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Internalizing Character Values through Islamic Religious Education: A Holistic Approach toward Sustainable Quality Education

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Abstract

Objective: Analyze a holistic approach to internalizing character values in IRE students and formulate a madrasah-based integrative model that supports SDG 4. Focus on conceptualization, implementation, the role of teachers, and their impact on student behavior. **Theoretical framework:** Based on Islamic character education theory, a holistic approach, and a continuous education paradigm. Internalization of values is understood as a pedagogical, cultural, and spiritual process that is integrated in the madrasah ecosystem. **Literature review:** The literature emphasizes the importance of integrating curriculum, teacher examples, and school culture in character education. The holistic approach is considered effective in building the affective and spiritual dimensions of students in a sustainable manner. **Methods:** Using a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation, and analyzed with Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña interactive models and triangulation. **Results:** A holistic approach is implemented through the integration of the IRE curriculum, teacher example, religious habituation, strengthening madrasah culture, and social activities that form a sustainable moral ecosystem. IRE teachers act as exemplary agents as well as spiritual companions. This approach has a significant impact on improving students' discipline, religiosity, responsibility, and social concern. **Implications:** To make a practical contribution to the sustainable development of madrasah character education. Theoretically, it strengthens the integration of Islamic education and the global quality education agenda. **Novelty:** Offers an integrative conceptual model that systematically blends pedagogic, cultural, and spiritual dimensions. This model enriches the development of madrasah-based character education within the framework of sustainability.

Keywords: holistic approach, character education, islamic religious education, madrasah education, sdgs.

INTRODUCTION

Character education in the 21st century has become a global issue that has received serious attention in various education systems, both in developed and developing countries [1]. International reports show that adolescent moral crises, such as declining discipline, increasing aggressive behavior, weak social responsibility, and low academic integrity, have become major challenges for educational institutions [2]. This condition indicates that the success of education is no longer enough to be measured through cognitive achievements alone, but also through the quality of students' character. In line with the

global agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4), quality education not only emphasizes the mastery of academic literacy but also the formation of character, human values, and social-emotional competence as the foundation of sustainable development [3].

Theoretically, Lickona emphasized that character education must integrate the dimensions of moral knowledge, moral feelings, and moral actions so that values can be fully internalized [4]. Meanwhile, Berkowitz emphasized the importance of a whole-school approach that involves the entire school ecosystem in character building [5]. Character building demands a systemic and holistic approach. In this context, Islamic educational institutions, especially madrasas, have a strategic position because they combine academic education with spiritual guidance, so that they have the potential to be an effective model in internalizing character values comprehensively and sustainably [6].

From the perspective of Islamic education, the concept of character development has long been known through the principles of tarbiyah, ta'dib, and tazkiyah, which emphasize the balance between intellectual, emotional, and spiritual aspects [7]. Education is not only aimed at educating the intellect, but also purifying the soul and forming noble morals [8]. However, in practice, many religious educational institutions still place character values as normative learning materials, which have not been integrated into school culture and daily behavior. As a result, there is a gap between religious knowledge and students' moral practices. This phenomenon shows that the internalization of values is not enough to be done through lectures or concept transfer, but rather requires habituation, example, and a conducive environment. Miller, in holistic education theory, asserts that meaningful learning occurs when students experience real-life values, not just understanding the definition [9].

Based on initial observations at MTs Asas Islamiyah Sipin Jambi City, it was found that there are still problems with student behavior, such as late attendance, lack of participation in congregational worship, low social awareness, and weak learning discipline. Although IRE learning has been running according to the curriculum, behavior change has not been fully optimal. Teachers often face a dilemma between delivering academic material and character development. One teacher stated, "The material is done, but the child's behavior does not necessarily change" [10]. This statement shows that there is an implementation problem in the internalization of values. This means that the approach that has been used so far tends to be cognitive-instructional and has not touched the affective and cultural dimensions. This condition raises the urgent need for a more comprehensive and sustainable education strategy. Thus, the main problem of this research lies in how to design and implement a holistic approach that is able to integrate learning, madrasah culture, and the role of teachers synergistically to produce real changes in student behavior.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of recent studies have shown that character education is effective when implemented through an integrated approach. An international study by Wang and Degol found that a positive school climate contributes significantly to students' social-emotional development [11]. Research by Berkowitz and Bier shows that the whole-school character education model improves students' discipline and empathy sustainably [12]. Meanwhile, research by Nucci and Narvaez confirms that teacher role models play a dominant role in shaping students' moral identities [13]. These findings indicate the importance of integrating school culture, the role of educators, and habituation practices. However, most of the research was conducted in the context of Western public schools and has not touched much on madrasas based on Islamic values. The relevance of a holistic approach in the context of Islamic education still requires a more in-depth and contextual empirical study, so that it can make a theoretical and practical contribution to the development of character education management in madrasas. To clarify the position of this research, the following is a synthesis of previous studies.

Table 1. Summary of Previous Research and Research Position

Researcher	Year	Focus	Findings	Limitations
Money & Rumble	2022	School climate	influence on social character	Non-Madrasah
Berkowitz & Bier	2023	Whole-school approach	effectively improve discipline	Western context
Nucci & Narvaez	2024	Teacher Role Example	Student Moral Model	Not yet integrative

The table shows that previous research tends to highlight one particular aspect, such as the school climate, institutional approaches, or the role of teachers, partially. There has been no study that integrates all of these components in one madrasah-based holistic model. This opens up conceptual opportunities for this research to develop a more comprehensive synthesis.

Based on the study, there appears to be a *research gap* in two main aspects. First, conceptually, previous studies have tested character education more in the framework of general education, not yet associated it with Islamic values and madrasah culture. Second, methodologically, some studies use an explanatory quantitative approach, so that it does not explore the process of internalizing values in depth. In fact, the process is contextual, cultural, and relational. Therefore, qualitative research is needed that is able to describe real practices, interaction dynamics, and meanings built by school residents. Basically, this research seeks to fill this gap through an in-depth exploration of a holistic approach in IRE character education in madrasas, resulting in a comprehensive understanding of how values are transformed into behavior.

The novelty of this research lies in the formulation of an integrative model of internalizing character values based on a holistic approach that combines three main dimensions, namely pedagogic (IRE curriculum integration), cultural (madrasah culture and habituation), and spiritual (exemplary and religious assistance of teachers). This model not only describes the strategy but also builds the systemic relationship between the components so as to produce an operational framework that is applicable to the madrasah. In contrast to the previous partial research, this study offers a conceptual synthesis as well as a pragmatic model that is contextual with Islamic education. This research is unique because it combines modern character education theory with *Islamic tarbiyah values*, thus making a new contribution to the literature on Islamic education management and the development of madrasah-based character policies.

Departing from the background, problems, previous studies, as well as gaps and novelties that have been described, this study aims to analyze in depth the conceptualization of the holistic approach, implementation strategies, the role of IRE teachers, and their impact on changes in student behavior at MTs Asas Islamiyah Sipin Jambi City. In addition, this research aims to formulate an integrative conceptual model as a practical recommendation for the development of madrasah-based character education. Through a qualitative approach to case studies, it is hoped that this research will be able to make a theoretical contribution to the enrichment of Islamic character education studies as well as practical contributions for madrasah managers in designing an effective, systematic, and sustainable character development system. More broadly, the resulting model is expected to support the strengthening of quality and sustainable education as proclaimed in the SDG 4 global agenda on *inclusive and equitable quality*. Thus, the results of the research are expected to be not only academically relevant but also have a real impact on improving the moral quality of the younger generation.

METHODOLOGY

This study additionally integrates the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) perspective into the methodological framework to examine how character education in Islamic Religious Education contributes to sustainable quality education. The integration of SDGs is focused primarily on SDG 4 concerning inclusive and equitable education, while also considering ethical awareness, social responsibility, and peaceful coexistence within the madrasa environment. In this research, SDGs function not only as a conceptual framework but also as an analytical lens to interpret educational practices implemented at MTs Asas Islamiyah Sipin, Jambi City. The study applies a qualitative case study design because this approach enables researchers to investigate educational phenomena holistically and contextually. The research explores how teachers, students, school leaders, and institutional culture collectively support the internalization of character values connected with sustainable education principles. Informants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in character education activities, including the madrasa principal, Islamic Religious Education teachers, homeroom teachers, religious activity supervisors, and students. This purposive strategy ensured the collection of rich and relevant information related to sustainable educational practices [14].

Data collection was conducted through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Observation focused on identifying learning activities, habituation programs, collective worship, disciplinary practices, and social interactions that reflect SDGs-oriented values. In-depth interviews explored participants' perceptions and experiences regarding the implementation of holistic character education. Documentation analysis included lesson plans, curriculum documents, school regulations, religious programs, and student activity reports to strengthen empirical findings associated with SDGs implementation. Furthermore, the research instruments were designed to capture educational values related to responsibility, cooperation, tolerance, discipline, environmental awareness, and social justice. These indicators were selected because they represent essential dimensions of SDGs-based education. During observations, the researcher examined how teachers integrated moral reflection, collaborative learning, and democratic interaction into classroom activities. The study also investigated how the madrasa culture encouraged students to practice ethical behavior in their daily lives [15].

Data analysis followed the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The collected data were coded, categorized, and interpreted thematically to identify patterns related to holistic education and SDGs values. The analysis emphasized relationships between pedagogical interaction, institutional culture, and students' character development. Through this process, the researcher formulated a conceptual synthesis explaining how holistic Islamic education contributes to sustainable educational transformation. To ensure validity and credibility, the study applied triangulation, member checking, and audit trails.

Triangulation was conducted by comparing findings from interviews, observations, and documentation to confirm consistency among different data sources. Member checking allowed participants to verify the accuracy of interpretations related to SDGs-oriented educational practices. Through these procedures, the research provides an in-depth understanding of how character education in madrasas supports sustainable quality education and contributes to the broader goals of SDGs implementation in Islamic educational institutions. In addition, the methodology emphasizes contextual interpretation, allowing researchers to understand educational realities. This approach strengthens the study and provides insights into the integration of religious values, institutional culture, and learning practices for developing students in contemporary Islamic education [16].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Conceptualization of a Holistic Approach in IRE Character Education

The holistic approach to character education at MTs Asas Islamiyah Sipin is understood as a comprehensive process of fostering students that not only emphasizes cognitive aspects, but also affective, spiritual, and daily behavior. Based on participatory observation, character education activities are not limited to Islamic Religious Education (IRE) learning hours, but are integrated into madrasah culture, such as congregational prayers, greetings, supervision of dress manners, and polite interactions between teachers and students. One of the IRE teachers stated, "Character is not enough to be taught, but it must be practiced every day. If it's just theory in class, kids quickly forget. Here we get used to the practice from entering the gate to coming home from school" [17]. This statement shows that madrasahs interpret character as a habituation of values, not simply a transfer of moral knowledge. Conceptually, this practice reflects a shift from an instructional approach to a transformational approach, in which the educational process takes place ecologically through the entire school environment [18].



Figure 1. Performing Prayers Together Before Entering Class

These findings are in line with Miller's holistic education theory, which asserts that education must develop the intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions in an integrated manner [19]. This perspective is emphasized by Lickona, who states that effective character is built through the integration of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action, not just ethical knowledge [20]. In the context of madrasahs, these three dimensions are seen through learning the concept of morality (knowing), habituation of empathy and reflection (feeling), and the practice of worship and discipline (action). A homeroom teacher said, "If children are used to praying dhuha and sharing with friends, it is easier for them to be reminded without being scolded" [21]. The quote indicates that the internalization of value occurs through emotional experiences and social practices. Thus, the dialogue between field data and theory shows that the holistic approach in madrasahs has a strong pedagogical foundation, as well as being relevant to the modern character education framework that emphasizes the formation of moral habits as the core of behavior change. To clarify this conceptualization, the results of coding interviews, observation, and documentation data are formulated in the main components of the holistic approach as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Components of a Holistic Approach to Character Education in MTs Asas Islamiyah

Components	Form of Implementation	Character Objectives
Intracurricular	Integration of grades in the IRE RPP	Moral understanding
Religious habituation	Dhuha Prayers, Tadarus, Prayers	Spirituality

Teacher role model	Discipline, Discipline	Integrity
Madrasah culture	5S, discipline	Social-Emotional
Extracurricular	Social Service, Rohis	Concern

The table shows that the internalization of values does not stand on a single program, but is spread across various formal and non-formal education spaces. Each component complements the others and forms a character learning ecosystem. This structure shows a continuity between curriculum planning, pedagogical practices, and institutional culture. In other words, a holistic approach is implemented through a multi-role strategy that reaches all student activities, so that the opportunity for value strengthening becomes more consistent and repeatable.

Based on the interpretation of the table and field findings, it can be emphasized that the conceptualization of the holistic approach in madrasahs is integrative, cultural, and sustainable. Integrative means that character values are attached to all subjects and activities, not just IRE; cultural shows that the value of life is in daily habits; Meanwhile, sustainable indicates that the coaching process is continuous, not a temporary program. Theoretically, this pattern is in line with Berkowitz's concept of the whole-school approach, which emphasizes the importance of synergy between curriculum, school climate, and social relations in building character [22]. From the perspective of Islamic education, this approach is parallel to the principle of *tarbiyah syamilah*, which views education as the total development of physical and spiritual aspects [23]. Therefore, the holistic approach at MTs Asas Islamiyah can be understood as a praxis model that bridges modern character education theory with Islamic values, as well as providing a conceptual contribution to the development of madrasah-based character education management.

Implementation Strategy for Internalizing Character Values

The implementation strategy of internalizing character values at MTs Asas Islamiyah Sipin shows a systematic and planned pattern, not just incidental activities. Based on the results of observation and analysis of curriculum documents, madrasahs design character education through the integration of mutually supportive intracurricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular programs. Internalization of values is carried out from the learning planning stage through character-based lesson plans, followed by the practice of habituating worship, teacher examples, and strengthening madrasah culture. The head of the madrasah said, "We do not make the character program an additional activity, but include it in all school activities so that the children get used to it without feeling patronized" [24]. This statement shows that the strategies used are embedded or inherent in the school system. Conceptually, this approach indicates that character education is understood as a cultural process that takes place naturally in students' daily lives [25]. The implementation of character values does not only occur at the instructional level, but also at the structural and social levels, so as to have a more permanent impact on the formation of student behavior.



Figure 2. Researcher Interview with the Principal

Pedagogically, the strategy of integrating values in learning can be seen in the practice of IRE teachers who insert moral reflection in every learning process [26]. The material on moral beliefs, fiqh, and the history of Islamic culture is not only conveyed cognitively, but is also associated with the real experience of students. Teachers often use case discussion methods, habituation of joint prayer, and attitude assessment as part of the evaluation. One teacher explained: "When it comes to honesty, we ask the children to tell us about their experiences of cheating or not, and then we invite them to reflect" [27]. This practice shows the existence of an internalization strategy through experiential learning. This approach is in line with Kolb's theory, which emphasizes that value is more effectively understood through reflective experience than lectures [28]. In addition, Lickona also emphasized that character education needs to involve the active involvement of students to form moral awareness [29]. At the cultural level, madrasas apply various structured habituation strategies to strengthen students' religious and social values. These habits are carried out regularly and collectively to form a moral habitus. The data from the field coding results are summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 3. Implementation Strategy for Internalizing Character Values

Strategy	Form of Activity	Frequency	Value Built
Example	Discipline present, polite language	Daily	Integrity
Worship habits	Prayers for the Dharma, Dharma.	Daily	Religious
5S Culture	Smile, greet, greeting	Daily	Social
RPP Integration	Reflection of Values	Every learning	Responsibilities
Social activities	Infak, Social Service	Weekly/Monthly	empathy

The table shows that each strategy has a consistent frequency of execution. This consistency is a key factor in success because constantly repeated values tend to become permanent habits [30]. Implementation strategies in madrasas form a systemic habituation pattern that accelerates the process of internalizing character.

The interpretation of the table shows that the strategies applied do not stand alone, but are intertwined to form a character ecosystem. Teachers' examples function as behavioral models, worship habits form spiritual discipline, 5S culture strengthens social interaction, RPP integration strengthens cognitive understanding, while social activities foster empathy. The combination of the five strategies shows a multi-level approach that includes personal, social, and institutional dimensions. Theoretically, these findings support Bandura's idea of social learning theory, that behavior is formed through observation, imitation, and reinforcement of the environment [31]. This means that when students witness the practice

of grades in real life, the process of imitation takes place naturally. Therefore, the implementation strategy in MTs Asas Islamiyah can be understood as the practice of environment-based character education, which places school culture as the main medium of moral learning.

The strategy for implementing the internalization of character values in madrasas reflects a comprehensive approach that combines pedagogic, cultural, and managerial dimensions. The strategy is not only designed by IRE teachers, but involves all school residents, including madrasah heads, homeroom teachers, and education staff, so that collective responsibility is formed. One student revealed, "Here all the teachers reprimand us that we are wrong, not only religious teachers, so we feel supervised but also guided" [32]. The statement indicates a unity of institutional commitment. This concept is in line with Berkowitz's whole-school approach, which emphasizes that character education is effective if it becomes an organizational culture, not an individual program. The implementation of strategies at MTs Asas Islamiyah not only results in habituation of behavior but also builds a conducive moral climate of madrasas. This model makes a practical contribution to the development of integrated and sustainable madrasah-based character education management.



Figure 2. Researcher Interview with Students

The Role of IRE Teachers as Agents of Value Internalization

The role of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers at MTs Asas Islamiyah Sipin occupies a central position as the main agent of internalizing character values. Based on the results of class observations and in-depth interviews, teachers not only act as presenters of religious material but also function as moral guides, spiritual guides, and role models for students. The pedagogic interaction that occurs shows that students tend to assess teacher behavior as an ethical standard that should be imitated. A grade VIII student stated, "If the ustadz comes early and participates in congregational prayers, we feel ashamed if we are not disciplined" [17]. This quote confirms that example is more effective than verbal instruction. IRE teachers thus act as a representation of values that are alive in daily practice. Empirically, the emotional closeness between teachers and students also strengthens the internalization process, because values are conveyed through personal relationships, not just formal authority [33]. This condition shows that teachers are key actors in bridging the normative value of Islamic teachings with the reality of student behavior in the madrasah environment.

These findings are in line with Bandura's social learning theory, which states that individuals learn through observation and imitation of significant models. In the context of education, teachers function as significant others whose behavior is replicated by students [34]. In addition, Lickona asserts that effective character is built through a moral community where teachers act as moral educators and caregivers [35]. This role is seen when teachers not only reprimand students' mistakes, but also give persuasive advice. One

teacher said: "We talk more often than we punish, so that children are aware of their mistakes". This dialogical approach suggests the existence of an empathy-based coaching strategy. From the perspective of Islamic education, this practice is in line with the concept of *uswah hasanah*, which places educators as moral examples [36]. Thus, the dialogue between modern theory and Islamic values strengthens the idea that the role of teachers is not just an academic instructor, but a moral culture that determines the success of character internalization.

At the practical level, the role of IRE teachers can be mapped into several interrelated strategic functions. Based on the reduction of field data, the role is not single, but multidimensional, including pedagogical, affective, and spiritual aspects. Teachers act as value-based learning designers, moral reflection facilitators, worship companions, student conflict mediators, and discipline controllers. This combination of roles shows that the internalization of values takes place through various interaction spaces, both in the classroom and outside the classroom [37]. In many situations, teachers are the main reference when students face ethical or social issues. This shows that the moral legitimacy of teachers has been formed naturally through consistency of behavior [38]. In other words, the effectiveness of internalizing values is greatly influenced by the personal integrity of teachers. Therefore, the success of character education cannot be separated from the professional and moral qualities of educators as the main actors of the learning process.

To illustrate the role relationship conceptually, the following is presented a synthesis chart of the role of IRE teachers as agents of value internalization.



Figure 3. A Personal Example of a Teacher

The chart above shows the flow that exemplary becomes the starting point, then strengthened through pedagogic interaction and reflection of values, followed by habituation, and spiritual assistance to produce behavior change. This structure emphasizes that the role of teachers is procedural, not instant. Each stage is interconnected and forms a continuous chain of internalization. A teacher acts as the main driving force that integrates all components of character education in the madrasah.

The interpretation of the chart shows that the effectiveness of internalizing grades is highly determined by the consistency of teachers in carrying out these roles simultaneously. If the example is weak, then the subsequent process loses moral legitimacy; On the other hand, if pedagogic interaction is strong but without habituation, then values do not transform into real actions. These findings support the concept of teacher as moral agent put forward by Nucci, that teachers function as architects of the school's moral environment [39]. From the perspective of Islamic education management, this role is also in line with the principle of *tarbiyah ruhiyah*, which emphasizes the development of heart and behavior in an integrated manner [40]. In a big way, IRE teachers at MTs Asas Islamiyah not only contribute to the cognitive aspect of religion, but also become the motor for the formation

of the religious culture of madrasahs. This model implies that improving the quality of students' character must start from strengthening the teacher's personality and spiritual competence as the main internalization agent.

The Impact of a Holistic Approach on Student Behavior

The holistic approach applied at MTs Asas Islamiyah Sipin shows a real impact on changes in student behavior, both in the dimensions of religious, disciplinary, social, and personal responsibility. Based on the results of longitudinal observations for one semester, researchers found a significant decrease in code violations and an increase in student participation in worship and social activities. These changes are seen not only in formal activities, but also in daily interactions, such as the habit of greeting teachers, maintaining class cleanliness, and time discipline. A homeroom teacher said, "Now, children are easier to direct. Without being told to do so, they immediately marched and entered class on time". This quote indicates that the instilled value has moved from the stage of consciousness to habit. This means that internalization no longer depends on the external control of the teacher, but grows as the student's self-control. A holistic approach not only results in temporary compliance but forms a more stable and sustainable behavioral transformation in school life.

These changes can be understood as a logical consequence of habituation and exemplary strategies that are applied consistently. From the perspective of Lickona's theory, a strong character is formed when moral values are practiced repeatedly until they become a moral habit [41]. This is in line with the Aristotelian view that virtue is born from habit. A IRE teacher said, "In the past, we often reprimanded the children for praying in the congregation; now the children themselves remind each other" [42]. The statement indicates a shift from external regulation to internal regulation. In addition, the theory of social behaviorism explains that positive behaviors that are continuously reinforced by the environment will last longer. The dialogue between field findings and theory shows that the impact of a holistic approach is not solely the result of instruction, but the result of a collective habituation process that builds students' moral awareness gradually.

To see these impacts more systematically, the researcher compared the behavioral conditions of students before and after the implementation of the holistic approach. The results of the comparison are summarized in Table 3 below.

Table 2. Comparison of Student Behavior Before and After a Holistic Approach

Behavioral Aspects	Before	After	Changes
Delays present	Often	Rarely	Downhill
Congregational prayers	±50% of students	±90% of students	increased
Violation of rules	Height	Low	significant decline
Social care	Passive	Active	increased
Language politeness	Lack of consistency	Consistent	Improve

The table shows a shift in the quantity and quality of student behavior in almost all indicators. The increase in worship participation and the decrease in violations show the direct impact of the holistic approach to discipline and religiosity. These data reinforce the observational finding that change is not sporadic, but systematic.

The interpretation of the table indicates that the religious dimension is the main entrance to behavior change, which is then followed by the social and disciplinary dimensions. In other words, spiritual practice serves as the foundation for other character formation. These findings support the spillover effect theory in character education, where one positive habit influences another positive behavior [43]. When students are used to praying in

congregation, they are also more orderly, polite, and caring about the environment. Managerially, this condition shows that religious habituation has a strengthening effect on the overall school culture [44]. Therefore, a holistic approach can be understood as a strategy that produces a multiplier effect on character formation. Values do not stand alone, but reinforce each other in the practice of students' daily lives in madrasas.

The impact of the holistic approach in MTs Asas Islamiyah shows that integrated character education is more effective than a partial or cognitive approach alone. One student revealed, "Here we are not only learning religion, but we are used to practicing it every day, so it feels automatic". This statement confirms the success of the internalization process until it reaches the stage of behavioral automation. From the perspective of whole-school character education (Berkowitz), changes in collective behavior are the main indicators of the success of character programs. This holistic approach in madrasas not only impacts individuals but also shapes a positive moral climate of the school. These findings provide an empirical contribution that the synergy between learning, culture, and example is able to produce a sustainable transformation of student behavior, while strengthening the legitimacy of the holistic approach as an effective model in madrasah-based character education.

A Holistic Model of Internalizing Character Values

Based on the findings of the research, the holistic approach applied at MTs Asas Islamiyah Sipin is not only in the form of a collection of character programs, but has developed into an integrated value education system. The synthesis of observation, interview, and documentation data shows that there is an integration between madrasah policies, the role of teachers, school culture, and student participation. This pattern forms a network of internalization processes that take place simultaneously in various educational spaces. The head of the madrasah said, "We don't want the character to stand alone as a program, but to be the breath of all madrasah activities". The statement affirms that character has been positioned as a core institutional value. Thus, the holistic approach in madrasas moves from the technical level to the philosophical and cultural level. Substantively, this condition indicates the formation of a moral ecosystem in which all school residents play the role of coaching agents [45]. Therefore, it is necessary to formulate a conceptual model to systematically explain the interconnectedness between these components as a scientific contribution to research.



Figure 4. Researcher interview with the Head of Madrasah

Theoretically, this synthesis intersects with the concept of the whole-school approach put forward by Berkowitz and Bier, which emphasizes that character education is effective when it involves an integrated curriculum, social relations, school leadership, and organizational culture. In addition, Lickona emphasized the importance of synergy between the dimensions of knowing, feeling, and action as the foundation for sustainable character formation. Field findings show that these three dimensions are present simultaneously in

madrasah practice. One teacher stated, "We teach him knowledge in class, we model his behavior, and then we get used to it every day". This quotation reflects the integration of theory and practice in a concrete way. From the perspective of Islamic education, this approach is in line with the concept of *tarbiyah syamilah*, which is the development of human beings as a whole, including intellect, heart, and charity [46]. Thus, the dialogue between Western theory and Islamic treasures reinforces the conceptual legitimacy that the holistic approach is a comprehensive framework that is relevant to the context of modern madrasahs.

The results of the synthesis of the components of the holistic approach are then formulated in Table 4 to clarify the relationship between the inputs, processes, and outputs of character education.

Table 3. Components of the Holistic Model of Character Education

Stages	Components	Form of Practice	Intermediate Results
Input	Islamic values & IRE curriculum	Character-based lesson plans	Moral understanding
Process	Examples, habits, school culture	worship, 5S, discipline	habituation
Reinforcement	Teacher Assistance & Attitude Evaluation	reflection, counseling	self-awareness
Output	Student behavior	religious, disciplined, empathetic	Character Formation

This table shows that the internalization of values takes place through multi-level and continuous stages. Each stage serves as a prerequisite for the next, so failure in one component can affect the final result. This gradual structure suggests that character formation requires systemic design, not a partial or incidental approach.

To visualize the integration between these components, this study formulates the following conceptual model as the main findings.

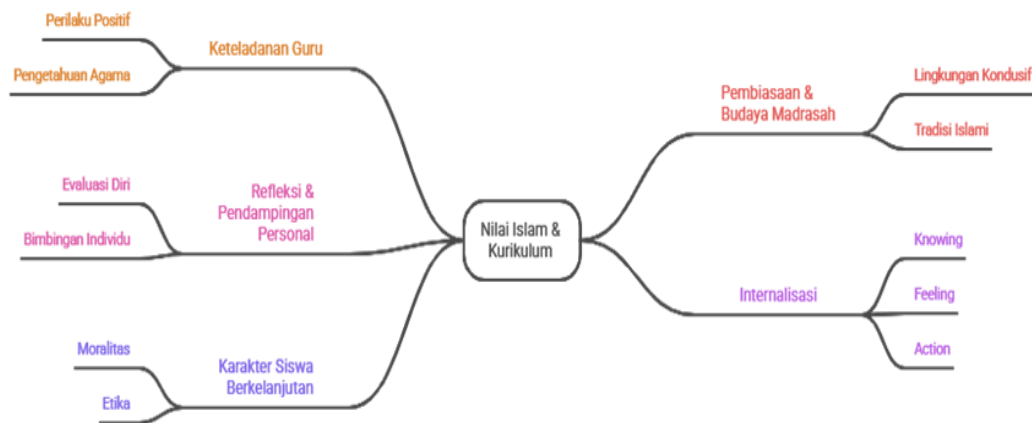


Figure 5. Integrative Model: A Holistic Approach to Internalizing Character Values

The chart shows a dynamic flow that is cyclical. Values do not stop at the teaching stage, but continue to be strengthened through habituation and reflection until they become a permanent character. The interpretation of the chart indicates that the teacher plays the role of the main mediator, while the culture of the madrasah acts as a reinforcement space. Thus, this model emphasizes the simultaneous interaction between actors, processes, and the environment in shaping student behavior.

This integrative model is a contribution to the novelty of research because it combines three main dimensions: pedagogical, cultural, and spiritual in one operational framework. If conventional approaches tend to place character education in the cognitive realm, then this model emphasizes the formation of habitus through everyday practice. One student said, "We feel that religious values are not just a lesson, but have become a habit of life in school". The statement affirms the success of internalization until it reaches the stage of behavioral automation. Academically, this model enriches the literature on Islamic education management by offering contextual implementive designs for madrasas [47]. Therefore, the holistic approach at MTs Asas Islamiyah can be seen as a prototype of best practice that has the potential to be replicated in other Islamic educational institutions in an effort to build students' character sustainably and systemically.

Analysis

The findings of this study demonstrate that the holistic approach implemented at MTs Asas Islamiyah Sipin has significant implications for the development of sustainable character education in Islamic educational institutions. The integration of curriculum, teacher exemplarity, religious habituation, and madrasa culture creates a comprehensive educational ecosystem that supports students' moral and spiritual development. This condition confirms that effective character education requires systemic collaboration among institutional components rather than fragmented instructional practices. In this context, the implementation of SDGs values in Islamic Religious Education becomes more contextual because students experience ethical learning directly through daily educational interactions.

The study also reveals that the success of character internalization is strongly influenced by the consistency of teachers as moral role models. Students tend to imitate behaviors demonstrated continuously by educators within formal and informal settings. Therefore, teacher professionalism should not only emphasize pedagogical competence but also spiritual integrity and social responsibility. This finding strengthens the relevance of SDGs-oriented education that promotes inclusive, peaceful, and value-based learning environments in contemporary schools and madrasas.

Furthermore, the holistic model developed in this research contributes theoretically to the discourse of Islamic education management by integrating pedagogical, cultural, and spiritual dimensions simultaneously. The model demonstrates that SDGs implementation in Islamic education can be achieved through sustainable habituation, collaborative culture, and reflective learning practices. In addition, the integration of SDGs principles into madrasa activities encourages students to develop empathy, discipline, and collective awareness as foundations of social harmony. The contribution of this study also confirms that SDGs-based character education is relevant for strengthening educational transformation and promoting sustainable human development. Therefore, the holistic approach provides a strategic framework for supporting SDGs achievement, especially in creating ethical, inclusive, and sustainable quality education for future generations. Ultimately, SDGs integration within holistic madrasa education strengthens global educational responsibility, intercultural understanding, and long-term community resilience sustainably.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that a holistic approach in Islamic Religious Education character education at MTs Asas Islamiyah Sipin Jambi City has proven to be effective in internalizing students' religious values, discipline, responsibility, and empathy through systemic integration between curriculum, teacher examples, habituation, and madrasah culture. The conceptualization of the holistic approach shows that character education is not positioned as an additional program, but rather as the core of all institutional activities

implemented in the intracurricular, cocurricular, and extracurricular realms. Implementation strategies that include the integration of values in learning, worship habits, 5S culture, and social activities form a consistent moral ecosystem, while IRE teachers play a central role as exemplary agents, reflective mentors, and spiritual companions who strengthen the internalization process through personal relationships. The impact of this approach is reflected in real behavioral changes, such as increased discipline, worship participation, and social concern among students. The synthesis of findings then gave birth to an integrative conceptual model that combines pedagogic, cultural, and spiritual dimensions in one whole-school approach framework based on Islamic values. The holistic approach not only results in the transformation of individual behavior but also forms a sustainable madrasah culture, as well as making a theoretical and practical contribution to the development of character education management in Islamic educational institutions. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that the implementation of holistic character education is relevant to the principles of the SDGs, especially in promoting inclusive, ethical, and sustainable quality education. The integration of moral values, social responsibility, and collaborative learning practices strengthens the contribution of madrasahs toward achieving SDGs-oriented educational transformation in contemporary Islamic education.

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Author Contribution

Rifaldi Wiranata contributed to conceptualization, data collection, data analysis, manuscript drafting, and interpretation of findings. Ely Surayya contributed to methodological design, theoretical framework development, validation, and manuscript revision. Rauf Adeola Lateef contributed to international academic review, language refinement, critical evaluation of the discussion, and strengthening the global perspective related to character education, Islamic Religious Education, and sustainable quality education within the broader framework of contemporary educational studies.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article. The research was conducted independently without any commercial, financial, or institutional influence that could affect the objectivity, interpretation, or presentation of the findings. All authors have approved the final version of the manuscript and agreed to its submission for publication in an international academic journal focused on education, Islamic studies, and sustainable development.

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