

Strategic Internalization of Islamic Ethics in School Culture: A Qualitative Analysis of Religious Education Practices at Vocational High School Annuraniyah Sulang

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ABSTRACT

Educational development is not only oriented toward students' intellectual abilities, but also plays a crucial role in shaping character and morals. From an Islamic perspective, education aims to produce individuals who are faithful, pious, knowledgeable, and possess noble character, so educational success is measured not only by academic achievement but also by the ability to implement moral and ethical values in daily life. Islamic Religious Education has a strategic role in this regard. In the era of globalization and technological advancement, moral challenges such as declining respect, individualism, low discipline, and misuse of social media have emerged, demanding a more contextual approach to religious education. One effective approach is through school culture as a system of values, norms, and habits that internalize Islamic ethics through habituation, role modeling, and social interaction. Although studies on religious school culture show a positive influence on character, research on the internalization of Islamic ethics in vocational high schools remains limited. This study aims to analyze the internalization of Islamic ethics through school culture at Vocational High School Annuraniyah Sulang. The school integrates Islamic values through activities such as the recitation of Asmaul Husna, congregational prayers, charity, student kultum, and character habituation in both academic and non-academic activities. The research focuses on the forms of internalization, strategies used, supporting and inhibiting factors, and their contribution to students' character development. The findings are expected to provide a theoretical contribution to Islamic education studies and serve as a basis for school policy evaluation in strengthening character education based on Islamic values.

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Introduction

Educational development is a process that is not only oriented toward students' intellectual growth, but also has an important function in shaping character and morals. From an Islamic perspective, education aims to produce individuals who are faithful, pious, knowledgeable, and possess noble character. Therefore, the success of education is not measured solely by academic achievement, but also by students' ability to implement moral and ethical values in daily life. Islamic Religious Education holds a strategic position in building students' character because it contains values related to the relationship between humans and Allah SWT, with fellow human beings, and with the surrounding environment (Majid & Andayani, 2017; Nata, 2019).

The advancement of information technology and globalization has brought various changes to society. On one hand, these developments provide easy access to information and broaden students' horizons. On the other hand, they also present moral challenges that affect the behavior of the younger generation, such as declining respect for teachers, increasing individualistic behavior, low discipline, and the misuse of social media. In line with this phenomenon, Rokhmah, Rizal, and Azis (2025) explain that the moral crisis among adolescents requires a religious education approach that is more contextual and addresses students' self-awareness. Through the implementation of Islamic mindfulness in PAI learning, students are encouraged to improve self-control, spiritual awareness, and the ability to reflect on their behavior, thereby reducing various moral deviations among adolescents. This phenomenon indicates that strengthening character education has become an urgent need in the national education system.

Character education in Islam cannot be separated from the concept of *akhlak*. *Akhlak* is the manifestation of faith values reflected in a person's behavior. It is not merely understood as knowledge of right and wrong, but also as habits internalized within an individual that encourage spontaneous behavior. Therefore, the formation of *akhlak* requires a continuous process of value internalization through a conducive educational environment (Nata, 2019; Zubaedi, 2017).

One approach considered effective in shaping students' character is through school culture. School culture refers to the system of values, norms, beliefs, traditions, and habits that develop within the school environment and serve as behavioral guidelines for all school members. School culture plays an important role in creating an educational climate that supports character development because students do not only acquire values through formal learning, but also through daily social experiences (Abdullah et al., 2019; Hidayatullah, 2023).

In the context of Islamic education, school culture can serve as a strategic medium for internalizing Islamic ethics. Internalization is the gradual process of instilling values so that they become part of an individual's personality. This process occurs not only through the delivery of learning materials, but also through habituation, role modeling, reinforcement of rules, and social interactions within the school environment (Muhaimin, 2012; Suyatno, Wantini, & Baidi, 2021).

Various studies show that religious school culture has a positive influence on students' character development. Religious programs such as congregational prayers, *tadarus Al-Qur'an*, social-religious activities, and habituation of Islamic behavior have been proven to improve discipline, responsibility, and students' spiritual awareness. However, most previous studies have focused on the implementation of religious programs without explaining in depth how the process of Islamic ethics internalization takes place in school life (Nurhayati, 2022; Wulandari et al., 2025).

Furthermore, studies on the internalization of Islamic ethics in vocational high schools remain relatively limited. Most prior research has been conducted in *madrasahs* or Islamic elementary schools. In fact, SMK students are in adolescence, a phase that involves more complex social and moral developmental challenges. Therefore, research is needed to explain how school culture contributes to the formation of Islamic ethics among students at the vocational high school level (Fadilah & Kurnia, 2024).

Vocational High School Annuraniyah Sulang is one of the educational institutions that seeks to integrate general education with Islamic values through various character-building programs. Based on preliminary observations, the school implements several religious activities as part of its school culture, such as the recitation of *Asmaul Husna* before learning, congregational prayers, charity, student *kultum*, habituation of greeting, and character-building programs. These programs aim not only to improve students' religious understanding, but also to shape behavior in accordance with Islamic values.

Another distinctive feature of Vocational High School Annuraniyah Sulang is the effort to integrate Islamic values into both academic and non-academic activities. Teachers act not only as instructors, but also as role models in practicing Islamic ethical values. In addition, the school environment is designed to support the development of a religious culture through

various symbols and habits that reflect the school's Islamic identity. Based on this background, this study focuses on four research questions: (1) what are the forms of Islamic ethics internalization in the school culture at Vocational High School Annuraniyah Sulang; (2) what strategies are used by the school to internalize Islamic ethics; (3) what are the supporting and inhibiting factors in the internalization of Islamic ethics; and (4) how does the internalization of Islamic ethics contribute to students' character development. This study is expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of Islamic education studies, particularly regarding the internalization of Islamic ethics through school culture. In addition, the findings are expected to serve as material for school policy evaluation and development in strengthening character education based on Islamic values.

Research Methods

This study used a qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the process of Islamic ethics internalization within the school culture through the implementation of Islamic Religious Education at Vocational High School Annuraniyah Sulang. The case study design was used because the research focused on one specific location that has distinctive characteristics in the implementation of Islamic school culture (Sugiyono, 2023).

The research was conducted at Annuraniyah Sulang Vocational High School, located in Sulang District, Rembang Regency, Central Java. The location was selected based on the consideration that the school has various religious programs integrated into both academic and non-academic activities, making it relevant to the focus of this study.

Research informants were selected using purposive sampling technique by considering their involvement in the implementation of school culture programs and religious education. The informants consisted of the principal, the vice principal for student affairs, two Islamic Religious Education teachers, two homeroom teachers, and six students who actively participated in the school's religious activities (Sugiyono, 2023).

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Interviews were used to obtain information regarding Islamic ethics internalization strategies, the implementation of school culture, and the supporting and inhibiting factors. Observation was conducted to observe religious activities, social interactions among school members, and the implementation of Islamic values in daily school life. Documentation was used to complement the data in the form of school regulations, religious activity programs, activity schedules, activity photographs, and other supporting documents (Sugiyono, 2023).

Data analysis used the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of three stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data condensation was carried out by selecting data relevant to the research focus. The data were then displayed in the form of narratives and thematic tables to facilitate interpretation. The final stage was drawing conclusions based on patterns, themes, and relationships among the research findings (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2018).

Data validity was tested through source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from the principal, teachers, and students. Technique triangulation was conducted by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. In addition, member checking was conducted by asking informants to confirm the results of the transcribed interviews (Miles et al., 2018; Sugiyono, 2023).

Results and Discussion

Based on the research conducted at Vocational High School Annuraniyah Sulang, it was found that the process of Islamic ethics internalization has become an integral part of the school culture developed in a planned, systematic, and sustainable manner. This internalization is not only realized through formal learning in Islamic Religious Education subjects, but is also implemented through various daily activities that involve all school

members. These findings indicate that the school does not only function as an institution that transfers knowledge, but also as an educational environment that actively plays a role in shaping students' character, attitudes, and behavior in accordance with Islamic values (Arifin, 2021; Suyatno et al., 2021). The school culture that develops at Vocational High School Annuraniyah Sulang becomes an effective medium in the process of instilling values because students gain direct experience in practicing Islamic teachings in daily life. Various programs that are carried out consistently make religious values not stop at the cognitive aspect or mere knowledge, but develop into awareness that influences students' mindset, attitudes, and actions. Thus, the educational process that takes place does not only produce students who understand Islamic concepts theoretically, but also those who are able to apply them in social and academic life (Yusuf, 2021; Hidayatullah, 2023).

The results of observations show that religious culture has become a distinctive feature of school life. Religious activities are not only carried out at certain moments, but have become habits that accompany the entire educational process. Every morning before learning activities begin, students carry out the recitation of Asmaul Husna and collective prayer. This activity becomes one of the means to build a religious atmosphere while preparing the psychological condition of students to be more ready to participate in learning. Based on interviews with teachers and students, this activity has a positive impact on inner peace, learning concentration, and increased spiritual awareness of students (Syafri, 2023).

In addition to the recitation of Asmaul Husna, the school also carries out *tadarus Al-Qur'an* regularly on certain days. This activity aims to improve students' ability to read the Qur'an while fostering students' love for the holy book as a guide to life. From field observations, it can be seen that students show quite high enthusiasm in participating in this activity. Some students expressed that the habit of reading the Qur'an at school encourages them to continue similar activities at home. This shows that the religious culture applied by the school is able to have an influence on the family environment of students (Maulida, 2023).

The Dhuha prayer and congregational Dhuhur prayer programs are also an important part of the Islamic ethics internalization process. All students are required to participate in these activities with the assistance of teachers and student organization administrators. Congregational prayer activities not only aim to improve the quality of worship, but also become a means of learning social values. In its implementation, students learn about the importance of time discipline, compliance with rules, togetherness, and respect for the prayer leader. This experience indirectly trains students to understand the importance of order and responsibility in daily life (Nurhayati, 2022; Kosasih et al., 2026).

These findings indicate that religious habituation is the main strategy used by the school in internalizing Islamic ethics. Habituation has an important role because character is not formed instantly, but through a process that takes place continuously. When a behavior is carried out repeatedly in a supportive environment, that behavior will develop into a habit which in the end forms an individual's character. In this context, the school functions as a social environment that consistently provides positive stimulus to students so that Islamic values can be deeply embedded.

The results of this study are in line with the concept of value internalization put forward by Muhaimin (2012) which explains that the process of instilling values takes place through the stages of value transformation, value transaction, and value transinternalization. The transformation stage occurs when students receive information about values that are considered good. Furthermore, the transaction stage takes place through interaction between students and teachers as well as the school environment. Meanwhile, the transinternalization stage occurs when the values learned have become integrated within the individual and are reflected in daily behavior. Based on the research findings, various religious programs implemented at Vocational High School Annuraniyah Sulang show that the internalization process has reached the transinternalization stage, which is marked by the emergence of positive habits in students without always having to be reminded by teachers.

In addition to religious habituation, the school also develops various social activities that aim to instill values of care for others. One of the programs routinely implemented is charity.

This program requires students to set aside part of their allowance to help people in need and to support the school's social activities. Based on interview results, most students admitted that this activity makes them better understand the meaning of sharing and the importance of helping others. They no longer view alms as merely an obligation, but as a form of social care that must become part of daily life (Barry et al., 2025).

The implementation of the charity program shows that Islamic education applied in the school does not only focus on the formation of individual piety, but also emphasizes the importance of social piety. Students are guided to understand that the relationship with Allah SWT must be balanced with good relationships with fellow human beings. Thus, values such as empathy, solidarity, mutual cooperation, and social care can develop optimally. These findings indicate that the internalization of Islamic ethics at Vocational High School Annuraniyah Sulang is not only oriented toward ritual worship aspects, but also includes the social dimension which is an important part of Islamic teachings (Rahman, 2022).

Another school culture that has an important role in the formation of students' ethics is the implementation of the 5S culture, namely Senyum, Salam, Sapa, Sopan, dan Santun (Smile, Greeting, Addressing, Polite, and Courteous). Based on observation results, this culture has become a habit carried out by all school members. Students are accustomed to greeting teachers when passing by, saying greetings when entering a room, using polite language when communicating, and showing respect to teachers and peers. These habits create a school atmosphere that is harmonious and full of appreciation (Hadi & Prayogi, 2025).

In the perspective of Islamic education, the 5S culture reflects the implementation of adab values which are one of the main foundations of character formation. According to Nata (2019), good akhlak is not only related to the relationship between humans and God, but is also reflected in social behavior that shows respect, courtesy, and appreciation for others. Therefore, the 5S culture can be understood as a concrete form of Islamic ethics internalization applied in students' daily lives (Anwar, 2021).

Another factor that greatly determines the success of Islamic ethics internalization is teacher role modeling. Based on the research results, teachers are seen as figures who have great influence on students' behavior. Teachers do not only act as deliverers of learning material, but also as real examples in the application of Islamic values. Attitudes of discipline, responsibility, honesty, simplicity, and courtesy shown by teachers become a very effective source of learning for students.

Most students stated that they more easily understand the importance of a value when they directly see examples of its application in daily life. When teachers show disciplined behavior by being present on time, students are encouraged to do the same. When teachers show honest and responsible attitudes, students gain a concrete picture of how these values are applied in real life. This condition shows that role modeling has a very large influence on the process of forming students' character.

These findings are in accordance with Bandura's Social Learning Theory which explains that individuals learn behavior through the process of observation and imitation of figures who are considered important. In the context of Islamic education, teachers have the function as *uswah hasanah* who provide real examples for students. Therefore, the success of character education does not only depend on the quality of the material taught, but is also determined by the quality of role modeling displayed by educators.

In addition to habituation and role modeling, the research results also show that there is integration of Islamic values in the entire learning process. This finding is in line with research by Achmad Abdul Azis (2024) which explains that the integration of religious moderation values in Islamic Religious Education learning is able to strengthen students' character through the instillation of values of tolerance, responsibility, social care, moderate attitude, and habituation of religious behavior in daily life. The integration of these values does not only take place in PAI subjects, but also through school culture and various learning activities that support the formation of the Profil Pelajar Pancasila. Teachers do not limit character education only to Islamic Religious Education subjects, but integrate moral values in various other subjects. The values of honesty, discipline, hard work, responsibility, and social care are linked

to the material being taught so that students understand that Islamic teachings have relevance to all aspects of life.

The integration of values in learning becomes an effective strategy because it allows students to see the relevance between knowledge and religious values. Learning is not only oriented toward academic achievement, but is also directed at forming strong character. Thus, students gain more meaningful learning experiences because they understand that academic success must be accompanied by good moral quality (Hasanah, 2022).

Overall, the research results show that the internalization of Islamic ethics through school culture at Vocational High School Annuraniyah Sulang provides a real impact on the development of students' character. This impact is seen in increased discipline, compliance with school rules, awareness of carrying out worship, responsibility in completing assignments, ability to communicate politely, and increased care for others. These changes do not occur instantly, but through a process of habituation that is carried out continuously in a supportive school environment.

The findings of this study confirm that school culture based on Islamic values can be an effective instrument in shaping students' character. This success shows that character education is not enough to be done through the delivery of learning materials alone, but requires an environment that is able to present real experiences in applying the values taught. Therefore, religious school culture can be seen as one of the relevant and effective strategies in strengthening character education at the vocational high school level (Fadilah & Kurnia, 2024; Putra, 2024). In addition to the various programs that have been implemented, the research results also show that the success of Islamic ethics internalization at Vocational High School Annuraniyah Sulang is inseparable from the role of school organizational culture that supports the creation of a religious educational environment. This organizational culture is reflected in the vision, mission, policies, and various activities designed to strengthen character formation. Based on interviews with the principal and teachers, all programs related to character development are not carried out incidentally, but have become part of school planning that is integrated with the educational goals of the institution. With a shared vision among all school members, the process of instilling values can take place in a more directed and sustainable manner.

This condition shows that school culture does not only function as a background for educational activities, but also becomes an instrument that actively influences students' mindset and behavior. An environment that consistently displays religious values will form habits that in the end become character. When students interact every day in an environment that upholds discipline, courtesy, responsibility, and religious values, they will more easily internalize these values compared to students who are in an environment that is less supportive of character formation.

Based on observations, the involvement of all school members becomes one of the factors that strengthen the success of religious culture. The principal acts as the policy director, teachers function as implementers as well as role models, while educational staff also support through services that reflect Islamic values. Even students are also actively involved in various religious activities through school organizations and extracurricular activities. This comprehensive involvement creates an educational climate that allows the value internalization process to take place collectively.

The research results also show that religious activities carried out at school not only have an impact on increasing students' religiosity, but also influence the formation of a culture of discipline. This is seen in the increased compliance of students with school regulations, punctuality in participating in teaching and learning activities, and awareness to carry out the duties and responsibilities given. Based on statements from several teachers, students who actively participate in religious activities tend to have a better level of discipline than before. They are easier to direct, more responsible for academic obligations, and show a more positive attitude in interacting with the school environment.

This phenomenon shows that religious values and discipline have a close relationship. In the perspective of Islamic education, discipline is part of the implementation of the values of

amanah and responsibility taught in religious teachings. Therefore, various religious activities applied by the school indirectly contribute to the formation of disciplined behavior. This finding strengthens the view that character education based on religious values has a broad scope because it is able to influence various aspects of students' behavior.

In addition to having an impact on discipline, the internalization of Islamic ethics also influences the development of students' social skills. Based on interviews, several students admitted to becoming more confident in interacting with teachers and friends after getting used to participating in various religious and social activities organized by the school. Programs such as student kultum, religious discussions, social service activities, and cooperation in implementing religious activities provide opportunities for students to develop communication skills, leadership, and cooperation.

This development of social skills shows that the internalization of Islamic ethics does not only produce individuals who are ritually obedient, but also forms students who have good social skills. In Islam, akhlak is not only related to the relationship between humans and Allah SWT, but also includes relationships with fellow human beings. Therefore, the success of Islamic education can be seen from students' ability to build harmonious social relationships, respect others, and show empathy and care for their surroundings.

Another interesting finding in this study is the existence of behavioral changes in students that are perceived not only by teachers, but also by parents. Based on information obtained from school documentation and interview results, several parents conveyed that their children become more diligent in worship, more polite in speaking, and more responsible for tasks at home after participating in various character-building programs at school. Although these changes do not occur uniformly in all students, these indications show that the value internalization process that takes place at school has an impact that extends to the family environment.

This condition shows that a strong school culture is able to create a value transfer effect outside the school environment. The values obtained by students are not only applied when they are at school, but are also brought into daily life. This becomes an important indicator that the internalization process has been running effectively because the values learned do not stop in the context of formal education, but have become part of students' behavior in various life situations.

Nevertheless, this study also found that the process of Islamic ethics internalization faces various challenges that need to get attention. One of the most dominant challenges is the influence of digital technology development and social media. Teachers revealed that students today have very broad access to various information through the internet. On one hand this condition provides benefits in supporting the learning process, but on the other hand it also presents various content that has the potential to conflict with the values taught at school.

Based on interview results, several teachers stated that students are sometimes more easily influenced by trends that develop on social media compared to advice given by teachers or parents. This situation shows that schools need to develop more adaptive strategies in facing the developments of the times. Character education can no longer be done only through conventional approaches, but must be able to utilize technology as a means to strengthen the cultivation of positive values.

In addition to the influence of social media, differences in family backgrounds also become a challenge in the value internalization process. This condition shows the importance of synergy between school and family in the process of forming students' character. Research by Azis and colleagues (2025) emphasizes that collaboration between teachers and parents is an important factor in strengthening adolescent moral education, especially in the digital era which is marked by the high influence of social media on students' behavior. Through intensive communication and joint supervision, the value internalization process can take place more effectively and sustainably. Not all students come from family environments that have the same attention to religious education. Some students receive intensive value reinforcement at home, while others have different experiences. This difference in conditions causes the level of acceptance and application of values among students to vary.

Although there are various challenges, the research results show that in general the Islamic ethics internalization program applied at Vocational High School Annuraniyah Sulang is able to provide a positive impact on the formation of students' character. This success is shown through behavioral changes that can be observed directly, both in aspects of religiosity, discipline, responsibility, courtesy, and social care. These findings strengthen the view that school culture is one of the factors that has a significant influence on the success of character education.

More broadly, the results of this study indicate that the internalization of Islamic ethics will run more effectively if carried out through a comprehensive approach. Classroom learning, religious habituation, teacher role modeling, school regulations, and parental involvement need to be combined in one system that supports each other. When all these components run synergistically, the process of instilling values not only produces short-term behavioral changes, but is also able to form character that is embedded in students until the future.

Thus, school culture based on Islamic values can be seen as an educational strategy that is relevant in facing various moral and social challenges that develop in the modern era. Through a strong school culture, students are not only equipped with academic competence, but also have a strong moral foundation so that they are able to face various changes of the times without losing their identity and Islamic values. This finding also confirms that character education based on school culture is a very important long-term investment in forming a generation with noble character, integrity, and high social responsibility.

Conclusion

This study shows that the internalization of Islamic ethics at Vocational High School Annuraniyah Sulang is carried out through school culture that is integrated with various educational activities. The internalization process takes place through religious habituation, teacher role modeling, integration of Islamic values in learning, and strengthening school regulations based on religious values. Various activities such as the recitation of Asmaul Husna, congregational prayers, charity, the 5S culture (Senyum, Salam, Sapa, Sopan, dan Santun - Smile, Greeting, Addressing, Polite, and Courteous), and continuous character building become the main means in instilling Islamic ethical values. The strategies implemented by the school have proven to be able to shape students' character, particularly in aspects of discipline, responsibility, honesty, courtesy, and social care. The success of Islamic ethics internalization is supported by the commitment of school leadership, synergy among teachers, support from the foundation, availability of worship facilities, and parental involvement in the character-building process. On the other hand, the influence of social media, peer environments outside of school, and differences in family backgrounds are challenges that affect the effectiveness of the value internalization process.

Overall, this study affirms that school culture built on Islamic values can be an effective instrument in shaping students' religious character. Therefore, strengthening Islamic school culture needs to be carried out continuously through collaboration among school, family, and community.

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