

Internalizing Religious Values through Habituation: Strengthening Students' Character in the Digital Era

*Hikmah Eva Trisnantari¹ Prim Masrokan Mutohar²,
Moch. Rikza Alkhubra Abdul Jabbar³, R. Ahmad Ismail⁴

¹Universitas Bhinneka PGRI Tulungagung, Jl. Mayor Sujadi No.7, Tulungagung, East Java, Indonesia

^{2,3}Universitas Islam Negeri Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung, Jl. Mayor Sujadi No.46, Tulungagung, East Java, Indonesia

⁴Al Azhar University, Al Mokhaym Al Daem, Cairo, Cairo Governorate, Egypt
*hikmaheva@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: *This study aims to analyze the process of internalizing religious values through habituation-based practices and its contribution to the formation of students' religious character at SMP Islam Al Azhaar Tulungagung within the context of digital culture. This research is significant because the increasing use of social media and exposure to online content can influence students' moral orientations. In contrast, scholarly studies that explain an integrative model combining religious habituation with awareness of digital technology use in character education within Islamic schools remain limited. This study employed a qualitative case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation involving the school principal, teachers, and students. The data were analyzed using an interactive analysis model consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The trustworthiness of the data was ensured through tests of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The findings reveal that the internalization of religious values occurs through three interrelated stages: value transformation, value transaction, and value transinternalization. This study uses these three stages as a conceptual framework to explain the process of value internalization through religious habituation within the school culture. This process contributes to the development of students' religious character, which is reflected in disciplined worship practices, social concern, attitudes of tawadhu (humility) and politeness, as well as wisdom in the use of digital technology. This study is limited to a single case study conducted at a single educational institution; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized. Nevertheless, this research makes a conceptual contribution by proposing a framework for the internalization of religious values grounded in habituation and by opening opportunities for further research across diverse contexts of Islamic education.*

¹  orcid id: <http://orcid.org/0009-0004-0702-1629>

²  orcid id: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6021-8744>

³  orcid id: <http://orcid.org/0009-0007-4877-7600>

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis proses internalisasi nilai religius berbasis pembiasaan serta kontribusinya terhadap pembentukan karakter religius peserta didik di SMP Islam Al Azhaar Tulungagung dalam konteks budaya digital. Penelitian ini penting karena meningkatnya penggunaan media sosial dan paparan konten daring berpotensi memengaruhi orientasi moral peserta didik, sementara kajian yang menjelaskan model integratif antara pembiasaan religius dan kesadaran penggunaan teknologi digital dalam pendidikan karakter di sekolah Islam masih terbatas. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan dokumentasi yang melibatkan kepala sekolah, guru, dan peserta didik. Data dianalisis menggunakan model analisis interaktif yang meliputi kondensasi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan dengan menjaga keabsahan data melalui uji kredibilitas, transferabilitas, dependabilitas, dan konfirmabilitas. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa internalisasi nilai religius berlangsung melalui tiga tahapan yang saling berkaitan, yaitu transformasi nilai, transaksi nilai, dan transinternalisasi nilai. Dalam penelitian ini, ketiga tahapan tersebut dipahami sebagai kerangka konseptual untuk menjelaskan proses internalisasi nilai melalui pembiasaan religius dalam budaya sekolah. Proses ini berkontribusi pada terbentuknya karakter religius peserta didik yang tercermin dalam kedisiplinan beribadah, kepedulian sosial, sikap tawadhu' dan kesantunan, serta kebijaksanaan dalam penggunaan teknologi digital. Penelitian ini terbatas pada studi kasus di satu lembaga pendidikan sehingga temuan tidak dapat digeneralisasikan secara luas. Namun demikian, penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi konseptual mengenai kerangka internalisasi nilai religius berbasis pembiasaan serta membuka peluang penelitian lanjutan pada konteks pendidikan Islam yang berbeda.

Keywords: *Internalization of Values, Religious Values, Internalization of Habits, Student Character, Digital Era.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has brought significant changes to students' behavioral patterns and ways of thinking. A survey conducted by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association indicates that in 2024, the number of internet users in Indonesia reached 221.56 million, representing 79.5% of the total population. Adolescents are among the most active user groups, with an average daily internet usage duration exceeding 5 hours (APJII, 2024). This high intensity of internet use enables young people to access a wide range of digital information and content more easily, making digital media an integral part of their daily activities.

The advancement of digital technology offers significant opportunities for students' knowledge and creativity. However, this openness of access also introduces new challenges, particularly the potential weakening of students' character due to exposure to various forms of content. Many forms of media content do not always align with

moral and religious values, including excessive entertainment, violent content, and other materials that lack educational merit (Yusnita et al., 2023).

Moral literacy, therefore, becomes an essential competence that educators need to cultivate among students. It refers to the ability to understand ethical values, evaluate the moral consequences of actions, and make responsible decisions regarding the use of digital technology. In this regard, education should not be oriented solely toward academic achievement but must also play a strategic role in instilling character values that holistically shape students' personalities (Syukrin & Salahudin, 2024).

One approach to addressing this challenge is to internalize religious values within the educational process. Religious values serve both as spiritual guidance and as a moral foundation, helping students navigate the challenges of modern life, including the use of digital technology. The process of value internalization becomes more effective when implemented continuously through habituation strategies embedded in the school culture. Through such an approach, students not only develop a cognitive understanding of the values but also demonstrate them in their daily behavior.

In line with this need, numerous studies have examined character education based on religious values in educational institutions. However, most of these studies tend to focus on describing religious activities without deeply exploring the internalization processes that occur through habituation. For example, the study by Wati & Amrullah (2022) primarily highlights the forms of religious activities conducted in schools without explaining how such practices gradually cultivate value-based habits within the context of digital culture. Similarly, Indarti & Efendi (2022) demonstrate that the internalization of Islamic values can foster religious character through contextual learning. However, their research remains limited to the senior secondary level of madrasas.

Meanwhile Rahman (2025), the integration of spiritual and social values does not examine habituation as a pedagogical strategy for gradually instilling values. These comparisons indicate that studies explaining the mechanisms of religious value internalization through structured habituation in response to the challenges of digital culture remain limited. Consequently, this research aims to analyze how religious habituation practices function as pedagogical mechanisms in shaping students' character in the digital era.

Based on this research gap, the present study seeks to address the lack of scholarly attention by examining in depth how the internalization of religious values through habituation programs contributes to the formation of students' character at SMP Islam Al-Azhaar Tulungagung. This study also seeks to explain the adaptive strategies employed by Islamic educational institutions in integrating religious value habituation with the use of digital technology as a medium for contextual character formation.

The urgency of this research lies in its potential contribution to offering a new perspective on integrative, contextual, and adaptive character education practices that respond to contemporary developments. This objective is consistent with Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which emphasizes that education functions to develop individuals who are faithful, pious, and possess noble character. The Qur'anic injunction further reinforces this normative foundation: "O you who believe, protect yourselves and your families from the Fire..." (Qur'an, 66:6). Accordingly, this study aims not only to contribute conceptually but also to provide practical references for Islamic educational institutions

in designing habituation strategies that are consistent, sustainable, and grounded in religious values.

II. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore in depth the process of internalizing religious values through habituation at SMP Islam Al-Azhaar Tulungagung. A qualitative approach was chosen to understand social and cultural realities contextually and interpretively through the perspectives of participants who are directly involved in educational practices (Miles et al., 2014).

The research is grounded in the interpretivist paradigm, which views social reality as a construction of meaning shaped through social interaction and the subjective experiences of educational actors. Within this framework, a case study enables the researcher to explore a phenomenon intensively within a specific and naturalistic setting, thereby facilitating a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of religious value internalization (Adiyono et al., 2024).

The research was conducted at SMP Islam Al-Azhaar Tulungagung. This private Islamic educational institution integrates academic instruction with programs aimed at developing students' religious character through habituation practices embedded in formal, informal, and non-formal school activities. This institution was selected as the research site because it systematically implements various religious habituation programs, such as *pengajian kitab kuning* (classical Islamic text study sessions), the *sungkeman* tradition (a cultural practice of expressing respect and seeking forgiveness), and other socio-religious practices integrated into the school's daily culture. These characteristics make the institution a relevant case study for examining how the process of religious value internalization unfolds within educational practice.

The research participants consisted of 15 informants, including one school principal, two homeroom teachers, two Islamic Religious Education teachers, and ten active students. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, focusing on individuals who possessed an in-depth understanding and direct involvement in the implementation of religious value habituation strategies. The researcher considered this number sufficient because it captures diverse perspectives within the school environment and enables the researcher to obtain in-depth data until data saturation is reached.

Data were collected through three techniques: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. The collected data were analyzed using three analytical procedures: 1) data condensation, which involves selecting, focusing, simplifying, and abstracting field data; 2) data display, which entails organizing information in the form of narrative descriptions and thematic tables; and 3) conclusion drawing and verification, a process of interpreting the meaning of the data and testing its validity through emerging thematic patterns. The researcher conducted an inductive, interactive analysis, incorporating cross-validation across multiple sources to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the findings (Miles et al., 2014).

To ensure the trustworthiness of the qualitative data, the study applied four validation strategies proposed by Guba & Lincoln (1994):



Figure 1. Trustworthiness criteria based on Guba and Lincoln

The figure above illustrates four criteria of trustworthiness: 1) credibility, established through triangulation of data sources and research methods; 2) transferability, achieved by providing rich contextual descriptions that enable readers to assess the applicability of the findings in other contexts; 3) dependability, ensured through an audit trail that documents the entire research process systematically; and 4) confirmability, which emphasizes the objectivity of the data through participant confirmation and the researcher’s reflective notes.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

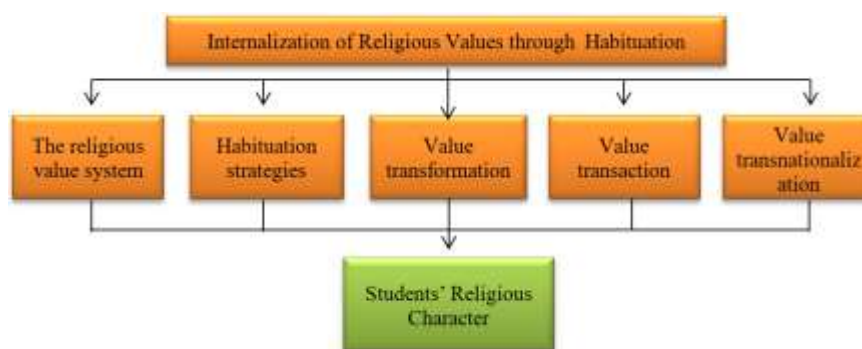


Figure 2. Habituation-based internalization of religious values

Based on the description in Figure 2, this study explores in depth how the school internalizes religious values through habituation across five analytical dimensions: the religious value system, habituation strategies, value transformation, value transaction, and value transinternalization. These five interrelated processes collectively shape students’ religious character as an outcome of the value-internalization process embedded in the school culture.

Religious Value System Based on Habituation

SMP Islam Al Azhaar Tulungagung has developed a religious value system that functions not merely as a set of formal regulations but as a set of principles internalized throughout the dynamics of school life. This system positions religious values as the primary foundation for character development. The school emphasizes four core values: discipline in worship, social responsibility, humility, and wisdom in the use of digital technology. The school regards these values as fundamental principles that integrate the objectives of Islamic education with the need for adaptation in the digital era. The identification of these values emerged from a thematic coding process applied to field data, which the researcher subsequently categorized into the most dominant religious values reflected in the school’s daily practices.

The existence of this value system enables the development of a consistent and sustainable religious culture within the school environment. The school integrates the values of *ḥablum minallāh* (the relationship with God) and *ḥablum minannās* (the relationship with fellow human beings) harmoniously, allowing students to cultivate a

balance between spiritual devotion and social responsibility. In practice, this system provides direction and orientation for various institutional policies, including the curriculum, extracurricular programs, and interpersonal interactions within the school community. Consequently, religious values are not treated merely as supplementary or symbolic elements but rather constitute the core foundation of all educational activities within the institution.

Habituation Strategies in the Internalization of Religious Values

The habituation strategies implemented at SMP Islam Al Azhaar Tulungagung follow a structured pattern based on the temporal stratification of activities: daily, weekly, and monthly programs. Based on the analysis of observational and interview data, this structure is not merely an administrative categorization of school activities. However, it functions as a pedagogical mechanism that gradually shapes students' religious habits. Such a pattern enables the process of value internalization to occur repeatedly, consistently, and sustainably across various contexts of students' learning experiences. The following section presents a further explanation of the institution's habituation strategies.

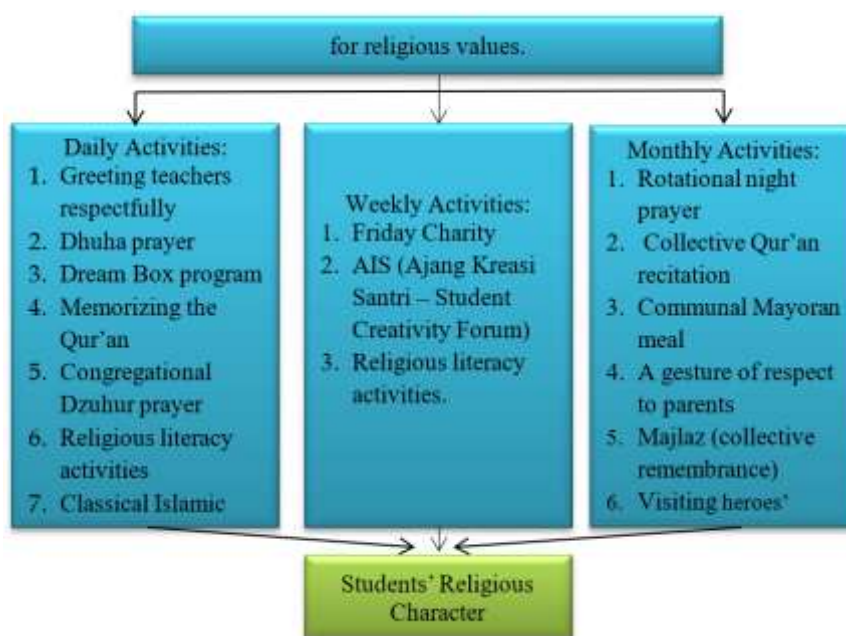


Figure 3. Habituation strategies in the internalization of students' religious values

Habituation Strategies in the Internalization of Religious Values

The classification of activities in Figure 3 illustrates the implementation of habituation strategies in the process of internalizing religious values at SMP Islam Al Azhaar Tulungagung. This strategy emphasizes character formation through students' active participation in structured spiritual and social activities organized daily, weekly, and monthly. Each activity category serves a distinct function while complementing the others in fostering the continuous development of religious character.

At the level of daily activities, habituation focuses on cultivating spiritual discipline through routine practices such as greeting and shaking hands with teachers, performing Dhuha prayer in congregation, participating in *tahfīz al-Qur'an* programs, and engaging in the study of *kitab kuning* (classical Islamic texts) covering the fields of *'aqidah* (Islamic theology), *akhlāq* (ethics), *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *sīrah* (prophetic

biography), and *naḥw-ṣarf* (Arabic grammar and morphology). These activities strengthen students' connection with the Islamic scholarly tradition while simultaneously cultivating respect for teachers and discipline in religious worship. In addition, the *Kaleng Impian* program integrates saving money with spiritual values by instilling optimism, patience, and future-oriented planning.

At the level of weekly activities, the school deepens internalization of religious values through social and intellectual engagement, including programs such as *Jumat Berkah* (Friday Charity Program), (*Ajang Kreasi Santri/AIS*), and religious literacy activities. These programs provide opportunities for students to actualize religious values through social care, the development of religious talents, and the enhancement of literacy and critical thinking skills.

Meanwhile, monthly activities reinforce students' spiritual experiences by involving families and the wider community. Programs such as *Khataman Keliling* (rotational Qur'an completion gatherings), *Qiyāmullail Keliling* (rotational night prayer gatherings), the *sungkeman* tradition prior to examinations, visits to national heroes' graves, and *Majlis Dzikir Jama'i Al Azhaar* provide more reflective and collective religious experiences while strengthening the relationship between students, parents, and the school community.

Based on these findings, the sequence of daily, weekly, and monthly activities indicates that the habituation strategy implemented at SMP Islam Al Azhaar Tulungagung not only establishes religious routines but also fosters the development of a religious habitus among students.

The Stage of Religious Value Transformation

The stage of value transformation represents the initial phase in the process of internalizing religious values, during which teachers introduce religious principles to students through educational communication. In this study, the stages of transformation–transaction–transinternalization are employed as an analytical framework, drawing on a theoretical model of value internalization in Islamic education. This framework explains how teachers convey religious values, guide students to understand them, and ultimately support their internalization within the educational practices of SMP Islam Al Azhaar Tulungagung.

At the transformation stage, teachers act as the primary transmitters of values through various instructional activities and religious guidance. Teachers transmit values through short lectures, *pengajian kitab kuning* (study sessions of classical Islamic texts), and guidance sessions during homeroom periods. Teachers also explain the meaning behind various religious practices implemented at the school, such as Dhuha prayer, congregational zuhr prayer, Qur'anic memorization, and collective dhikr gatherings (*majlis*). Through these activities, the school introduces students to values such as discipline in worship, humility (*tawadhu'*), self-discipline, and social responsibility.

During these guidance sessions, teachers also remind students that “the religious habits and moral conduct cultivated at school should be maintained in their homes and within the broader community. Students are encouraged not to be easily influenced by social media content that contradicts moral values and religious teachings. Religious activities practiced in school are therefore expected to function as a moral safeguard, enabling students to critically filter negative influences from various forms of uneducational digital content.”

At this stage, teachers also relate religious teachings to students' everyday realities through various habituation programs implemented in the school environment. As one student explained, "Teachers often explain that activities such as *Kaleng Impian*, *Qiyāmullail Keliling*, or communal gatherings (*mayoran*) are not merely school programs but ways of learning to care for others." This statement indicates that religious activities are not merely ritual routines but also educational instruments for character formation that cultivate empathy and social awareness among students.

The Stage of Religious Value Transaction

The value transaction stage is the phase in which students begin to understand and internalize religious values through social interactions within the school environment. At this stage, teachers not only transmit religious values but also engage students in learning them through shared experiences in various habituation activities, such as Dhuha prayer, congregational zuhr prayer, Qur'anic memorization, and collective dhikr gatherings. Through these practices, students learn to emulate the attitudes demonstrated by teachers, including discipline in worship, humility, and responsibility in carrying out religious activities.

Furthermore, interactions among students during religious activities at the school also reflect the process of value transaction. Students frequently remind one another to participate in programs such as *Qiyāmullail Keliling*, *Khataman Keliling*, and charitable initiatives through the *Kaleng Impian* program. As one student explained, "We usually remind each other to join activities such as congregational prayers or the *Kaleng Impian* program. Teachers also often remind us not to spend too much time on our phones so that our time can be used for more beneficial activities." (Student Interview).

These interactions provide students with direct experiences that enable them to understand the meaning of religious values in everyday life. As stated by Mrs. Tia, an Islamic Religious Education teacher, "We try to encourage students to experience directly how religious values are practiced in their lives, for example by habituating collective worship activities and reminding them to use technology wisely." (Interview with Teacher). Thus, students do not merely learn religious values at a theoretical level but also develop the ability to apply them in their daily lives, including when engaging with digital technology.

The Stage of Religious Value Transinternalization

The stage of transinternalization is the phase in which values taught and habituated begin to become part of students' internal consciousness. This condition is reflected in students' habitual display of religious attitudes, such as greeting and shaking hands with teachers, showing respect to elders within the school environment, and reminding one another to perform acts of worship. During congregational prayers, several students also demonstrate initiative by arriving earlier and volunteering to take turns leading the prayer (*imam*) without waiting for teachers' instructions.

Evidence of value internalization is also visible in students' behaviors that continue beyond the school environment. Mrs. Tia, an Islamic Religious Education teacher, explained that "some alumni continue charitable activities such as the *Jumat Berkah* program within their local communities." (Interview with Teacher). This indicates that the value of social responsibility instilled at school has become an integral part of students' character.

These positive activities are not only carried out directly but are also increasingly documented through social media as a constructive form of technology utilization. Several students share documentation of activities such as Jumat Berkah or the habit of greeting teachers within the school environment. The intention is not to seek popularity but rather to disseminate messages of kindness and encourage others to emulate such positive behaviors. In this way, technology is utilized as a medium of *da'wah*, enabling the wider dissemination of religious values within society.

The internal awareness of these values is also reflected in students' behavior when using technology in their daily lives. Some students demonstrate greater caution in their use of social media, such as maintaining respectful language in communication, refraining from sharing inappropriate content, and utilizing the internet for beneficial purposes, including searching for academic materials or religious knowledge. This suggests that religious values are not only practiced in direct social interactions but also function as ethical guidelines for behavior within digital spaces.

Students' Religious Character

Based on the findings of this study conducted at SMP Islam Al Azhaar Tulungagung, the process of internalizing religious values through habituation demonstrates a strong relationship with the formation of students' character. The character traits identified in this research reflect the core values embedded within the school's value system, namely discipline in worship, social responsibility, humility, and wisdom in the use of technology.

These categories of character were identified through an analysis of observational data, interviews with teachers and students, and documentation of school activities conducted repeatedly throughout the research process. Consequently, the religious character observed among students is not merely based on situational observations but is grounded in behavioral patterns that consistently appear in students' daily activities within the school environment.

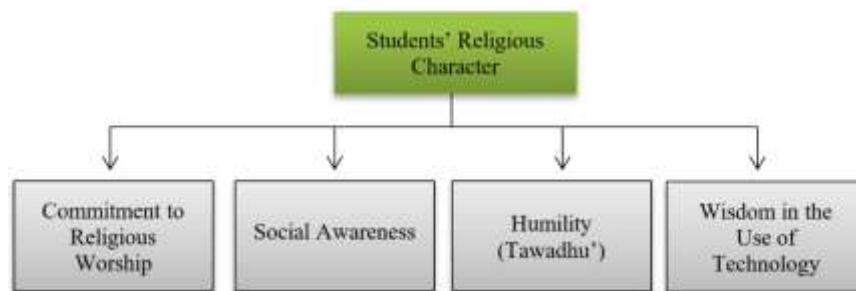


Figure 4. *The outcomes of religious value internalization on students' character*

Figure 4 illustrates that the internalization of religious values through habituation-based practices contributes to the development of students' character across spiritual, social, and moral dimensions. These character traits emerge from the integration of routine religious practices, continuous teacher guidance, and students' active participation in various religious and social activities. Although this study primarily focuses on the school environment, several teachers reported that changes in students' attitudes have also begun to appear in their interactions outside the classroom, particularly in their relationships with peers and family members. The forms of religious character successfully internalized can be described as follows:

1. Commitment to Religious Worship

Students demonstrate their commitment to religious worship through active participation in congregational prayers, including Dhuhr, Asr, and Dhuha. They consistently arrive on time, perform ablution (*wudhu*'), and maintain concentration and solemnity during prayer. Some students even volunteer to serve as the imam or *muadzin*, indicating a growing sense of responsibility. One student initially felt hesitant to lead the prayer; however, after receiving encouragement and guidance from teachers, he gradually came to see the role as a trust (*amanah*). This experience suggests that religious observance has evolved beyond a routine obligation into a spiritual need that nurtures *istiqamah* (steadfastness) and personal responsibility.

2. Social Awareness

Through programs such as Jumat Berkah (Blessed Friday), students internalize the value of social awareness by voluntarily collecting donations to support members of the surrounding community. During one activity, the researcher observed students enthusiastically distributing packages of vegetables to small-scale vendors around the school while offering prayers and greetings. This practice demonstrates how students cultivate generosity and empathy through structured, meaningful social engagement.

3. Humility (*Tawadhu*')

Humility (*tawadhu*') is manifested in students' respectful behavior when interacting with teachers, peers, and school guests. They greet others with a *salam*, slightly bow as a gesture of respect, and communicate using polite, courteous language. On one occasion, the researcher observed a student approaching a guest who appeared confused and calmly guiding them to the teacher's office. Such behavior reflects the internalization of humility as a lived moral disposition rather than merely a taught concept.

4. Responsible Use of Technology

This character trait is evident in students' growing awareness of how to use technology responsibly and constructively. Some students utilize social media to share positive content, such as documenting the Jumat Berkah program or other religious activities conducted at school. In addition, students demonstrate a more selective attitude toward digital content and increasingly use the internet for beneficial purposes, including studying and seeking knowledge.

Discussion

Religious Value System

The institution positions its religious value system as a core value that underpins its educational activities and school culture at SMP Islam Al Azhaar Tulungagung. The school applies these values through a habituation-based strategy that integrates Classroom learning, religious activities, and everyday social interactions. Conceptually, this approach represents the development of a religious school culture by adopting selected elements of *pasantren* educational practices within the context of formal schooling. This perspective is consistent with the findings of Jakandar et al. (2025), which emphasize that the integration between instructional programs and institutional culture strongly influences the success of value internalization. Through this system, the school fosters the values of *ḥablum minallāh* (the relationship between humans and

God) and *ḥablum minannās* (the relationship among human beings) in a balanced manner as the foundation for shaping students' religious character.

This perspective aligns with the school culture-based character education model described by Zubaidah (2019), which argues that moral values can only be sustained when they become an integral part of the daily practices of the entire school community. Furthermore, Sutarsih (2021) explains that an environment that consistently provides role modeling, positive reinforcement, and direct experiences facilitates students' more effective internalization of values. In this context, SMP Islam Al Azhaar Tulungagung designs its programs comprehensively to ensure that they not only convey religious values as theoretical knowledge but also enable students to practice them continuously until they develop into enduring character traits.

Habituation Strategy

The habituation strategy implemented at this school is structured into three stages of activities: daily, weekly, and monthly programs. At the daily level, one of the most visible practices is the tradition of greeting and shaking hands with teachers every morning. This simple practice, as explained by Sari & Hikmawati (2025), cultivates humility, fosters respect, and strengthens the emotional bond between students and educators. Other routine activities include congregational Dhuha prayer, which effectively promotes time discipline and devotion in worship (Hasanah et al., 2024), as well as *muroja'ah* and *tahfidz* programs of the Qur'an that contribute to strengthening memorization and deepening the internalization of Islamic values (Laili et al., 2025). The study of *kitab kuning* (classical Islamic texts) further broadens students' critical understanding of Islamic teachings Haryono et al. (2025), while congregational prayers foster a sense of togetherness and leadership among students (Azizah & Musthofa, 2024).

From the perspective of social learning theory, habituation, when repeated, can shape internalized behavior through processes of reinforcement and role modeling (Setiawan et al., 2025). The structuring of activities into daily, weekly, and monthly programs also facilitates the gradual formation of a religious habitus. Through activities such as the study of classical Islamic texts, religious literacy programs, and collective *majlis dzikir*, students are consistently encouraged to develop religious understanding, strengthen religious literacy, and cultivate spiritual awareness.

In the context of rapid technological development, which has significantly expanded access to information and digital content, these values serve as an essential foundation, enabling students to become more selective and responsible in their use of digital information (Najah & Mashuda, 2022). Thus, the habituation strategy not only reinforces religious practices within the school environment but also shapes students' value orientation as they navigate the complexities of the digital era.

Value Transformation

The process of value transformation positions teachers as the primary agents in conveying moral messages to students (Miftahuddin et al., 2024). In this study, the stages of transformation–transaction–transnationalization are employed as an analytical framework derived from the theoretical model of value internalization in Islamic education proposed by Hakam & Nurdin (2016). Accordingly, these three stages do not constitute a new model in the present research; rather, they serve as a conceptual lens for understanding the process of religious value internalization within the educational

practices of SMP Islam Al Azhaar Tulungagung. Through this framework, the study seeks to explain how religious values are communicated, dialogically negotiated, and ultimately internalized by students in their everyday lives within the school environment.

Nevertheless, the implementation of value transformation does not always occur uniformly, as each teacher possesses varying capacities in transmitting values. Teachers of Islamic Religious Education generally play a more dominant role in delivering religious values. In contrast, teachers of general subjects contribute through role modeling and the integration of values within the learning process. This finding aligns with the study by Basyir et al. (2026), which emphasizes that the success of value cultivation largely depends on educators' ability to connect religious teachings to students' social realities. Furthermore, consistent role modeling constitutes a crucial factor in ensuring that moral messages are not merely understood cognitively but are also embodied in students' daily behavior (Elyunusi et al., 2022).

From a theoretical perspective, Nurdianto et al. (2024) argue that value transformation is more effective when educators contextualize instructional material within students' lived experiences. This view is supported by Tsani et al. (2024), who state that integrating religious values across all subjects and school activities can broaden the scope of value transformation, enabling students to perceive these values as integral to all aspects of their lives rather than being confined solely to religious instruction. Therefore, value transformation occurs not only through the transmission of religious knowledge but also through the integration of values across diverse educational activities, enabling students to recognize the relevance of religious values within their broader social context.

Value Transaction

The stage of value transaction involves an interactive process that enables students to experience values directly through teacher guidance and mentorship (Abdillah et al., 2025). A study by Siregar & Jarudin (2024) indicates that teacher-modeled behaviors have a stronger internalization effect than mere verbal instruction. Dialogical relationships between teachers and students enable value learning reflectively (Masturin et al., 2022). In addition, Huda et al. (2024) emphasize that teachers' emotional engagement also plays a significant role in strengthening students' understanding of values.

From a theoretical perspective, Bandura (1977) provides, through social learning theory, a scientific explanation for why behaviors observed from respected figures are more readily adopted when accompanied by social reinforcement. This perspective is consistent with the concept of a community of practice proposed by Lave & Wenger (1991), which holds that intensive interaction within a community can shape members' identities and behaviors. Collective activities such as *Jumat Berkah* and *Qiyāmullail* reflect the implementation of this concept while serving as practical arenas for cultivating values of empathy, cooperation, and social responsibility through direct experience.

Value Transnationalization

The stage of value internalization marks the culmination of the value internalization process, in which teachings consistently practiced gradually transform into personal awareness and become part of students' individual identities. At this stage, positive

behaviors are performed without external compulsion (GÃrhan, 2025). In their study, Nurizah & Amrullah (2024) emphasize that the formation of a relatively stable character requires a combination of habituation, role modeling, and consistent reinforcement. Similarly, research by Ma`arif et al. (2024) demonstrates that repeated practices gradually shape patterns of thinking and long-term behavioral tendencies. In the context of this study, various religious activities routinely conducted at school function as mechanisms for habit formation that progressively nurture students' religious awareness.

However, the process of transinternalization does not always occur linearly or stably. The internalization of values may vary depending on the social environments in which students interact outside the school setting. Some students demonstrate the ability to sustain religious practices in their daily lives, such as consistently performing acts of worship or maintaining behaviors aligned with the values learned at school. Nevertheless, in certain circumstances—particularly when students are exposed to different social circles or influenced by digital media—the consistency of these practices may encounter challenges. This condition indicates that the process of value internalization is not fully complete but remains influenced by the dynamics of the social environments students encounter.

From the perspective of transformative learning, Mezirow (2000) explains that sustainable behavioral change requires a fundamental shift in one's meaning perspective. Such transformation does not occur instantaneously but develops through continuous reflection and repeated experiences across diverse life contexts. Therefore, students' capacity to make independent moral decisions is shaped not only by school-based learning but also by their interactions with family environments, broader society, and the digital spaces they engage with. In line with this view, Nuryani (2024) argues that the highest level of character education is achieved when students can make autonomous moral decisions based on the value principles they have internalized. Consequently, transinternalization in education should not be understood merely as the outcome of a learning process, but rather as a dynamic and evolving process that continues to develop alongside students' social experiences.

Students' Religious Character

The formation of students' religious character identified in this study indicates that the process of value internalization does not merely produce ritualistic religious behavior but also shapes broader social and moral dimensions. Religious commitment, reflected in the routine practice of congregational prayers, demonstrates that habituation plays a significant role in fostering students' spiritual discipline. This finding reinforces the study of Musthofa (2025), which states that the collective practice of worship can cultivate discipline while simultaneously enhancing religious awareness in daily life.

Beyond the spiritual dimension, students' religious character is also reflected in the development of social awareness through programs such as Jumat Berkah. This program provides students with opportunities to directly practice the values of empathy and solidarity through acts of sharing with others. This finding is consistent with the research by Muhajir et al. (2025), which demonstrates that integrating social values into religious education can foster social concern and strengthen harmonious relationships in educational environments.

Students' attitudes of *tawadhu* (humility) and courteous behavior also develop through the consistent role modeling demonstrated by teachers. Teachers do not merely function

as transmitters of academic knowledge but also serve as moral exemplars who embody ethical values in their daily interactions within the school environment. This finding supports the study by Syaikh & Putri (2023), which emphasizes that educators' role modeling constitutes a crucial factor in the formation of students' character.

In addition, this study finds that students' religious character also encompasses the capacity to use technology wisely. Through teachers' guidance and the reinforcement of digital literacy within school activities, students are encouraged to filter information and avoid digital content that contradicts religious values. This finding suggests that the internalization of religious values in Islamic education is also closely related to students' ability to navigate the ethical and responsible challenges of the digital era.

Conceptually, the integration of worship habituation, teachers' role modeling, social engagement activities, and the strengthening of digital literacy forms a contextual pattern of religious character development. This conceptual model can be illustrated in the following diagram.

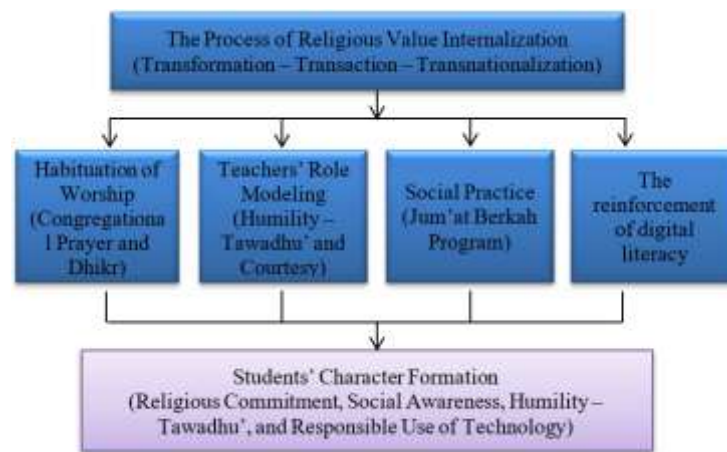


Figure 5. *The conceptual model of students' religious character formation*

The diagram illustrates a conceptual model of students' religious character formation derived from the synthesis of the theoretical framework of value internalization and the empirical findings of this study. The internalization process occurs through the stages of transformation, transaction, and transinternalization, which are manifested through various educational practices such as the habituation of worship, teachers' role modeling, and socio-religious activities. In addition, values are reinforced through moral guidance and digital literacy provided by teachers to students. The integration of these practices ultimately generates a contextual form of religious character—one that integrates spirituality, social awareness, moral integrity, and the ability to exercise wisdom in the use of technology and digital media.

These findings indicate that the internalization of religious values in contemporary Islamic education not only shapes devotional practices and social morality but also fosters a dimension of digital wisdom. This refers to students' capacity to use technology ethically and selectively in accordance with religious values.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the internalization of religious values through habituation at SMP Islam Al Azhaar Tulungagung occurs through three main stages: value

transformation, value transaction, and value internalization. The school supports these stages through habituation strategies embedded in the school culture, including congregational worship practices, socio-religious activities, teachers' role modeling, and strengthened digital literacy. This process contributes to the formation of students' religious character, encompassing commitment to religious worship, social awareness, humility (*tawadhu'*), and courteous behavior, as well as the ability to use technology wisely. The findings also indicate that the internalization of religious values does not merely shape ritual religious behavior but also fosters moral and ethical awareness among students, particularly in addressing the decline in students' character qualities resulting from exposure to content that is not always aligned with moral and religious values. From a practical perspective, this study provides insights for Islamic educational institutions on the importance of integrating religious habituation, teacher role modeling, social engagement activities, and digital literacy to develop students' character. Future research may develop comparative studies across diverse educational institutions to enrich the understanding of religious value internalization models within the broader context of Islamic education.

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