

# Student Character Development Model Based on Religious Values at MAN 1 Ngawi

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## ABSTRACT

Character education has become a major concern in Islamic educational institutions due to increasing challenges related to moral degradation, declining discipline, and weakening ethical values among students. Although numerous studies have examined the implementation of character education, limited research has focused on developing a comprehensive model of student character formation based on religious values at the Madrasah Aliyah level. This study aimed to formulate a Student Character Development Model Based on Religious Values at MAN 1 Ngawi. The research employed a qualitative case study design involving the principal, teachers, school leaders, and students as research participants. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis and were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The findings reveal that student character development is achieved through a systematic process of religious value internalization involving value understanding, value feeling, religious habituation, role modeling, active participation, and continuous evaluation. The process is supported by school culture, family involvement, religious institutions, community participation, and educational leadership. The resulting model contributes to the development of religious character, integrity, responsibility, discipline, social care, and leadership among students. The study concludes that religious value-based character education requires an integrated and collaborative approach to ensure sustainable character formation in Islamic educational institutions.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Character education has become one of the central issues in contemporary education due to increasing concerns regarding moral degradation, student indiscipline, violence, intolerance, and the weakening of ethical values among young generations. Educational institutions are expected not only to develop students' cognitive competencies but also to cultivate moral, spiritual, and social responsibility. In the context of Islamic education, madrasahs have a strategic role in fostering students' character through the internalization of religious values integrated into learning activities, school culture, and daily habituation (Munandar, 2025; Jakandar, 2025). Character formation based on religious values is considered essential because religious teachings provide ethical guidance that shapes students' behavior, attitudes, and personality in everyday life (Djuaini, 2025). Recent studies have highlighted the importance of religious values in character education. Munawir (2024) found that character development is strengthened through teacher role models, value internalization, and continuous evaluation in Islamic education learning. Likewise, Maarif (2024) demonstrated that the habituation of Islamic values contributes significantly to the formation of students' moral awareness and ethical behavior. Other studies emphasized that school culture plays a crucial role in embedding character values such as religiosity, honesty, discipline, and responsibility (Kasim, 2026; Priatmoko, 2025). Furthermore, Jakandar (2025) argued that the integration of religious values into character

education can foster integrity, social awareness, and noble character among students. These studies collectively indicate that religious values remain a fundamental foundation for character development within Islamic educational institutions. Although previous studies have extensively discussed religious character education, most research has focused on the implementation, internalization, and management of character education programs. Research by Priatmoko (2025) examined religious character education in a pesantren-based madrasah, while Munandar (2025) investigated the integration of character values into Islamic Religious Education learning. Similarly, Kasim (2026) explored school culture as a medium for character education, and Komala (2025) developed a character education model based on Islamic adab values in Madrasah Tsanawiyah. However, limited studies have specifically formulated a comprehensive model of student character development based on religious values at the Madrasah Aliyah level, particularly in the context of MAN 1 Ngawi. Existing studies tend to explain practices and implementation rather than constructing an integrated model that describes the interaction among school culture, leadership, teachers, learning processes, religious activities, and student participation in shaping character. This condition reveals a research gap. First, there is a conceptual gap because previous studies focus more on character education implementation than on model development. Second, there is an empirical gap because research on religious value-based character development in Madrasah Aliyah remains limited. Third, there is a contextual gap because MAN 1 Ngawi possesses distinctive religious, cultural, and educational characteristics that may produce a unique model of character development not identified in previous studies. Therefore, this study offers novelty by constructing a Student Character Development Model Based on Religious Values at MAN 1 Ngawi, which integrates religious values, school culture, teacher exemplarity, habituation programs, student organizations, and educational leadership into a comprehensive framework.

MAN 1 Ngawi was selected as the research site because it has a distinctive religious culture that is consistently reinforced through daily Islamic practices and the Rohis (Islamic Spiritual Organization) extracurricular program, which plays an active role in character development. The principal of MAN 1 Ngawi stated that strengthening students' religious character is a strategic priority integrated into both academic and extracurricular activities to foster morally responsible and spiritually grounded graduates (Principal of MAN 1 Ngawi, personal communication, 2026). Based on the aforementioned issues, the main problem addressed in this study is how the process of student character development based on religious values is implemented at MAN 1 Ngawi and how the interaction among educational components contributes to the formation of students' character. To address this problem, this study employs a qualitative case study approach to explore deeply the experiences, practices, and strategies implemented by school stakeholders in developing students' character through religious values. The objective of this study is to formulate a comprehensive model of student character development based on religious values at MAN 1 Ngawi. The expected contribution of this research is both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, the study enriches the literature on character education and Islamic education by proposing a contextual model of character development. Practically, the findings are expected to provide recommendations for madrasah leaders, teachers, and policymakers in designing effective strategies for strengthening student character through religious values in Islamic educational institutions.

## 2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore and develop a student character development model based on religious values at MAN 1 Ngawi. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables an in-depth understanding of social phenomena, values, behaviors, and educational practices that shape students' character within the natural setting of the madrasah. The research was

conducted at MAN 1 Ngawi, an Islamic senior secondary school under the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, which actively implements religious programs and character education through curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities. The research subjects consisted of the principal, vice principals, teachers of Islamic Religious Education, homeroom teachers, guidance and counseling teachers, student organization advisors, and selected students who were directly involved in character development activities. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, including school policies, character education programs, activity reports, and institutional documents. The selection of informants was conducted using purposive sampling based on their involvement, knowledge, and experience in implementing religious value-based character education. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, encompassing data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed source triangulation, technique triangulation, prolonged engagement, member checking, and peer debriefing. Through these procedures, the research sought to generate a comprehensive understanding of the processes, strategies, supporting factors, challenges, and interactions among educational stakeholders in developing students' character based on religious values at MAN 1 Ngawi.

Data were collected from 12 purposively selected informants, comprising one principal (KS), two vice principals (WK1–WK2), three Islamic Education teachers (G1–G3), and six students (S1–S6). Participants were selected based on their direct involvement in implementing Project-Based Learning (PjBL) integrated with Islamic values. The principal and vice principals represented institutional leadership, the teachers had at least five years of teaching experience and actively implemented PjBL, while the students had participated in at least two PjBL activities, were actively involved in school religious programs, and were recommended by teachers as information-rich participants. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis. Interviews focused on the integration of Islamic values into PjBL, learning implementation, students' critical thinking development, and implementation challenges, lasting approximately 50–75 minutes and audio-recorded with participants' consent. Non-participant observations were conducted during classroom learning, project activities, and religious programs, while document analysis included the Madrasah Work Plan (RKM), annual academic program, lesson plans (Modul Ajar), student regulations, project reports, worship monitoring books, curriculum meeting minutes, and school documentation. These multiple data sources enabled methodological triangulation, thereby enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The development of student character based on religious values has become an increasingly important issue in contemporary education, particularly in Islamic educational institutions that are expected to produce graduates with not only academic excellence but also strong moral and spiritual integrity. The rapid advancement of technology, globalization, and social change has created new challenges for schools in cultivating students' ethical behavior, discipline, responsibility, and social awareness. Recent studies indicate that religious values play a significant role in shaping students' character through the processes of value internalization, habituation, exemplary behavior, and the creation of a supportive school culture (Munawir, 2024; Jakandar, 2025). Furthermore, character formation is more effective when religious values are integrated into learning activities, school traditions, extracurricular programs, and educational leadership practices that consistently reinforce moral development (Retnasari, 2023; Shiddiq, 2024). Previous studies have primarily focused on the implementation of character education programs, whereas limited attention has been given to

developing an integrated model that explains how religious values are transformed into students' attitudes and behaviors through systematic educational processes. Therefore, this study proposes a Student Character Development Model Based on Religious Values at MAN 1 Ngawi, which illustrates the interaction among religious values, supporting stakeholders, internalization processes, character transformation, and student character outcomes as a comprehensive framework for strengthening character education in madrasah settings.

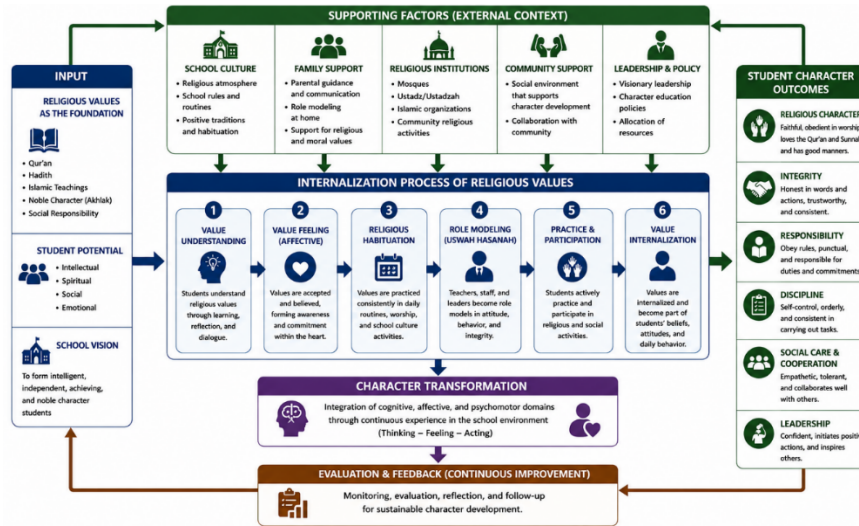


Figure 1. Student Character Development Model Based on Religious Values at MAN 1 Ngawi

**Source:** Developed by the authors based on the theories of religious value internalization by Thomas Lickona, character education through moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action (Lickona, 2021), the value internalization model of Muhaimin (2020), religious habituation theory in Islamic education by Abuddin Nata (2021), and findings from this research at MAN 1 Ngawi.

The Student Character Development Model Based on Religious Values at MAN 1 Ngawi begins with religious values derived from the Qur'an, Hadith, Islamic teachings, noble character (akhlak), and social responsibility as the foundation for student character formation. These values are integrated with students' intellectual, spiritual, social, and emotional potentials within the framework of the madrasah's vision to develop intelligent, independent, and morally upright graduates. Religious values serve as the primary reference that guides all educational activities and character-building programs implemented in the madrasah environment (Muhaimin, 2020). The internalization process starts with value understanding and value feeling, where students acquire knowledge of religious values and develop emotional commitment toward them. This process is strengthened through religious habituation activities such as worship, Qur'anic literacy, and religious traditions that are consistently practiced in daily school life. According to Lickona (2021), effective character education requires the integration of moral knowing and moral feeling before values can be translated into behavior. Furthermore, the model emphasizes the importance of role modeling (uswah hasanah) and active participation in religious and social activities. Teachers, school leaders, and educational staff act as exemplars whose attitudes and behaviors provide practical examples for students to emulate, while participation in various activities enables students to apply religious values in real-life situations. This process reflects the view that character development is strengthened through direct experience, social interaction, and continuous practice within a supportive educational environment (Kristjánsson, 2020). The culmination of the process is character transformation, where religious values become embedded in students' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, resulting in religious character, integrity, responsibility, discipline, social care, and leadership. The success of this

transformation is supported by school culture, family involvement, religious institutions, community support, and effective educational leadership that collectively create a conducive ecosystem for character formation. To ensure sustainability, the model incorporates evaluation and feedback mechanisms through monitoring, reflection, and continuous improvement, allowing character development to remain relevant and effective over time (Berkowitz & Bier, 2022).

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that student character development at MAN 1 Ngawi is not the result of a single educational intervention but rather emerges from a continuous process of religious value internalization embedded within the broader educational ecosystem of the madrasah. The findings indicate that religious values are transmitted through interconnected mechanisms, including classroom learning, religious habituation, teacher role modeling, extracurricular activities, and social interactions among students. This pattern suggests that character formation is strengthened when students repeatedly encounter and practice the same values across different educational contexts. Consequently, religious values function not only as cognitive knowledge but also as behavioral guidelines that shape students' daily attitudes and actions. These findings support Lickona's (1991) framework, which argues that effective character education requires the integration of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Similar arguments have also been advanced by Berkowitz and Bier (2005), who emphasize that character education becomes more effective when moral values are reinforced through the culture and daily practices of educational institutions. The findings further reveal that the effectiveness of religious-based character education lies in its ability to create consistency between values taught in formal instruction and values reinforced through school culture. Previous studies have emphasized the contribution of religious values to students' moral development and religious commitment (Munawir, 2024; Priatmoko et al., 2025). Likewise, character education rooted in religious values has been found to promote integrity, discipline, responsibility, and social awareness among students (Komala & Sukandar, 2025). However, the present study extends these findings by demonstrating that character development is not merely the outcome of exposure to religious content but is shaped by a structured process of value reinforcement occurring across multiple educational settings. The model identified in this research suggests that students are more likely to develop integrity, discipline, responsibility, and social awareness when religious values are continuously reinforced through institutional practices, interpersonal relationships, and participatory experiences.

Another important finding concerns the multidimensional nature of the factors influencing character development. The study reveals that school culture, leadership commitment, family involvement, community participation, and religious institutions collectively contribute to the formation of students' character. This finding supports the ecological systems theory proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979), which argues that individual development is influenced by interactions occurring across multiple environmental systems. Similarly, Epstein (2018) emphasizes that collaboration between schools, families, and communities significantly contributes to students' academic, social, and moral development. Consequently, effective character education requires the alignment of expectations, norms, and values across school, family, and community contexts to provide students with coherent moral guidance. The findings also indicate that leadership plays a strategic role in sustaining religious-based character education. Leadership commitment influences not only the formulation of institutional policies but also the establishment of a school culture that prioritizes moral development. This finding is consistent with Fullan (2014), who argues that educational leadership serves as a catalyst for cultural change and organizational improvement. Through policy support, resource allocation, and the promotion of exemplary behavior among teachers and staff, school leaders create conditions that facilitate the internalization of religious

values. Therefore, leadership functions as a mediating factor connecting institutional vision with everyday educational practices. Study contributes to the literature by proposing a Student Character Development Model Based on Religious Values that integrates cognitive, affective, behavioral, and environmental dimensions within a single conceptual framework. This perspective is consistent with the view of Nucci, Narvaez, and Krettenauer (2014), who argue that character development should be understood as a multidimensional process involving moral cognition, emotional engagement, behavioral practice, and social interaction. Practically, the model provides a comprehensive framework for madrasah leaders, teachers, and policymakers seeking to strengthen character education through religious value internalization, habituation, exemplary leadership, and stakeholder collaboration.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that student character development at MAN 1 Ngawi is formed through a systematic process of religious value internalization that integrates value understanding, emotional acceptance, religious habituation, exemplary behavior (*uswah hasanah*), active participation, and continuous reinforcement within the madrasah environment. The interaction between religious values, school culture, family support, religious institutions, community involvement, and educational leadership contributes significantly to the transformation of students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions, resulting in the development of religious character, integrity, responsibility, discipline, social care, and leadership. The implications of this study indicate that character education in madrasahs should not be limited to classroom instruction but should be implemented through a comprehensive and collaborative approach involving all stakeholders. Furthermore, the proposed model provides both a theoretical framework for understanding religious value-based character formation and a practical reference for educational institutions seeking to strengthen character education programs through sustainable value internalization and continuous evaluation processes.

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