



Implementation of Religious Culture in Developing Students' Interpersonal Intelligence

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Receive: 12/06/2025

Accepted: 02/09/2025

Published: 01/10/2025

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji penerapan budaya religius sebagai pendekatan pendidikan karakter yang kontekstual dan aplikatif untuk mengembangkan kecerdasan interpersonal siswa di MTs Darullughah Wal Karomah. Berangkat dari fenomena merosotnya moral peserta didik akibat program karakter yang masih verbalistik dan simbolis, studi ini menempatkan budaya religius sebagai ekosistem nilai yang menyatu dalam rutinitas harian. Melalui kegiatan keagamaan rutin, pembiasaan, keteladanan guru, serta sistem penghargaan berbasis nilai-nilai Islam, siswa mengalami pembentukan akhlak secara terus-menerus. Dengan desain studi kasus kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan analisis dokumen. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa implementasi budaya religius secara konsisten tidak hanya memperdalam dimensi spiritual siswa, tetapi juga meningkatkan kecerdasan interpersonal melalui empati, kerja sama, komunikasi positif, dan kepemimpinan. Budaya religius terbukti menjadi strategi pendidikan karakter yang efektif, menyeluruh, dan berkelanjutan untuk melahirkan generasi yang toleran, bertanggung jawab, dan berintegritas.

Kata Kunci: Budaya Religius, Kecerdasan Interpersonal, Siswa

Abstract

This study examines the implementation of religious culture as a contextual and applicable character-education approach to developing students' interpersonal intelligence at MTs Darullughah Wal Karomah. Departing from the decline in student morality caused by character programs that remain verbalistic and symbolic, the research positions religious culture as an integrated value ecosystem embedded in daily routines. Through obligatory religious activities, habituation, teacher modelling, and a reward system rooted in Islamic values, students continuously experience moral formation. Employing a qualitative case-study design, data were collected via observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The findings reveal that consistent implementation of religious culture not only deepens students' spiritual dimension but also enhances interpersonal intelligence by fostering empathy, cooperation, positive communication, and leadership skills. Religious culture thus emerges as an effective, comprehensive, and sustainable character-education strategy that produces tolerant, responsible, and integrity-driven generations.

Keywords: Religious Culture, Interpersonal Intelligence, Students

Introduction

The decline of students' moral and character development across all levels of education is a pressing social reality that cannot be ignored (Giroux & Penna, 1979). Amidst the rapid pace of modernization and digitalization, various forms of deviant behavior among students have become increasingly evident (Hanandini, 2024). These include bullying, disrespect towards teachers, a lack of empathy,

and rising intolerance within school environments. Such behaviors highlight the failure of current educational systems to educate the whole person (Kusmawati et al., 2023). The broader cultural shift towards permissiveness and individualism has significantly influenced the values absorbed by students, displacing traditional values such as mutual assistance, courtesy, and respect. Instead, instant gratification, competitiveness, and hedonism

have become more prevalent (Karn & Bhattacharya, 2025).

In response to these challenges, educational institutions have predominantly focused on academic achievement, rankings, and graduation standards, often at the expense of moral and ethical development (Foster, 2016). Curricula are heavily weighted towards cognitive objectives, leaving little room for sustained reflection on values (Davis et al., 2016). As a result, character education often remains a symbolic discourse rather than a lived practice. This orientation prioritizes students' cognitive development while marginalizing the formation of character, moral values, and ethics. Consequently, a significant gap has emerged between the ideal goal of education—to produce knowledgeable and morally sound citizens—and the empirical reality. Many students excel academically but lack empathy, social responsibility, and personal integrity.

The consequences of this moral vacuum extend beyond individual students and impact society as a whole (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2013). Heightened adolescent conflict, identity crises, and weakened social cohesion are some of the broader societal issues that stem from this gap. Formal educational institutions often treat character formation as a secondary concern, focusing instead on meeting administrative requirements and academic benchmarks (Chatzipanagiotou & Katsarou, 2023). This approach leaves little room for contextual, value-based learning. The absence of consistent role modeling by educators and a fragmented school ecosystem that fails to reinforce ethical behavior further exacerbate the problem (Hakim et al., 2023).

Despite character education being formally integrated into the national curriculum, its implementation remains suboptimal (Shuai, 2023). Current approaches are often verbalistic and decontextualized, with moral values taught theoretically rather than through practical experience and habituation. In contrast, MTs Darullughah Wal Karomah offers a compelling alternative by integrating religious culture into daily school life. This approach goes beyond mere religious ritual and is implemented as a comprehensive value ecosystem. Values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, and tolerance are not just preached but are practiced daily through various activities and interactions, creating an immersive environment where ethical habits are ingrained (Hakim et al., 2023).

This study aims to investigate why nationally mandated character education has failed to achieve its intended outcomes and how a contextually grounded, religious-culture approach can bridge the gap between theory and practice. By focusing on MTs Darullughah Wal Karomah, the research will explore how daily routines, teacher modeling, parental involvement, and school policies collectively contribute to a holistic moral learning environment. Specifically, the study will examine how this integrated ecosystem fosters students' interpersonal intelligence and internalizes moral values more effectively than traditional, non-contextual programs.

The research will also evaluate the contributions of various educational stakeholders—teachers, students, parents, and school policies—in creating a holistic character education ecosystem. The goal is to provide a comprehensive picture of how character education can be transformed from a mere concept into a lived reality. By doing so, the study aims to offer a replicable model for educational institutions seeking to enhance their character education programs through a more integrated and contextual approach.

The overarching hypothesis of this study is that the consistent and contextual application of religious culture in MTs Darullughah Wal Karomah significantly enhances students' interpersonal intelligence and the authentic internalization of moral values. This approach is believed to be more effective than normative, non-contextual models of character education. By examining the practical implementation of character education at MTs Darullughah Wal Karomah, the study seeks to provide insights into how educational institutions can better align their practices with the ideal goal of producing morally sound and knowledgeable citizens.

Method

This study was conducted at MTs Darullughah Wal Karomah, an educational institution affiliated with Pondok Pesantren Darullughah Wal Karomah, which integrates religious values into daily school life to foster students' character and social intelligence. Employing a qualitative case study approach, the research aimed to explore how religious culture develops students' interpersonal intelligence at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah level. The qualitative method was chosen for its ability to provide a holistic understanding of complex social

phenomena, particularly the role of religious culture in enhancing students' social skills, as emphasized by Moleong (2021) and supported by Maulana & Budiyo (2024) and Safitri (2024). The case study design allowed for an in-depth investigation of students demonstrating high interpersonal intelligence, focusing on the specific context of a school environment that consistently embeds religious values.

The primary objective was to comprehensively describe the characteristics of the religious culture and its impact on students' interpersonal development, while also identifying influencing factors from the school environment, family, and social interactions. This approach enabled a rich, authentic exploration of the subject from multiple perspectives, as highlighted by Manullang et al (2025) and Ratnaningtyas et al (2023), revealing both internal and external dynamics shaping the relationship between religious culture and students' social intelligence. The study began with formulating specific research questions to deeply uncover unique phenomena in individuals or groups, followed by purposively selecting subjects who exhibited high interpersonal intelligence within a religiously integrated school environment.

The flowchart you uploaded delineates a structured research methodology in Indonesian, encompassing five key stages: Initially, the 'Identification of the Problem' phase involves establishing the research focus and defining the problem's scope. This is followed by the 'Selection of the Subject/Case,' where subjects are chosen based on specific criteria aligned with the research purpose. The subsequent 'Data Collection' phase includes methods such as observation, questionnaires, and documentation. 'Data Analysis' then entails data reduction, presentation, and the drawing of conclusions. The final stage, 'Data Validation,' incorporates triangulation, member checking, and expert review to ensure the reliability of the findings. This flowchart acts as a comprehensive guide, detailing the research process from problem identification to data validation.

The initial step involves determining the subject of study, after which researchers commence data collection, typically employing methods such as direct observation to witness students' behaviors in natural settings like classrooms, during religious activities, or in daily social interactions; in-depth interviews

with students, teachers, parents, and other relevant parties to explore experiences, perceptions, and values ingrained within the subjects; and documentation studies, which might include school records, student portfolios, or institutional policies related to religious activities and character development. The gathered data is then analyzed descriptively and qualitatively through data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing, with researchers identifying patterns, themes, and relationships among factors emerging from various data sources to reveal the meanings behind subjects' behaviors and experiences. Subsequently, data validity is examined using techniques such as triangulation (comparing results from various data sources), member checking (having subjects confirm findings), and persistent observation to ensure the obtained data is valid and accountable. The research process culminates in the compilation of a case study report, detailing the characteristics of religious culture in students' lives, the internalization process of religious values, and their impact on interpersonal intelligence, including the researcher's reflections on the findings, study limitations, and recommendations for educational practice and further research.

Result and Discussion

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of religious culture in schools and its relationship with students' interpersonal intelligence, researchers conducted a series of observations, interviews, and documentation within the school environment under investigation. The collected data was then analyzed descriptively and qualitatively to address the research focus. The field findings were presented in two main parts:

Forms and Strategies of Implementing Religious Culture in Schools

Based on observations, in-depth interviews with school heads, teachers, and students, as well as documentation of activities, it was found that the implementation of religious culture in schools occurs through routine, spontaneous, and modeling activities. The forms of religious activities implemented include routine activities such as Tadarus Al-Qur'an before starting lessons, Dhuha and Zuhur prayers in congregation, Istighosah and collective prayers before exams, and commemorations of

major Islamic holidays (PHBI) such as Maulid Nabi, Isra Mi'raj, and Nuzulul Qur'an.

As expressed by Ustadz Hasan Alhamdulillah, the school consistently implements several religious activities that become part of students' routines. In the morning before classes begin, all students take turns reciting Al-Qur'an in their respective classes. After that, before the first lesson starts, the teacher will lead a collective prayer. Then, during the second break or before leaving, students who are not excused are required to attend the Zuhur prayer in congregation, while on certain days there is also a Dhuha prayer conducted together in the mosque.

Ustadz Sholeh also stated that this is an important part of our program. Each year, the school organizes commemorations of Maulid Nabi, Isra Mi'raj, and Nuzulul Qur'an. The activities vary, such as religious lectures, Islamic competitions, moral parades, to support for orphan students. We involve students in planning and implementation, so they have a sense of responsibility and ownership over these activities. In addition, we conduct spontaneous activities that include greeting when entering and leaving the classroom, prayers before and after learning, and teachers' invitations to express gratitude or seek forgiveness when facing learning difficulties.

This understanding indicates that the school has consistently implemented a religious culture through various routine activities and daily habits. Activities such as pre-class Tadarus Al-Qur'an, congregational Dhuha and Zuhur prayers, and collective prayers have become part of the routines ingrained in students' daily lives. Furthermore, the school also organizes commemorations of major Islamic holidays like Maulid Nabi, Isra Mi'raj, and Nuzulul Qur'an, involving students in the implementation of activities. Equally important, habits such as greeting, prayers before and after studying, and expressions of gratitude and seeking forgiveness

demonstrate that religious values are naturally instilled in daily interactions. The Journal of Basic Education Research also concludes that the implementation of religious character in students is carried out step by step through the integration of Islamic values in teaching, religious activity habits, and extracurricular development (Yahya, 2022). The values instilled include prayer adherence, respecting teachers, honesty, and a willingness to give alms. The implications are seen in students' positive behavior, polite speech, and actions that reflect Islamic ethics.

The implementation of religious culture in schools is an integral part of character education efforts aimed at holistically shaping students' personalities. This is not only directed at instilling obedience in performing formal worship but also at fostering strong social and spiritual attitudes. As explained by Sholihah and Khoiriyah, an integrated approach in implementing religious culture includes integrating Islamic values into the learning process, habits through religious activities, and attitudes through modeling and extracurricular activities (Sholihah & Khoiriyah, 2024). Thus, the religious culture applied in the school environment not only shapes students' spiritual aspects but also strengthens social values such as empathy, tolerance, and responsibility, reflected in the daily behavior of participants.

In addition to routine activities and habits, the implementation of religious culture in schools is also evident in the form of structured modeling and implementation strategies. Modeling is an important element in shaping a religious school culture, where teachers and educational staff play a role as models in maintaining morals and building students through a persuasive approach (Pratama, 2023). To support the sustainability of religious culture, schools implement various planned and systematic strategies, as shown in the following figure 1.



Figure 1. Istighosah Joint Activities

In collective supplication activities with teachers, the cultivation and habituation of ethics in daily interactions are reinforced through supervisory approaches that are persuasive and advisory, alongside disciplinary actions regarding attire and conduct when walking or passing by peers. This is supported by a reward and punishment system based on religious values, such as appreciating students who are active in religious activities and spiritually addressing violations. These strategies indicate that the practice of religious culture is not merely ceremonial but an integral part of an integrated character education system (Hayati, 2024).

The implementation of religious culture in schools has been proven to significantly contribute to the development of students' interpersonal intelligence, which includes the ability to cooperate, empathize, communicate positively, and lead. Through social religious activities such as community service, fundraising, and voluntary work for major Islamic holidays (PHBI), students learn to share tasks, discuss, and take collective responsibility. This aligns with Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, stating that interpersonal intelligence can be trained through sustained social interaction (Cahyo, 2021; Minalloh, 2020). Furthermore, students' involvement in religious organizations like ROHIS serves as an effective platform for training leadership and collaboration within a religious environment that builds character (Sholihah et al., 2022; Kurniawan, 2023; Astuti et al., 2024).

Empathy and tolerance also grow through habits such as praying for one another, visiting sick friends, and respecting differences in background. These actions reflect moral maturity, as explained by Kohlberg, where

empathy and tolerance are significant indicators of moral development (Yulianingsih, 2022; Pasaribu, 2019). In daily life, students demonstrate positive communication by using polite language, greeting, and reprimanding in a kind manner. These habits not only create harmonious social interactions but also form assertive, open, and respectful interpersonal communication skills (Agus & Denis, 2025; Saqinah, 2024).

Overall, the application of religious culture not only instills spiritual values but also serves as an effective medium for shaping students' social character (Agus & Denis, 2025; Saqinah, 2024). Structured religious activities can foster self-confidence, leadership abilities, and healthy interaction skills (Ismail, 2018; Habibah et al., 2025). With this holistic approach, students exhibit not only strong faith but also mature emotional and social intelligence. Therefore, religious culture in the school environment can be seen as a comprehensive and sustainable character education strategy, supporting the emergence of a generation that is integrated, tolerant, and responsible.

Conclusion

Teachers stand at the heart of character formation in the madrasah, acting not merely as purveyors of knowledge but as living exemplars who guide learners to grasp and enact noble values. Within this Islamic educational setting, the twin strategies of rule enforcement and habituation operate in concert rather than in isolation. Rule enforcement supplies a transparent framework of expectations, constantly reminding students why discipline, responsibility and order matter in everyday life.

Habituation then weaves those expectations into daily routine through deliberate repetition: when students sweep the classroom before dawn, line up for congregational prayer, or pause to recite a brief supplication before lessons, the behaviours gradually crystallise into lifelong character traits.

Crucially, both strategies demand a humanistic approach. Teachers are not distant disciplinarians; they are the first to model the very standards they set. When learners observe their teacher consistently arriving on time, greeting everyone respectfully and joining the communal prayer, the rules cease to be abstract directives and become lived values worth emulating. This modelling is reinforced by gentle correction: a quiet conversation after a missed prayer, a guiding question when uniform regulations slip, an encouraging word when responsibility is shown.

Madrasahs possess a distinctive advantage in this endeavour because Islamic teachings provide a coherent moral vocabulary—cleanliness as an extension of faith, punctuality as reverence for time gifted by Allah, cooperation as an expression of *ukhuwah*. By anchoring classroom routines in these teachings, the institution nurtures graduates who excel academically while carrying a resilient Islamic moral compass. In an era saturated with ethical ambiguity, such character education is no longer optional; it is imperative.

Therefore, the teacher's role is decisive but not solitary. Sustainable character growth hinges on a triadic partnership: teachers who exemplify and coach, students who practise and reflect, and parents who reinforce at home the same habits rehearsed at school. When this alliance remains consistent and compassionate, the madrasah fulfils its mission of producing young people who are intellectually capable, spiritually grounded and ethically equipped to navigate the moral and social complexities of the future.

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