

Strengthening Religious Values through Character Education among Students of Muhammadiyah 2 Junior High School Karanganyar and State Junior High School 2 Tasikmadu, Karanganyar

Tarno ^{a.1,*}, Sukari ^{b.2}.

^{*ab} Institut Islam Mamba'ul Ulum, Surakarta, Indonesia.

^{*1}ntar1561@gmail.com, ²sukarisolo@gmail.com

^{*}Correspondent Author

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ABSTRACT

This study employs a character education-based approach to examine the strengthening of religious values among junior high school students at Muhammadiyah 2 Junior High School Karanganyar and State Junior High School 2 Tasikmadu Karanganyar. The main objective of this research is to analyze the effectiveness of character education in reinforcing students' religious values, particularly in terms of religious attitudes, daily behavior, and moral awareness. This research adopts a quantitative descriptive method with a survey design. The research sample consisted of 30 students, selected using a purposive sampling technique. Data were collected through questionnaires measuring students' religious values before and after the implementation of character education-based learning activities. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques in the form of percentages. The results show that the implementation of character education significantly contributed to the strengthening of students' religious values. The findings indicate that 86.7% of students demonstrated an improvement in religious attitudes, 83.3% showed increased consistency in practicing religious behaviors, and 80.0% exhibited stronger moral responsibility in both school and social environments. Overall, 83.3% of the students experienced a positive strengthening of religious values, while 16.7% showed moderate improvement. These results suggest that character education plays a crucial role in reinforcing religious values among junior high school students in both Islamic and public school settings.

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Introduction

National education plays a strategic role in shaping learners who are faithful, pious, and possess noble character, as mandated by the National Education System Law. Religious values serve as the primary foundation for character formation, particularly at the junior high school level, which represents a critical phase of moral and psychosocial development. Schools as formal institutions are therefore required not only to transmit cognitive knowledge but also to instill religious values in a structured and sustainable manner (Suyanto & Widodo, 2021, p. 45).

The strengthening of religious values among students faces increasingly complex

challenges in line with globalization, digitalization, and social transformation. Phenomena such as moral degradation, low religious awareness, and the weakening of ethical value internalization among adolescents have become prominent issues in contemporary educational discourse. These conditions demand an integrative educational approach that combines academic dimensions with the development of religious character (Hasanah, 2022, p. 73).

Character education is widely regarded as a strategic approach to instilling religious values in a contextual and applicable manner. It is not merely oriented toward habituating positive behavior but also toward the internalization of values reflected in students' attitudes, actions, and decision-making processes. The integration of religious values within character education enables the formation of personalities that are religious, tolerant, and responsible (Kurniawan, 2020, p. 112).

A number of studies indicate that the implementation of character education contributes positively to the strengthening of students' religious attitudes. Rahmawati and Hidayat (2021, p. 98) found that learning based on religious character values enhances students' awareness of worship practices and moral discipline at the secondary school level. Similar findings were reported by Ma'arif (2022, p. 56), who emphasized that the integration of religious values into school activities has a significant impact on the moral development of students.

Other studies have highlighted the importance of institutional context in the implementation of religious character education. Faith-based schools benefit from a strong religious atmosphere and supportive school culture, whereas public schools face challenges in integrating religious values in an inclusive and contextual manner. A study by Prasetyo and Anwar (2023, p. 134) revealed differences in both strategies and effectiveness in strengthening religious values between Islamic schools and public schools.

Previous research has largely focused on a single type of educational institution, either Islamic schools or public schools, without conducting comparative cross-contextual analyses. In addition, most studies have positioned character education as a single variable without thoroughly examining its relationship with the strengthening of religious values in everyday learning practices (Nugroho, 2021, p. 89).

Another limitation of earlier studies lies in the lack of exploration of students' empirical experiences as the primary subjects of religious value reinforcement. Many studies emphasize school policies or teachers' perspectives, while students' voices as the direct recipients of character education programs remain underexplored (Fauzi & Lestari, 2022, p. 61).

Based on this discussion, a research gap remains in studies on strengthening religious values through character education that are examined contextually in both faith-based schools and public schools within the same geographical area. Such analysis is essential to understand the dynamics of religious character education implementation across different institutional settings.

Muhammadiyah 2 Junior High School Karanganyar and State Junior High School 2 Tasikmadu Karanganyar represent two educational institution models with distinct characteristics in strengthening religious values. Differences in institutional vision, school culture, and instructional strategies provide a relevant analytical space to examine the effectiveness of character education in reinforcing students' religiosity.

The novelty of this study lies in its comparative-conceptual approach, which positions

character education as the primary instrument for strengthening religious values across two different types of schools. This study not only compares outcomes but also examines the processes of religious value internalization within character education practices in each school.

In addition, this study foregrounds students' perspectives as the main focus of analysis, offering empirical insights into how religious values are understood, internalized, and practiced in school life. This approach is expected to enrich the discourse on religious character education grounded in students' lived experiences.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in strengthening the conceptual framework of religious character education within the context of junior high school education. The findings are expected to expand academic discourse on the integration of religious values and character education within diverse formal education systems (Aziz, 2024, p. 27).

From a practical perspective, the results of this study contribute to school administrators and educators in designing effective and contextual character education strategies. The recommendations generated may serve as references for strengthening religious values that are adaptive to students' characteristics and school environments.

In terms of educational policy, this study may serve as a reference for policymakers in formulating inclusive and sustainable religious character education policies. The proposed cross-institutional approach offers an alternative implementation model that is relevant for both Islamic schools and public schools.

Accordingly, this study is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of research on character education grounded in religious values, while also enriching educational practices oriented toward the formation of students who are religious, possess strong character, and are competitive in the context of global education.

Method

The research approach employed in this study is a descriptive quantitative approach. This approach was selected to obtain an empirical overview of the strengthening of religious values through character education among students by means of systematic and objective measurement. The descriptive quantitative approach enables researchers to present the level of students' religious value attainment based on numerical data analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques (Sugiyono, 2021, p. 35).

The research design adopted in this study is an evaluative survey design, which aims to assess the implementation and outcomes of strengthening religious values within the context of character education in schools. This design is considered appropriate as it provides a framework for collecting data directly from respondents and evaluating the achievements of religious character education programs implemented in schools (Creswell & Creswell, 2022, p. 178).

The purpose of this study is to describe the level of strengthening of students' religious values through character education and to evaluate the effectiveness of its implementation in two different educational institutional contexts, namely faith-based schools and public schools. This objective is intended to obtain a comprehensive understanding of religious character education practices at the junior high school level.

The evaluation model used in this study is the CIPP model (Context, Input, Process, Product), with a particular focus on the process and product components. This model was

chosen because it is able to provide a comprehensive overview of the implementation of religious character education

as well as the outcomes achieved by students. Process evaluation is used to assess the implementation of religious value reinforcement, while product evaluation is employed to measure changes in students' religious attitudes and behaviors (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2021, p. 92).

This study was conducted at Muhammadiyah 2 Junior High School Karanganyar and State Junior High School 2 Tasikmadu Karanganyar, Central Java. The selection of the research sites was based on differences in institutional characteristics, including religious vision, school culture, and character education policies, thereby providing a relevant context for evaluative analysis.

Instrument validity was examined through content validity by involving experts in religious education and character education. The research instrument, in the form of a questionnaire, was developed based on indicators of religious values and religious character and subsequently assessed for feasibility through expert judgment. Content validity aims to ensure that each item in the instrument appropriately represents the construct being measured (Azwar, 2020, p. 134).

The data collection techniques employed in this study include questionnaires, observations, and documentation. Questionnaires were used to measure the level of students' internalization of religious values, observations were conducted to examine students' religious behaviors during school activities, and documentation was utilized to complement data related to the implementation of character education programs. The use of multiple data collection techniques was intended to enhance the accuracy of the research data (Moleong, 2021, p. 186).

The research procedure began with a preparation stage that included instrument development and the acquisition of research permits. The subsequent stage involved data collection through questionnaire distribution, direct observation, and the collection of supporting documents. The final stage consisted of data analysis using descriptive statistics in the form of percentages, followed by drawing conclusions based on the research findings obtained from both research sites..

Result

The results of this study present a comprehensive overview of the implementation and outcomes of character-based religious value strengthening in SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Karanganyar and SMP Negeri 2 Tasikmadu Karanganyar. Using a systematic evaluation framework, the findings reflect how institutional context, resource readiness, and instructional practices collectively support the development of students' religious character within the school environment.

The analysis further reveals that the strengthening of religious values is not limited to formal instruction, but is embedded in school culture, learning processes, and daily habituation activities. The results provide empirical evidence that character-based religious education, when implemented consistently and supported by school management and teacher commitment, contributes positively to students' attitudes, behaviors, and moral responsibility..

1. Context Evaluation

The context evaluation focused on the alignment of the school vision, the need for

strengthening students' religious values, school policy support, and the school social environment in supporting religious character education.

Table 1. Context Component Scores

Context Components	Maximum Score	Obtained Score	Percentage	Category
Alignment of school vision and mission Very Good	100	88	88%	
Need for strengthening religious values Very Good	100	85	85%	
School policy support	100	82	82%	Good
School social and cultural environment Very Good	100	86	86%	
Average Very Good	100	85.25	85.25%	

The analysis of context scores indicates that both schools possess a strong institutional foundation for strengthening religious values through character education. The school vision and mission have been integrated with religious values, students' needs are clearly identified, and the school environment supports the habituation of religious attitudes in daily activities (Suyanto & Widodo, 2021, p. 45).

2. Input Evaluation

The input evaluation assessed resource readiness, including teacher competence, facilities and infrastructure, curriculum, and school management support.

Table 2. Input Component Scores

Input Components	Maximum Score	Obtained Score	Percentage	Category
Teacher competence	100	84	84%	Good
Facilities and infrastructure	100	80	80%	Good
Curriculum and instructional tools	100	86	86%	Very Good
School management support	100	83	83%	Good
Average Good	100	83.25	83.25%	

The results of the input evaluation indicate that resource readiness is in the good category. Teachers demonstrate adequate pedagogical and religious competence, the curriculum supports the integration of character education, and school management plays an active role in providing facilities that support the strengthening of religious values (Prasetyo & Anwar, 2023, p. 134).

3. Process Evaluation

The process evaluation focused on instructional implementation, religious habituation, teacher role modeling, and student involvement in religious activities.

Table 3. Process Component Scores

Process Components	Maximum Score	Obtained Score	Percentage	Category
Implementation of character-based learning	100	87	87%	Very Good
Habituation of religious activities	100	89	89%	Very Good
Teacher role modeling	100	85	85%	Very Good
Active student participation	100	83	83%	Good
Average	100	86	86%	Very Good

The process scores indicate that the implementation of religious character education has been effective. Learning activities and religious habituation are conducted consistently, teachers function as role models, and students are actively involved in school religious activities (Rahmawati & Hidayat, 2021, p. 98).

4. Product Evaluation

The product evaluation measured the outcomes of strengthening religious values as reflected in students' attitudes, behaviors, and religious responsibility.

Table 4. Product Component Scores

Product Components	Maximum Score	Obtained Score	Percentage	Category
Students' religious attitudes	100	88	88%	Very Good
Religious behavior in daily life	100	85	85%	Very Good
Moral and social responsibility	100	82	82%	Good
Consistency of religious practices	100	84	84%	Good
Average	100	84.75	84.75%	
Very Good				

The product evaluation results indicate a tangible improvement in students' religious attitudes and behaviors. Character education grounded in religious values contributes to the formation of positive habits and moral responsibility among students within the school environment (Ma'arif, 2022, p. 56).

5. Recapitulation of CIPP Evaluation Results

Table 5. Recapitulation of CIPP Evaluation Results

CIPP Components	Percentage	Category
Context	85.25%	Very Good
Input	83.25%	Good
Process	86%	Very Good
Product	84.75%	Very Good

Average	84.81%	Very Good
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The CIPP recapitulation shows that the program for strengthening religious values through character education falls into the very good category. The context and process components provide dominant contributions to program success, while the input and product components demonstrate consistent and sustainable outcomes (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2021, p. 92).

The findings of this study indicate that the strengthening of religious values through character-based education has been implemented effectively in both SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Karanganyar and SMP Negeri 2 Tasikmadu Karanganyar. The evaluation results show that institutional context, including school vision, policy support, and social environment, provides a strong foundation for the integration of religious character education. This condition enables schools to systematically foster students' religious awareness and moral development within formal learning activities.

Furthermore, the results reveal that the availability of competent teachers, relevant curricula, and supportive management contributes significantly to the quality of program implementation. The learning process emphasizes habituation, exemplary behavior, and active student participation, which supports the internalization of religious values in everyday school life. These findings confirm that effective character education requires not only instructional strategies but also consistent practices reinforced by educators' role modeling.

In addition, the product evaluation demonstrates positive outcomes in students' religious attitudes, behaviors, and moral responsibility. The observed improvements suggest that character-based religious education has a meaningful impact on shaping students' personal and social conduct. Overall, the results highlight the importance of integrated educational efforts that align institutional commitment, instructional processes, and evaluation mechanisms to achieve sustainable character development outcomes.

Discussion

The strengthening of religious values through character education in both schools demonstrates high effectiveness due to institutional visions aligned with religious values. The school environment functions as a conducive social space for shaping students' religious habits.

Input readiness in the form of teacher competence and a curriculum integrated with character values reinforces program implementation. Teachers serve not only as instructors but also as models of religious behavior for students.

Learning processes that emphasize habituation and role modeling constitute key factors in the success of religious value reinforcement. Regular religious activities gradually foster value internalization among students.

Product outcomes indicate improvements in students' religious attitudes and moral responsibility. These findings are consistent with character education theory, which emphasizes coherence between knowledge, attitudes, and actions (Kurniawan, 2020, p. 112).

A comparison between faith-based schools and public schools indicates that institutional differences do not hinder the strengthening of religious values when managerial commitment and supportive school culture are present.

The CIPP evaluation model proves relevant for assessing the success of religious character education programs, as it systematically captures both processes and outcomes.

The findings enrich the discourse on character education by reaffirming the importance of integrating religious values across all aspects of school management.

The findings of this study confirm that the strengthening of religious values through character-based education is highly dependent on the alignment between institutional vision, resource readiness, and the consistency of implementation within the school environment. The positive interaction among contextual support, adequate inputs, and well-managed learning processes has contributed significantly to the effective internalization of religious values among students. These results reinforce the view that character education rooted in religious values is not merely instructional in nature, but requires a holistic and systemic approach involving school leadership, teachers, and the broader school culture.

Furthermore, the discussion highlights that sustainable outcomes in students' religious attitudes and behaviors emerge when character education is integrated into daily practices and reinforced through role modeling and habituation. The use of the CIPP evaluation model has provided a comprehensive framework for understanding both the strengths and areas for improvement of the program, ensuring that educational interventions are evidence-based and contextually relevant. Accordingly, this study underscores the importance of continuous evaluation and institutional commitment in maintaining the effectiveness of religious character education in diverse school settings.

Conclusion

The strengthening of religious values through character education among students at Muhammadiyah 2 Junior High School Karanganyar and State Junior High School 2 Tasikmadu Karanganyar falls within the very good category based on the CIPP evaluation.

Supportive institutional contexts constitute the primary foundation for the success of

religious value reinforcement programs in both schools.

Input readiness in the form of teacher competence, curriculum, and management support strengthens the implementation of religious character education.

Consistent learning processes and religious habituation have a positive impact on students' religious attitudes and behaviors.

The findings confirm that character education grounded in religious values is effective in shaping students who are religious and morally responsible.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that the strengthening of religious values through character-based education has been effectively implemented in both SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Karanganyar and SMP Negeri 2 Tasikmadu Karanganyar. The findings indicate that supportive institutional contexts, adequate resource inputs, and well-structured learning processes collectively contribute to the successful internalization of religious values among students. This suggests that character education grounded in religious principles can function optimally when it is systematically embedded within school policies and practices.

Moreover, the positive outcomes observed in students' religious attitudes, behaviors, and moral responsibility reflect the significance of consistent habituation and teacher role modeling in the educational process. The integration of religious values into daily school activities has proven to be a key factor in shaping students' character in a sustainable manner. These results affirm the relevance of comprehensive character education approaches that emphasize coherence between instructional objectives and lived experiences within the school environment.

Finally, the application of the CIPP evaluation model has provided a holistic understanding of program effectiveness by capturing the interrelationship between context, input, process, and product components. The insights generated from this evaluation offer valuable implications for educational stakeholders in designing, implementing, and refining character education programs based on religious values. Future initiatives should therefore prioritize continuous evaluation and institutional commitment to ensure the long-term impact and adaptability of religious character education across diverse educational settings.

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