

## The Model of Internalizing Islamic Values Based on Local Wisdom in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Learning at SMPN 1 Keruak

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### ABSTRACT

This study is motivated by the limited empirical research on the integration of Islamic values and local wisdom within Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in public secondary schools, despite its significant role in shaping students' character and religious attitudes in multicultural contexts. The study aims to identify the forms of Islamic values internalized through PAI learning, examine teachers' strategies in integrating Islamic values through local wisdom, and analyze the impact of this internalization on students' character development and religious behavior at SMPN 1 Keruak. The research adopts a qualitative case study design, involving 27 participants consisting of PAI teachers, school leaders, and students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and documentation analysis conducted from November to December 2025. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, meanings, and relationships across data sources. The findings reveal that Islamic values related to Akidah, Sharia, and Akhlak are systematically internalized through culturally responsive pedagogical strategies. Teachers employ integrated approaches including value alignment with local wisdom, contextualized instruction, participatory learning, role modeling and habituation, as well as critical cultural analysis. These strategies contribute to the development of students' religious discipline, social solidarity, respectful behavior, environmental awareness, and social empathy. The results align with character education and culturally responsive pedagogy theories, emphasizing the importance of contextual learning in value formation. The study concludes that integrating Islamic values through local wisdom strengthens the effectiveness and sustainability of character education in public schools. The findings contribute theoretically to Islamic education and value internalization studies and offer practical implications for educators and policymakers in designing culturally grounded PAI learning models. Future research is recommended to employ comparative and longitudinal approaches across diverse educational settings.

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## INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam/PAI) plays a pivotal role in shaping students' moral character and ethical conduct in both national and global educational contexts. PAI provides a foundational framework of values and moral principles derived from Islamic teachings that guide students not only to behave ethically but also to act responsibly in their daily lives. Fundamentally, PAI aims to instill core Islamic values such as faith (*iman*), piety (*taqwa*), and noble character (*akhlak al-karimah*), which serve as the moral compass for students' behavior. Through the provision of strong spiritual and moral foundations, Islamic Religious Education seeks to develop individuals with an Islamic character who are balanced intellectually (*olah pikir*) and emotionally (*olah rasa*), in accordance with the innate human disposition (*fitrah*) (Zalsabella et al., 2023).

Alongside religious education, local wisdom (*local wisdom*)—including customs, traditions, and societal value systems—functions as a fundamental framework regulating social behavior within communities. These cultural assets must be preserved to ensure that Indonesia's rich cultural heritage remains sustainable across generations. Consequently, there is an urgent need to explore and revitalize local wisdom values as part of educational development (Zalsabella et al., 2023). In the context of Islamic Religious Education, local wisdom is conceptualized as comprising two interrelated dimensions: universal religious wisdom, which remains constant across time and space, and local religious wisdom, which adapts Islamic teachings to the socio-cultural realities of specific regions (Halliday, 1996).

Despite its potential, the integration of local wisdom into PAI learning presents several critical challenges. First, there is the risk of misinterpretation, where local practices may conflict with Islamic values if they are not carefully selected and critically analyzed prior to integration. Second, Indonesia's vast diversity of local wisdom creates difficulties in implementing a comprehensive and uniform integration model within PAI learning. These challenges necessitate a contextual and adaptive pedagogical approach to ensure that local wisdom aligns harmoniously with Islamic teachings (Raisul Umam, 2023). Third, limitations in teachers' capacity—particularly insufficient understanding of local wisdom—may hinder effective integration. Fourth, the scarcity of contextualized PAI teaching materials rooted in local wisdom further constrains implementation. Finally, inadequate institutional and community support, including policy-level backing, can significantly impede the integration process. These challenges collectively underscore the need for systematic training, curriculum development, and policy reinforcement to support local wisdom-based PAI learning (Raisul Umam, 2023).

To address these critical challenges, several strategic solutions have been proposed, including the development of instructional modules, the implementation of targeted teacher workshops, the creation of contextual teaching materials, the encouragement of community participation, and the utilization of digital technology to support learning innovation (Raisul Umam, 2023). These solutions provide a conceptual framework for overcoming barriers in integrating local wisdom into Islamic Religious Education. Nevertheless, such strategies require empirical validation through in-depth research to ensure their effectiveness in real educational settings.

From a theoretical perspective, Islamic values constitute an abstract yet essential dimension of human life, representing ideals that guide moral judgment and behavior rather than empirical facts alone. Values influence individuals' attitudes, perspectives, and life orientations, shaped significantly by customs, ethics, beliefs, and religious commitments (Ristianah, 2020). Within Islamic education, the core values to be internalized encompass *'aqidah* (faith), *shari'ah* (Islamic law), and *akhlak* (moral conduct), which collectively form an integrated moral system grounded in

Islam. *'Aqidah* reflects belief in Allah, angels, scriptures, prophets, the Day of Judgment, and divine decree, while *shari'ah* governs both acts of worship (*ibadah*) and social interactions (*mu'amalah*). These dimensions culminate in *akhlak*, which manifests as habitual moral behavior reflecting one's faith and religious commitment. Together, *iman*, *Islam*, and *ibsan* represent an inseparable moral unity within Islamic teachings (Ristianah, 2020).

Local wisdom, meanwhile, is widely recognized as a cultural heritage containing noble values that shape communal identity and moral order across generations (Tiara Putra & Achadi, 2025). It encompasses knowledge, values, traditions, folklore, and cultural practices developed and transmitted within communities (Hayati & Bahri, 2024). In educational contexts, local wisdom serves as a vital instrument for cultural preservation, character strengthening, and national identity formation. Education grounded in local wisdom not only conveys historical and cultural understanding but also helps students contextualize their relationship with society and the environment, thereby reinforcing culturally responsive learning (Putri et al., 2025). Conceptually, local wisdom is understood as locally rooted ideas imbued with ethical values that guide communal life (Sartini & Adf, 2020), and its strength lies in its adaptive validity through continuous local testing (Isma et al., 2024).

Empirically, several previous studies have addressed the internalization of religious values and the integration of local wisdom in educational settings. Minhaji et al. (2024) examined the internalization of religious values through extracurricular Islamic activities at the junior high school level, identifying stages of value transformation, transaction, and transinternalization. Jamaluddin and Manda (2025) explored the integration of local wisdom, religious values, and universal values in shaping public school culture. Indarti and Efendi (2024) focused on the internalization of Islamic values within classroom learning at the elementary level, while Nuriani (2025) conducted a literature-based analysis on integrating Islamic moral values through local wisdom in PAI learning. Similarly, Inayati et al. (2024) investigated the internalization of religious moderation values based on local wisdom in senior high schools. Although these studies provide valuable insights, most focus either on extracurricular activities, elementary or senior high education levels, or conceptual analyses, leaving a significant gap in research addressing structured instructional models for internalizing Islamic values through local wisdom within formal PAI classroom learning at the junior high school level.

Theoretically, this research is grounded in four interrelated frameworks: the theory of value internalization in Islamic education, value education theory, local wisdom theory, and contextual teaching and learning. Value internalization theory emphasizes the gradual embedding of values through cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions via modeling and habituation (Muhaimin, 2012). Value education theory views education as a systematic process of cultivating moral awareness and ethical responsibility (Halstead & Taylor, 2000). Local wisdom theory positions culture as a source of moral identity and social values (Tilaar, 2015), while contextual learning theory highlights the importance of connecting learning content with students' real-life socio-cultural experiences to enhance meaningful learning (Johnson, 2002). The integration of these theories supports the conceptual novelty of this study by framing Islamic value internalization as a culturally grounded, pedagogically contextualized process.

Based on preliminary observations at SMPN 1 Keruak, PAI learning has not yet been optimally integrated with local Lombok wisdom. Many students demonstrate limited understanding of local cultural values, resulting in a weak connection between Islamic teachings and local socio-cultural practices. This condition highlights the urgency of conducting in-depth research to examine how Islamic values are internalized through local wisdom-based PAI learning

in this specific context. Accordingly, this study focuses on identifying the forms of Islamic values internalized through PAI learning, examining teachers' strategies in integrating Islamic values through local wisdom, and analyzing the impact of such internalization on students' character development and religious attitudes at SMPN 1 Keruak.

## **METHODS**

### **1. Research Type**

This study employed a qualitative research approach, as it aimed to explore in depth the process, meaning, and contextual dynamics of internalizing Islamic values based on local wisdom within Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. Qualitative research is particularly appropriate when the researcher seeks to understand social phenomena from participants' perspectives and to interpret meanings embedded in specific contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Furthermore, qualitative inquiry allows for a holistic examination of values, beliefs, and cultural practices that cannot be adequately captured through numerical data alone (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Given the value-laden and culturally grounded nature of Islamic education and local wisdom, a qualitative approach provided the most suitable framework for addressing the research objectives.

### **2. Research Design**

The research adopted a case study design, focusing on SMPN 1 Keruak as a bounded system in which the internalization of Islamic values through local wisdom was examined intensively. Case study design enables researchers to investigate contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2018). This design was selected to allow a comprehensive understanding of how Islamic values are internalized through instructional strategies, school culture, and socio-cultural interactions in a specific educational setting. Compared to prior studies that examined value internalization either through extracurricular activities or at different educational levels, this study advances existing research by concentrating on a structured instructional model within formal PAI classroom learning at the junior high school level.

### **3. Population and Sample**

The population of this study comprised all stakeholders directly involved in the implementation of Islamic Religious Education at SMPN 1 Keruak. Purposive sampling was used to select participants based on specific criteria relevant to the research focus, such as direct involvement in PAI learning, familiarity with local wisdom, and experience in educational practices. Purposive sampling is appropriate in qualitative research when researchers seek information-rich cases that can provide deep insights into the phenomenon under study (Sugiyono, 2019).

This study involved 27 participants, consisting of five key informants (the school principal, vice principal for curriculum, and three PAI teachers), eighteen student informants from Grades VII, VIII, and IX, and four supporting informants including parents, a local cultural figure, and a non-PAI teacher. This composition was considered sufficient to achieve data saturation and to ensure the credibility and depth of the findings, as recommended in qualitative sampling practices (Patton, 2015).

### **4. Data Collection Instruments and Techniques**

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interview guides were developed to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and strategies related to the internalization of Islamic values based on local wisdom. Observation was conducted to capture real-time instructional practices and students' behavioral responses during PAI learning, while document analysis included lesson plans, teaching materials,

and school policy documents. The use of multiple data collection techniques enabled methodological triangulation, enhancing the trustworthiness of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data collection was carried out from November to December 2025, allowing sufficient time for prolonged engagement and persistent observation. Instrument validation in qualitative research was ensured through credibility strategies such as triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing, which are widely recommended to strengthen qualitative rigor (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

## **5. Data Analysis**

Data analysis followed an interactive qualitative analysis model, involving data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. This analytical process was conducted continuously throughout the data collection phase to allow emerging themes to inform subsequent data gathering. According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), such an iterative process enables researchers to develop meaningful patterns and theoretical insights from qualitative data.

Thematic analysis was applied to identify recurring patterns related to forms of Islamic values, teachers' strategies, and the impacts of value internalization on students' character and religious attitudes. Although the analysis was conducted manually, systematic coding and categorization procedures were employed to maintain analytical rigor. This approach ensured that findings were grounded in empirical data while remaining aligned with the theoretical framework of value internalization and contextual learning.

## **RESULTS**

### **1. Forms of Islamic Values Internalized through PAI Learning**

The findings reveal that the internalization of Islamic values through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMPN 1 Keruak is systematically structured and holistically implemented. The values internalized are classified into three interrelated domains derived from core Islamic teachings, namely Akidah (faith), Sharia (worship), and Akhlak (morality). These domains are not taught as abstract concepts but are integrated into daily learning practices and school culture through the incorporation of local wisdom, allowing values to be meaningfully embedded in students' lived experiences.

#### **a. Internalization of Akidah Values (Faith)**

The internalization of Akidah values aims to strengthen students' belief in Allah (SWT) and to cultivate spiritual awareness as the foundation of moral behavior. The findings indicate that Akidah internalization at SMPN 1 Keruak emphasizes five core values: Tauhid, Taqwa, sincerity (ikhlas), gratitude (syukur), and tawakkal.

##### **1) Tauhid (Oneness of Allah)**

Tauhid is internalized by emphasizing that all forms of knowledge—religious and secular—are manifestations of Allah's power and wisdom. PAI teachers consistently link subject matter to divine attributes, particularly through the integration of Asmaul Husna in classroom explanations. A PAI teacher explained that religious instruction is always contextualized within students' cultural environment to reinforce monotheistic belief: "In SMPN 1 Keruak, PAI learning is always connected to local wisdom by instilling values such as Tauhid, where students are taught that all knowledge they learn reflects Allah's greatness. Asmaul Husna is used as the main medium to convey this understanding" (P01, male, PAI teacher, SMPN 1 Keruak, personal communication, November 6, 2025).

Classroom observations confirmed that references to Allah's attributes were regularly integrated into discussions across topics, reinforcing the understanding that faith is inseparable from everyday knowledge acquisition (Observation, November 10, 2025).

#### 2) Taqwa (God-consciousness)

Taqwa is internalized through continuous moral reminders and reflective learning practices that encourage students to act responsibly even without direct supervision. Teachers assign tasks related to good deeds and emphasize moral accountability before Allah rather than external control. This approach fosters internal moral regulation and aligns with students' cultural understanding of moral responsibility rooted in local communal norms (Observation, November 12, 2025).

#### 3) Sincerity (Ikhlas)

Sincerity is instilled by encouraging students to perform good deeds purely for Allah, without expectation of praise or reward. Teachers intentionally minimize excessive monitoring during charitable or religious activities to nurture intrinsic motivation. This approach reflects the integration of Islamic sincerity with local values that emphasize humility and self-restraint (Interview, November 14, 2025).

#### 4) Gratitude (Syukur)

Gratitude is internalized through habitual practices such as opening and closing prayers before and after lessons. Students are guided to express thankfulness for knowledge, health, and learning opportunities. These practices are deeply embedded in the school's daily routines, reinforcing gratitude as both a religious obligation and a cultural norm (Observation, November 18, 2025).

#### 5) Tawakkal (Reliance on Allah)

Tawakkal is taught by encouraging students to combine effort with reliance on Allah, particularly in academic and evaluative contexts. Teachers remind students to pray after making maximum effort, reinforcing the belief that outcomes are ultimately determined by Allah. This value resonates strongly with local cultural wisdom that emphasizes patience and trust in divine will (Interview, November 20, 2025).

The internalization of Akidah values is further reinforced through daily *Imtaq* (faith and piety) activities conducted before formal lessons begin. Students collectively recite short Qur'anic verses led by student representatives and conclude with prayers guided by PAI teachers, reflecting the communal religious culture of the school (Observation, November 22, 2025). One student noted: "Every student is instructed by the teacher to participate in the morning *imtaq* activities before lessons begin" (P08, male, Grade VII student, SMPN 1 Keruak, personal communication, November 25, 2025).

### **b. Internalization of Sharia Values (Worship)**

The internalization of Sharia values focuses on cultivating discipline, responsibility, and consistency in performing both obligatory and voluntary acts of worship. The findings indicate three dominant Sharia-related values: discipline in prayer, Qur'anic literacy, and social responsibility through *infaq*.

#### 1) Discipline in Performing Prayers

Prayer discipline is internalized through regular congregational worship practices conducted at school, particularly *Dhuha* and *Dzuhur* prayers. Teachers provide doctrinal instruction on proper prayer procedures, while practical implementation outside the classroom reinforces habitual discipline. A PAI teacher emphasized: "The most dominant form of internalization is the habituation of congregational prayers at school. Students are guided both theoretically and

practically to build consistency and discipline in worship” (P02, male, PAI teacher, SMPN 1 Keruak, personal communication, November 27, 2025).

Observations revealed that students perform Dhuha prayer in rotation due to mosque capacity, under direct supervision of teachers, demonstrating structured and consistent worship practices (Observation, December 1, 2025).

#### 2) Qur’anic Literacy and Love for the Qur’an

Love for the Qur’an is cultivated through morning recitations and tadarus activities, especially on Fridays. Students collectively read short verses before lessons begin, reinforcing Qur’anic familiarity as a shared spiritual practice. Teachers also assign tasks requiring students to identify Qur’anic verses relevant to PAI topics, strengthening cognitive and affective engagement with the Qur’an (Documentation, December 3, 2025).

#### 3) Infaq and Social Responsibility

Social responsibility is internalized through routine infaq activities conducted weekly, particularly during Friday charity programs. Students contribute voluntarily, with funds coordinated by class leaders and transparently reported. This practice teaches responsibility, empathy, and accountability, aligning Islamic teachings on charity with local traditions of communal support. A student explained: “We are asked to give charity every Friday. The class leader collects it and submits it to the teacher, and the total amount from each class is announced that same day” (P11, female, Grade VIII student, SMPN 1 Keruak, personal communication, December 5, 2025).

### **c. Internalization of Akhlak Values (Morality)**

The findings indicate that Akhlak values receive the strongest emphasis, as they are considered the most directly observable and socially impactful. Moral internalization encompasses honesty, respect and politeness, responsibility, and social ethics, all of which are reinforced through daily interactions and culturally grounded practices.

#### 1) Honesty

Honesty is cultivated through academic integrity, responsibility in assignments, and transparency in social activities such as charity collection. Teachers emphasize moral accountability before Allah, strengthening ethical awareness beyond rule compliance (Observation, December 8, 2025).

#### 2) Respect and Politeness

Respect and politeness are internalized through culturally contextualized manners, including appropriate speech levels, greetings, and respectful body language toward elders, teachers, and peers. The localized application of the 5S culture (Salam, Sapa, Senyum, Sopan, Santun) reflects the integration of Islamic ethics with local customs (Observation, December 10, 2025).

#### 3) Responsibility

Responsibility is fostered through students’ active participation in religious routines, environmental cleanliness, and social programs. Students are entrusted with roles such as leading prayers, organizing charity, and maintaining communal spaces, reinforcing accountability (Observation, December 12, 2025).

#### 4) Social Ethics

Social ethics are internalized through practices that promote empathy, solidarity, and mutual care, including collective support for peers experiencing hardship. These practices reflect the integration of Islamic moral teachings with long-standing local traditions of communal compassion (Documentation, December 15, 2025).

## **2. Teachers’ Strategies in Integrating Islamic Values through Local Wisdom**

The findings indicate that PAI teachers at SMPN 1 Keruak employ a set of integrated and deliberate strategies to internalize Islamic values through local wisdom. These strategies are not implemented in isolation but function as a coherent pedagogical framework that bridges Islamic teachings with students' socio-cultural realities. Teachers consciously position local wisdom as a pedagogical resource that enhances relevance, meaning, and sustainability of value internalization within PAI learning.

#### **a. Identification and Alignment of Islamic Values with Local Wisdom**

The first strategic step undertaken by PAI teachers involves identifying forms of local wisdom that are substantively aligned with universal Islamic values. Teachers selectively map local cultural practices, traditions, and social norms that resonate with the domains of Akidah, Sharia, and Akhlak. This alignment ensures that Islamic teachings are not perceived as foreign or detached from students' lived experiences.

A PAI teacher explained that the selection of local wisdom is based on its compatibility with Islamic principles: "As PAI teachers, our initial strategy is to identify and select local wisdom that is in harmony with Islamic values. We align cultural practices such as mutual cooperation, respect for elders, and community deliberation with the universal values of Islam" (P03, male, PAI teacher, SMPN 1 Keruak, personal communication, November 7, 2025).

Observation data confirm that teachers frequently draw explicit parallels between Islamic concepts and local traditions, such as linking *ta'āwun* (mutual assistance) with the local practice of *gotong royong*, or connecting Islamic ethics of respect (*ta'zīm*) with local norms of honoring elders (Observation, November 9, 2025). This strategic alignment allows students to perceive Islamic values as an integral part of their cultural identity rather than as abstract religious doctrines.

#### **b. Contextualization Strategy**

Contextualization emerges as a central instructional strategy in integrating Islamic values with local wisdom. Rather than delivering normative religious content in a decontextualized manner, teachers frame PAI material within concrete examples drawn from students' everyday lives and cultural environments. This approach enhances students' comprehension and emotional engagement with Islamic values.

Teachers contextualize learning by incorporating local narratives, folk stories, and historical figures known within the community to exemplify Islamic virtues. For instance, stories of local religious leaders or respected community figures are used to illustrate moral integrity, sincerity, and social responsibility.

One teacher noted: "We do not only teach religious concepts theoretically. We always contextualize them using examples from students' daily lives and local cultural stories so that Islamic values feel close and real to them" (P04, female, PAI teacher, SMPN 1 Keruak, personal communication, November 13, 2025).

Classroom observations revealed that teachers frequently use local expressions, idioms, and culturally familiar analogies when explaining PAI material, allowing students to internalize values through culturally resonant meanings (Observation, November 15, 2025).

#### **c. Participatory Learning Strategy**

The participatory learning strategy emphasizes active student involvement in the learning process as a means of internalizing values experientially. Teachers encourage students to engage directly in culturally rooted practices that embody Islamic values, transforming students from passive recipients into active participants.

This strategy includes field-based assignments, group discussions, and reflective tasks that require students to observe, document, and analyze local traditions through an Islamic ethical lens.

For example, students are assigned to observe communal religious activities or local traditions and identify the Islamic values embedded within them.

A PAI teacher explained: “Students are actively involved in observing and analyzing local traditions. They are asked to identify which Islamic values are reflected in those practices, so learning becomes experiential rather than merely conceptual” (P05, male, PAI teacher, SMPN 1 Keruak, personal communication, November 18, 2025).

Observational data indicate that participatory activities foster collaborative learning and critical reflection, enabling students to connect Islamic teachings with real-life cultural practices (Observation, November 21, 2025).

#### **d. Role Modeling and Habituation Strategy**

Role modeling and habituation constitute a foundational strategy in the internalization of Islamic values. PAI teachers consistently model Islamic behavior and culturally appropriate conduct, recognizing that students learn values more effectively through observation and repetition than through verbal instruction alone.

Teachers consciously embody values such as honesty, discipline, politeness, and humility in their interactions with students and colleagues. These behaviors are reinforced through daily routines and school-wide cultural practices, including localized applications of the 5S culture (Salam, Sapa, Senyum, Sopan, Santun).

A school leader emphasized the importance of exemplary conduct: “Teachers are expected to become role models in practicing Islamic values. What students see every day is what shapes their character, especially when these values are reinforced through habitual activities” (P06, male, Vice Principal for Curriculum, SMPN 1 Keruak, personal communication, November 23, 2025).

Observations confirm that habituation practices, such as greeting rituals, collective prayers, and respectful communication, are consistently implemented and culturally nuanced (Observation, November 25, 2025).

#### **e. Critical Analysis Strategy**

The critical analysis strategy reflects teachers’ efforts to cultivate students’ ability to engage with local wisdom selectively and reflectively. Teachers guide students to critically examine cultural practices, distinguishing those that align with Islamic teachings from those that may contradict core Islamic principles.

Through guided discussions and reflective questioning, students are encouraged to maintain valuable cultural traditions while rejecting practices that conflict with Tauhid or Sharia. This strategy promotes religious maturity and critical consciousness.

A PAI teacher explained: “We teach students to appreciate local culture while also being critical. They learn to preserve traditions that promote goodness and unity, but to avoid practices that contradict Islamic teachings” (P07, male, Teacher, SMPN 1 Keruak, personal communication, December 2, 2025).

Documentation analysis of lesson plans and instructional materials shows that critical reflection activities are systematically incorporated into PAI learning objectives (Documentation, December 6, 2025).

### **3. Impact of Islamic Value Internalization on Students**

The findings demonstrate that the internalization of Islamic values based on local wisdom at SMPN 1 Keruak has produced meaningful and observable impacts on students’ character formation and religious attitudes. These impacts extend beyond cognitive understanding and are reflected in students’ daily behavior, social interactions, and spiritual practices. The integration of

Islamic teachings with culturally familiar values has enabled students to internalize religious principles in a more authentic, sustained, and contextually grounded manner.

#### **a. Development of Social Character and Solidarity**

The internalization process has significantly contributed to the development of students' social character, particularly in fostering solidarity and collective responsibility. Students demonstrate increased willingness to cooperate, assist peers, and engage in communal activities. This social character development reflects the successful integration of the Islamic principle of *ta'āwun* (mutual assistance) with the local cultural tradition of *gotong royong*.

Observational data indicate that students actively participate in collaborative activities such as classroom cleaning, school events, and social service initiatives. These activities are not merely perceived as institutional obligations but are understood as expressions of religious and cultural responsibility. A PAI teacher explained: "Students no longer see cooperation as just a school rule. They understand it as part of their religious duty and local culture, especially when helping friends or participating in collective activities" (P09, male, Teacher, SMPN 1 Keruak, personal communication, November 19, 2025).

Observations conducted during group activities revealed spontaneous peer assistance and collective problem-solving, indicating that solidarity has become an internalized social norm (Observation, November 22, 2025).

#### **b. Strengthening Respectful and Polite Behavior**

The findings further reveal a notable improvement in students' respectful and polite behavior, particularly in their interactions with teachers, elders, and peers. This behavioral change is strongly associated with the integration of Islamic ethics of respect (*adab*) and locally rooted norms governing courteous conduct.

Students demonstrate heightened cultural sensitivity by using appropriate language registers, respectful gestures, and polite communication styles when interacting with older individuals. Teachers reported that students are more attentive to local etiquette and social boundaries. One student noted: "We are taught to respect teachers and elders not only as a religious obligation but also as part of our local customs, so we are more careful in how we speak and behave" (P14, female, Grade IX student, SMPN 1 Keruak, personal communication, November 26, 2025).

Observational data confirm consistent use of respectful greetings and culturally appropriate manners across school settings (Observation, November 28, 2025).

#### **c. Environmental Responsibility Awareness**

Another significant impact of Islamic value internalization is the increased awareness of environmental responsibility among students. Environmental care is framed as both a religious mandate and a cultural obligation, reinforcing students' motivation to preserve their surroundings.

Students increasingly perceive environmental preservation as part of their responsibility as *khalifah* (stewards) on earth. Teachers contextualize this Islamic concept by referencing local wisdom that emphasizes harmony with nature. As a result, students demonstrate greater concern for cleanliness and environmental sustainability within the school environment.

A school administrator stated: "Students now understand that keeping the environment clean is not just a school rule but a religious responsibility. This understanding is strengthened by local values that teach respect for nature" (P10, male, School Principal, SMPN 1 Keruak, personal communication, December 3, 2025).

Observations revealed improved student participation in environmental maintenance activities, such as waste management and school garden care (Observation, December 5, 2025).

#### **d. Improvement in Religious Discipline and Worship Practices**

The internalization of Islamic values has also led to improvements in students' religious discipline, particularly in the consistency and seriousness of worship practices. This improvement reflects the combined influence of structured habituation, teacher role modeling, and cultural reinforcement.

Students show increased consistency in participating in congregational prayers and in performing individual acts of worship. Teachers reported that students are more punctual and orderly during prayer times, demonstrating heightened religious awareness and self-discipline.

A student shared: "Praying together at school has become a habit for us. It feels incomplete if we miss it, because we are used to doing it regularly" (P16, male, Grade VIII student, SMPN 1 Keruak, personal communication, December 8, 2025).

Observations confirmed improved attendance and discipline during congregational prayers throughout the school day (Observation, December 10, 2025).

#### **e. Growth of Social Empathy and Care for Others**

The final major impact identified in this study is the growth of students' social empathy and concern for others. Islamic values of compassion (*rahmah*) and solidarity are reinforced through local traditions of communal support, fostering emotionally responsive and socially responsible behavior.

Students demonstrate increased empathy, particularly in responding to peers experiencing personal or family difficulties. The school community collectively organizes support activities, such as financial assistance and visits, reinforcing compassion as both a religious and cultural value.

A teacher explained: "When a student's family experiences misfortune, students immediately show concern and help. This practice has been cultivated for years and reflects both Islamic values and local tradition" (P17, female, Teacher, SMPN 1 Keruak, personal communication, December 12, 2025). Documentation of school social programs indicates that these practices are institutionalized and consistently implemented (Documentation, December 14, 2025).

## **DISCUSSION**

### **1. Results Analysis**

The findings of this study confirm that the internalization of Islamic values through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMPN 1 Keruak operates as a holistic and contextually grounded process. Consistent with the theoretical view that Islamic education aims to cultivate iman, taqwa, and akhlaq al-karimah as an integrated moral system (Ristianah, 2020), this study demonstrates that Akidah, Sharia, and Akhlak are internalized not as isolated domains but as mutually reinforcing dimensions embedded within daily learning practices and school culture. The integration of local wisdom functions as a mediating structure that enables abstract religious values to be translated into concrete, lived experiences, thereby strengthening students' moral awareness and behavioral consistency.

The prominence of Akhlak values in observable student behavior supports the argument that moral conduct represents the most tangible outcome of value internalization. This finding aligns with the internalization theory in Islamic education, which emphasizes that values become meaningful when they move from cognitive understanding to affective commitment and habitual action through modeling and habituation (Muhaimin, 2012). Meanwhile, Akidah values serve as the spiritual foundation that shapes internal moral regulation, while Sharia values reinforce discipline, responsibility, and consistency in worship practices. Together, these findings indicate that PAI learning at SMPN 1 Keruak successfully reflects the inseparable unity of iman, Islam, and ihsan as articulated in Islamic educational philosophy (Ristianah, 2020).

Furthermore, the identified instructional strategies reveal that teachers' pedagogical practices function as a coherent framework rather than fragmented techniques. The sequence of identifying and aligning Islamic values with local wisdom, contextualizing learning, engaging students through participatory activities, reinforcing values through role modeling and habituation, and cultivating critical reflection illustrates a systematic internalization process. This pattern reflects the principles of contextual teaching and learning, which emphasize the importance of connecting academic content with learners' real-life socio-cultural contexts to enhance meaningful learning (Johnson, 2002).

## **2. Comparison with Previous Studies**

The findings of this study are consistent with prior research highlighting the effectiveness of integrating religious values with cultural contexts in education. Previous studies have shown that local wisdom serves as a powerful medium for strengthening character education and preserving cultural identity when aligned with religious principles (Tilaar, 2015; Sartini & Adf, 2020). Similarly, studies on Islamic value internalization have emphasized habituation, role modeling, and participatory learning as key mechanisms for embedding values in students' behavior (Minhaji et al., 2024; Indarti & Efendi, 2024).

However, this study extends existing literature by demonstrating how critical analysis strategies are deliberately employed to help students engage selectively with local traditions. Unlike earlier studies that primarily emphasize cultural accommodation, the findings show that students are guided to critically evaluate local practices to ensure alignment with Tauhid and Sharia. This approach responds directly to concerns raised by Raisul Umam (2023) regarding the risk of misinterpretation when integrating local wisdom without adequate critical reflection. By incorporating guided critical analysis, this study offers a more balanced model that preserves valuable cultural traditions while maintaining theological integrity.

## **3. Implications of Findings**

Theoretically, this study contributes to the discourse on Islamic education by reinforcing the view that value internalization is a socio-cultural and pedagogical process rather than merely doctrinal transmission. By integrating value internalization theory (Muhaimin, 2012), value education theory (Halstead & Taylor, 2000), local wisdom theory (Tilaar, 2015), and contextual learning theory (Johnson, 2002), the findings provide empirical support for a culturally grounded model of Islamic education. This integration strengthens the conceptual understanding of how Islamic values can be sustainably internalized within diverse educational contexts.

Practically, the findings offer important implications for educators and policymakers. The results demonstrate that local wisdom can function as an effective pedagogical resource for Islamic Religious Education in public schools, provided it is carefully selected, contextualized, and critically examined. Teacher competence in understanding both Islamic teachings and local culture emerges as a key factor, supporting earlier arguments that systematic training and curriculum development are essential for effective implementation (Raisul Umam, 2023). The study also suggests that character education initiatives should prioritize long-term habituation and role modeling to achieve lasting behavioral outcomes.

## **4. Research Limitations**

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the research is confined to a single junior high school, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other regions with different cultural characteristics. Second, the qualitative case study design relies on participants' perspectives and researcher interpretation, which may introduce subjectivity despite rigorous

triangulation procedures. Third, the study focuses on short-term and observable behavioral outcomes, without longitudinal measurement of value internalization over time.

Future research is therefore recommended to involve comparative multi-site studies, integrate quantitative or mixed-method approaches, and examine the long-term sustainability of Islamic value internalization models across diverse cultural and institutional contexts.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the internalization of Islamic values through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMPN 1 Keruak is effectively realized through a culturally grounded and pedagogically structured model. The findings demonstrate that Islamic values encompassing *Akidah*, *Sharia*, and *Akhlak* are internalized in an integrated manner by aligning religious teachings with local wisdom. Teachers play a central role in this process by implementing systematic strategies, including value identification and alignment, contextualization, participatory learning, role modeling, habituation, and critical reflection. As a result, students exhibit positive developments in character formation, religious discipline, social solidarity, environmental responsibility, and empathetic attitudes, indicating that the integration of local wisdom strengthens both moral understanding and behavioral consistency.

Despite these contributions, this study has certain limitations. The research was conducted in a single educational setting, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other schools with different cultural and institutional contexts. Additionally, the qualitative case study approach relies heavily on participants' perspectives and observable behaviors, which may not fully capture the long-term sustainability of value internalization. The study also does not employ longitudinal measurement to assess the durability of character transformation over time.

Future research is therefore recommended to expand the scope by conducting comparative and multi-site studies across diverse cultural regions. Employing mixed-method or longitudinal research designs would allow for deeper analysis of the long-term impact of Islamic value internalization. Further studies may also explore teacher professional development models and curriculum innovation to strengthen the integration of Islamic values and local wisdom within broader educational systems.

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