# The Internalization of Islamic Character Values in the Learning Process of Islamic Elementary Schools

**Surryanto Djoko Waluyo, Agung Edi Rustanto**

## Abstract

This study aims to analyze the internalization of Islamic character values in the learning process of Islamic elementary schools through a literature review employing the SPANDek method (Systematic, Peer-reviewed, Analytical, and Narrative Documentation of Evidencebased Knowledge). This approach was used to systematically examine various research findings published in peer-reviewed journals indexed by Google Scholar from 2014 to 2024. The review focuses on the concepts, strategies, and implementation of Islamic character values such as honesty (ṣidq), responsibility (amānah), discipline, hard work, and compassion (raḥmah) within the context of thematic learning in Islamic elementary education. The findings reveal that the internalization process is carried out by integrating Islamic values into all components of instruction, including lesson planning, classroom implementation, and learning evaluation. The role of teachers as uswah ḥasanah (exemplary role models) and the establishment of a religious school culture are identified as key factors in ensuring successful character formation. Several effective strategies are highlighted, including exemplar-based learning, habituation, religious activities, and value integration within the thematic curriculum. Nevertheless, challenges remain, particularly the limited understanding among some teachers regarding cross-subject Islamic value integration and the absence of a robust characterevaluation system. Through the SPANDek method, this study presents an evidence-based synthesis that underscores the importance of synergy among teachers, schools, and families in strengthening Islamic character education at the elementary level. The results are expected to serve as both conceptual and practical references for curriculum developers and educators in optimizing Islamic character formation from the early stages of formal education.

**Keywords:** Internalization, Islamic Character Values, Islamic Elementary School, Learning Process, Spandek, Literature Review.

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## Introduction

Education serves as a strategic vehicle for shaping individuals who are not only intellectually capable but also morally grounded and equipped with strong character. From an Islamic perspective, education is not merely a process of transferring knowledge; rather, it is an effort to cultivate personality and behavior rooted in Islamic values. One of the most crucial aspects of Islamic education is the internalization of Islamic character values among students. This internalization represents a cultural process through which noble values derived from Islamic teachings are embedded within learners, guiding their thoughts, attitudes, and behavior in daily life (Lickona, 2013; Arif et al., 2024). At the elementary school level, character formation serves as a fundamental phase that significantly shapes children's future moral and spiritual development. This stage is considered critical because students are in the formative years of their moral and social growth. Therefore, education at this level must focus on instilling core akhlāq karīmah values such as honesty (ṣidq), discipline, responsibility (amānah), hard work (mujāhadah), courtesy (adab), and compassion (raḥmah). These values align with the vision of Islamic education to develop insān kāmil—individuals who are knowledgeable, faithful, and possess noble character (Fauyan & Wati, 2023).

In the context of Islamic elementary schools, the internalization of Islamic character values is carried out through a holistic approach that integrates Islamic principles across all learning activities. This process does not only occur in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) classes but is also embedded within thematic learning, extracurricular programs, school culture, and daily interactions between teachers and students (Indarti & Efendi, 2022). According to Ardianto (2022), character internalization in Islamic education encompasses three key stages: (1) the transformation of values, in which teachers introduce Islamic values conceptually; (2) the transaction of values, in which students begin to internalize these values through habituation and practical activities; and (3) trans-internalization, in which the values become entrenched as integral components of students' personalities.

Teachers occupy a central role throughout this process. As uswah ḥasanah (exemplary role models), teachers are expected to demonstrate Islamic character in their attitudes, speech, and behavior. Their role extends beyond delivering knowledge; they are also spiritual and moral guides who connect Islamic values with contemporary learning contexts to ensure relevance to students' lives (Buwono & Susilo, 2023). Learning models that emphasize exemplification (role modeling) and habituation contribute to the creation of a positive and character-oriented learning environment. Findings from relevant studies indexed in Google Scholar indicate that the success of Islamic character internalization in elementary schools is strongly influenced by several supporting factors, including teachers' commitment, a religious school culture, wellintegrated religious programs, and parental involvement in character development (Widayati, 2023). Schools that implement routine religious activities such as congregational prayers, Qur'an recitation, and Islamic habituation programs are shown to be more effective in shaping students' character.

Nevertheless, several challenges persist in implementing Islamic character internalization at the elementary level. Mulyasari (2024) notes that some teachers still lack adequate understanding of how to integrate Islamic values across various subjects. In addition, character evaluation is often limited to cognitive aspects, while affective and psychomotor components are rarely assessed systematically. External influences—such as digital media and popular culture that conflict with Islamic values—also pose serious challenges. These conditions call for more adaptive and contextual strategies that remain grounded in Islamic principles while responding to contemporary educational realities.

Therefore, this study seeks to analyze models, strategies, and stages of Islamic character internalization in the learning processes of Islamic elementary schools through a comprehensive literature review. Data were collected from peer-reviewed journal articles indexed by Google Scholar from 2014 to 2024. The analysis aims to provide a deeper understanding of the internalization patterns and to formulate practical recommendations for teachers and school administrators to enhance Islamic character education. Ultimately, this study is expected to contribute to strengthening character education in Indonesia so that it aligns with both national educational goals and universal Islamic values.

## Literature Review 2.1 The Concept of Islamic Character Value Internalization

Internalization of values is a process of instilling and integrating particular values into learners so that these values become part of their mindset, attitudes, and behavior. In the context of Islamic education, the internalization of Islamic character values aims to shape learners' personalities based on the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith, reflected through akhlāq karīmah. These values include honesty (ṣidq), amānah (trustworthiness), responsibility, discipline, hard work, and compassion (raḥmah).

Achadah, Wahidmurni, and Yasin (2024) explain that the internalization of Islamic character values in elementary schools is not only implemented through conceptual instruction, but also through routine practices such as congregational worship, Qur'an reading activities, and the reinforcement of a religious school culture. Accordingly, internalization is not merely cognitive value transmission, but a continuous process of character formation through lived experience and social interaction.

## 2.2 Character Education and the Integration of Islamic Values in the Curriculum

Character education in Islam places moral and spiritual values at the core of the learning process. Cahyadi and Pascasarjana (2021) emphasize that Islamic character education must be integrated across all subjects, rather than being limited to Islamic Religious Education courses. Such integration enables students to recognize the relationship between scientific knowledge and the moral principles upheld in Islam.

Within Islamic elementary schools, the integrative thematic curriculum serves as an effective medium for instilling Islamic character values. Teachers may connect each learning theme with Islamic principles—such as embedding honesty in mathematics lessons, responsibility in group activities, and empathy and compassion in social learning. Through this approach, value internalization occurs holistically and naturally throughout the learning experience.

**2.3 The Role of Teachers, Schools, and School Culture in Value Internalization** Teachers hold a central role in the process of internalizing Islamic character values. According to Saepudin (2023), teachers serve a dual function as educators and role models (uswah ḥasanah). Their attitudes, speech, and behavior become real-life models for students to emulate Islamic character.

In addition, a religious school culture significantly influences students' character formation. Cahyanto, Suryana, and Hidayat (2024) assert that routine activities—such as congregational prayer, Qur'an memorization, and collective supplication—help create a spiritual atmosphere that strengthens the internalization of Islamic values. Thus, the synergy between teacher exemplification and a religious school environment forms a strong foundation for cultivating noble character in students.

### 2.4 Learning Strategies and Value Integration in the Digital Era

In the digital era, learning strategies for internalizing Islamic character values must adapt to technological advancements. Kulsum, Mulyani, and Hanifa (2024) note that digital-based learning can be aligned with character education through the use of interactive media featuring Islamic exemplary stories, educational videos, and digital platforms that promote moral values.

The effective use of technology can reinforce responsibility, discipline, and digital ethics among students. Therefore, teachers must act as guides who ensure that learners use technology wisely and in ways that align with Islamic values.

**2.5 Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Islamic Character Value Internalization** The success of Islamic character internalization is influenced by multiple factors. According to Ayu, Fitriah, and Rahmawati (2023), supporting factors include teacher commitment, a religious school culture, curriculum reinforcement, and parental involvement. These elements create a synergistic ecosystem between school and family in shaping students' character.

Conversely, common obstacles include teachers' limited understanding of crosscurricular value integration, underdeveloped character assessment systems, and the influence of popular culture that contradicts Islamic values. For this reason, teacher training, improved character assessment mechanisms, and stronger collaboration among schools, families, and communities are essential.

### 2.6 Theoretical Framework and the SPANDek Approach

This study is grounded in value internalization theory, which emphasizes three stages: value transformation, value transaction, and trans-internalization. Within the literature review context, the SPANDek approach (Systematic, Peer-reviewed, Analytical, and Narrative Documentation of Evidence-based Knowledge) is employed to examine research findings systematically and based on verifiable evidence.

The SPANDek stages include:

1. Systematic – Literature searches conducted through structured procedures using indexed journals.
2. Peer-reviewed – Sources drawn from credible scholarly publications.
3. Analytical – Analysis focused on strategies, models, and outcomes of Islamic value internalization.
4. Narrative Documentation – Synthesized findings presented narratively to produce conceptual and practical conclusions.

This approach strengthens the theoretical foundation by ensuring that conclusions are built upon credible, relevant, and contextually grounded research related to Islamic elementary education.

## Research Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a literature review design. The review focused on peer-reviewed scientific articles published between 2020 and 2025 and indexed in the Sinta database, specifically those discussing the internalization of Islamic character values in learning processes at Islamic elementary schools or within the context of basic Islamic education. The primary method used was SPANDek (Systematic, Peer-reviewed, Analytical, Narrative Documentation of Evidence-based Knowledge), ensuring that the selection, analysis, and documentation of literature were systematic and evidence-based.

Data were collected through systematic searches of databases such as Google Scholar and national journal portals that publish Sinta-accredited articles. The inclusion criteria consisted

of: (1) publication year between 2020 and 2025; (2) relevance to elementary school or Islamic basic education settings; (3) a thematic focus on the internalization of character values or Islamic values in the learning process; and (4) peer-reviewed articles indexed in Sinta. After the collection process, the literature was screened to identify the most relevant and high-quality articles.

The analysis was conducted in three main phases based on the SPANDek method: (1) systematic, referring to the structured search and selection of literature in accordance with the inclusion criteria; (2) analytical, involving thematic coding of the articles to identify concepts, strategies, supporting and inhibiting factors; and (3) narrative documentation, in which a narrative synthesis was developed to describe analytical findings, inter-study connections, and both conceptual and practical implications. The results of the review served as the basis for formulating a conceptual model for internalizing Islamic character values in the learning process at Islamic elementary schools.

## Result and Discussion

The SPANDek review of nationally indexed Sinta literature published between 2020–2025 reveals a consistent pattern regarding the dominant strategies for internalizing Islamic character values in Islamic elementary schools. The studies collectively highlight three recurring approaches: (1) curriculum-embedded value integration, (2) teacher modeling, and (3) habituation through ritual and school practices. The literature shows that integrating values into thematic instruction—for example, embedding honesty, responsibility, and cooperation into classroom activities—makes values more contextual, experiential, and personally meaningful for young learners. Such internalization is demonstrated to be far more effective than purely verbal or normative moral instruction.

These findings are aligned with the work of Ahmed and Ismail (2020) in Malaysia, which indicates that Islamic character education becomes more impactful when integrated into thematic learning rather than taught as a separate subject. Similarly, Al-Qahtani (2021) in Saudi Arabia found that observation, imitation, and social reinforcement through teacher modeling significantly influence moral–spiritual internalization among elementary pupils. Likewise, Rahman and Hassan's (2023) cross-country study in Southeast Asia confirms that religious habituation practices in Islamic elementary schools strengthen moral awareness through habitual learning and social reinforcement mechanisms.

The thematic analysis produced four major analytical domains:

### 4.1 Pedagogical and Instructional Domain

Effective instructional strategies for value internalization extend beyond moral lecturing and instead employ active learning approaches such as project-based learning, reflective dialogue, value-based games, and cross-curricular integration. These approaches provide learners with authentic opportunities to practice targeted character values. Examples include structured group work to foster *amanah* and responsibility, as well as reflective journals to cultivate empathy. Yusof et al. (2022) report a positive correlation between reflective learning activities and the depth of students' internalization of Islamic values. Nur and Abdullah (2024) further demonstrate that contextualized instruction strengthens the transfer of values into observable behavior.

### 4.2 School Culture Domain

Schools that institutionalize religious routines—such as congregational prayer, *tadarus*, and collective supplication—create a normative ecosystem that reinforces long-term

dispositional character formation. Al-Mutairi's (2022) study in Kuwait shows that structured religious routines accelerate internalization through environmental reinforcement. In the Indonesian context, findings from Muslimah (2021) and Hidayat and Rahman (2022) similarly confirm that a strong religious school culture is one of the most effective determinants in sustaining Islamic character among students.

### 4.3 Family and Community Domain

Family and community involvement emerge as critical variables in value internalization. International studies (e.g., Said & Omar, 2021; Amin & Wahid, 2023) emphasize that character internalization is sustained only when home practices reinforce school-based values. A lack of synchronization between home and school environments weakens the continuity of character formation. In Indonesia, this perspective is supported by Aminah (2023), who stresses the importance of school–parent communication in character-building initiatives.

### 4.4 Technology and Media Domain

Recent literature shows that digital platforms serve as a double-edged medium: on one hand, they can disseminate inspiring Islamic narratives and interactive value-learning content; on the other hand, they may expose children to value-conflicting content. Rahim and Ahmad (2023) highlight the potential of prophetic storytelling via digital media to strengthen spiritual character, while Yilmaz (2024) warns that unrestricted exposure to digital content can disrupt internalization processes, particularly among children who are still in the imitation stage of moral development.

### 4.5 Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

The analysis reveals that successful internalization is multifactorial and requires consistent implementation. Key supporting factors include teachers' pedagogical and spiritual competence, school governance that prioritizes character education, and the availability of systematic affective assessment tools. Hassan and Noor (2023) identify teacher competence as the strongest predictor of successful Islamic character internalization. Conversely, major barriers include: (1) limited teacher skill in cross-curricular integration, (2) overloaded curricula that marginalize character education, (3) the shortage of valid affective assessment instruments, and (4) external influences from social media and popular culture. Studies by Yusof et al. (2022) and Al-Qahtani (2021) underline that peer and digital exposure significantly shape the behavioral consistency of Islamic character in children.

### 4.6 Practical Implications

The SPANDek synthesis offers five integrated recommendations:

1. Capacity-building for teachers through professional development on value integration, moral modeling, and affective assessment.
2. Redesigning thematic curricula with explicit value indicators and measurable assessment strategies.
3. Strengthening meaningful religious school culture beyond symbolic routines.
4. Implementing character assessment systems using rubrics, longitudinal observation, and student portfolios.
5. Enhancing school–family–community collaboration for sustained value habituation.

Conceptually, the findings reinforce a cyclical model: input (values and policy) → process (integrative instruction + modeling + habituation) → output (character behavior) with evaluative feedback. This underscores that value transformation requires multi-actor coordination and continuity, rather than short-term intervention.

## Conclusion

Based on the SPANDek synthesis of national Sinta-indexed literature (2020–2025) and reputable international journals, it can be concluded that the internalization of Islamic character values in Islamic elementary schools is a strategic and holistic process involving multiple educational components. The most effective strategies identified in the literature are: (1) the integration of values into thematic classroom instruction, (2) teacher modeling as a representation of Islamic behavior, and (3) habituation of religious activities as a reinforcement of moral dispositions.

The success of this internalization process is determined by the synergy among learning practices, school culture, family involvement, and the broader social environment. Schools that demonstrate a strong religious culture, teachers who possess both pedagogical and spiritual competence, and families that actively reinforce school-based values tend to achieve stronger character outcomes among students. Conversely, the major challenges arise from limited teacher capacity in cross-curricular value integration, overloaded curricula, insufficient affective assessment tools, and external influences such as social media and popular culture.

Therefore, the internalization of Islamic character values cannot be implemented sporadically or partially; rather, it requires a systemic and sustainable approach. Strengthening teacher capacity, cultivating an authentic religious school culture, developing value-oriented curricula, and fostering family–community engagement are key determinants of success. A cyclical implementation model that links policy input, learning processes, and behavioral output offers a practical and adaptable framework for Islamic elementary schools in Indonesia.

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