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Integrating Religious Values in Schools: Strategies for Developing Student Religiosity

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Abstract

This study aims to identify and describe strategies used by schools to develop students' religiosity through religious culture, habituation, teacher modeling, and collaboration with families and communities. This research employed a qualitative approach with a library research design, analyzing accredited SINTA journal articles, academic books, and related studies. The results indicate that the development of students' religiosity in schools is implemented through five main approaches. Religiosity is fostered through daily worship habituation, including congregational prayer, Qur'an recitation, voluntary fasting, and morning charity activities. Second, teachers and principals play a central role by serving as moral and spiritual role models for students. Schools create a religious environment by cultivating the 5S culture and displaying religious symbols. The implementation of innovative religious programs and digital-based learning supports students' spiritual development in response to contemporary educational demands. The development of students' religiosity is strengthened through collaboration among schools, families, and communities as part of the tri-center of education. The findings confirm that the development of students' religiosity is not limited to formal Islamic education, but also requires an integrated and sustainable religious ecosystem that fosters faith, morality, and spiritual integrity among students.

Keywords

Development Strategy, Islamic Education, Religiosity, Religious Culture, Students.

1. Introduction

Education functions not only as a means of transferring knowledge but also as a medium for shaping students' character and moral values. One fundamental aspect of character education is the development of religiosity, which is the process of internalizing religious values reflected in students' attitudes, behaviors, and daily habits within the school environment. In the context of national education, strengthening the religious aspect has become one of the main pillars, as stipulated in the Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation Number 20 of 2018 on Strengthening Character Education, which places religious values as the primary core value that must be implemented in all learning activities (Hidayat & Kosasih, 2019).

In the current era of globalization, moral decline has increasingly become a pressing issue, particularly due to negative moral values that can easily influence students through various media, including print, electronic, and online platforms (Tang, 2018). Moral decline phenomena, such as gang fights, school brawls, alcohol consumption, smoking, or drug use, rape, sexual misconduct, theft, and others, have become concerns for educators. The rise in deviant behaviors among students and adolescents, which are inconsistent with religious norms, raises questions about the effectiveness of religious education implementation in schools. The low quality of Islamic Religious Education (*Pelajaran Agama Islam/PAI*) in schools is not the sole cause of students' deviant behavior; challenges such as limited facilities, diverse student backgrounds, and insufficient parental support remain obstacles that need to be addressed. The role of PAI is expected to serve as an agent of change in guiding students' behavior toward more positive directions.

Religious education serves as a means of shaping students' character. In religious education, interactions occur between educators and students across various learning activities. These interactions aim to transmit knowledge, skills, and character values to students (Khasbiyah et al., 2025). The success of religious education in schools cannot be separated from the role of families as informal educational institutions and the community as a laboratory for students to develop their skills and personal character (Gaol & Sianturi, 2023). Therefore, religious education can function as a means for students to develop character, personality, mental, and spiritual aspects that can serve as preparation for navigating social life (Biesta, 2019). Religiosity in an individual's life functions as a value system regarding specific rules. Generally, these rules serve as guidelines for attitudes and behaviors in accordance with the religious beliefs they adhere to. Religiosity as a system of religious values carries particular meaning in human life and can serve as a distinctive characteristic. Developing students' religiosity in schools is crucial for shaping the character, spirituality, and morality of the younger generation. Effective strategies involve integrating religious culture, teacher modeling, habituation, and the involvement of all school and community components.

Although religious education in schools is considered important for shaping students' character and moral values, previous studies have largely been limited to evaluating curricula or cognitive aspects of PAI, thus insufficiently examining practical strategies such as habituation, teacher modeling, school religious culture, and collaboration with families and communities. This issue is increasingly urgent given the rise of moral decline among adolescents, including brawls, drug use, sexual misconduct, and violations of social norms, amid globalization and the influence of digital media (Tang, 2018). This study offers a holistic approach by emphasizing the integration of religious culture, teacher modeling, daily habituation, and cross-environment collaboration as strategies for developing students' religiosity, thereby addressing not only cognitive aspects but also the internalization of spiritual, moral, and social values in daily life. Accordingly, this research aims to identify and describe

the strategies employed by schools to develop students' religiosity through religious culture, habituation, teacher modeling, and collaboration with families and communities.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Religious Culture, Teacher Modeling, and Leadership

Religious culture in schools is developed through a continuous process of value internalization, with habituation serving as one of the most effective strategies, particularly in early childhood education. Habituation embeds religious values through consistent and repetitive practices until they become an integral part of children's daily routines (Hadi et al., 2025). The internalization of religious values extends beyond verbal instruction and requires authentic lived experiences, such as collective prayers, storytelling about prophets, and spiritually meaningful play-based activities. These experiential practices allow students to connect religious teachings with real-life contexts, making values more deeply rooted and sustainable. Empirical evidence from Hidayah et al. (2025) demonstrates that religious habituation has a positive and significant effect on strengthening school religious culture. This culture functions as a foundational framework for shaping students' religious character, reflected in behaviors such as politeness, honesty, responsibility, and noble conduct.

Within this framework, teachers play a crucial role not only as academic instructors but also as spiritual leaders who transmit religious values through daily behavioral modeling. Teachers cultivate students' moral awareness through social interactions, religious routines, and consistent ethical conduct within the school environment (Hadisi et al., 2025). Leadership grounded in Islamic values further reinforces the formation of students' religious character and social ethics, as teachers act as visible role models in both instructional activities and everyday school life. Hussain (2025) emphasizes the importance of ethical leadership in contemporary Islamic education, particularly in the context of digital transformation, where teachers' behavior and communication become primary channels for moral and spiritual value internalization. Consequently, religious culture, teacher modeling, and ethical leadership operate synergistically to foster holistic religious character development among students.

2.2. School Environment and Culture

School environment and culture play a critical role in shaping students' religious character and behavior. School culture, defined as a set of values, norms, habits, and beliefs that form the identity of a school, directly influences the attitudes and actions of its members (Baihaqi & Sutama, 2025). A positive school culture fosters a sense of togetherness, discipline, responsibility, and pride among students. Retnasari et al. (2023) emphasize that cultivating religious character through school culture involves three key stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation. In the planning stage, schools provide physical facilities and infrastructure that support religious activities, while evaluation assesses the adequacy and effectiveness of these resources in promoting religious values. This structured approach ensures that the school environment consistently reinforces moral and spiritual development.

In addition to cultural practices, integrating religious lessons and activities into the school curriculum exposes students to diverse aspects of faith, encouraging reflection and internalization of religious beliefs (Fitriana et al., 2024). The presence of religious symbols and dedicated spaces, such as prayer rooms or chapels, further creates a supportive environment for practicing faith. Conducive school practices, including the mile, Greet, Say Hello, Be Polite, Be Courteous (*Senyum, Sapa, Salam, Sopan, Santun/5S*) principles, strengthen both social and spiritual values, while student organizations provide opportunities for active participation in

religious activities (Hidayah et al., 2022). Collaboration with families and communities extends the impact of these initiatives beyond the classroom, creating a holistic ecosystem that sustains students' religious character. Collectively, these elements highlight the importance of a well-designed school environment and culture in promoting continuous spiritual, moral, and social development among students.

2.3. Innovative Religious Programs and Collaborative Strategies

Innovative religious programs in schools employ participatory and experiential learning methods to contextualize religious teachings within students' daily lives. The experiential learning model emphasizes learning through direct experience, allowing students to actively internalize religious values. Zakiyah et al. (2024) highlight that by centering education on hands-on experiences, this approach not only deepens students' understanding of religious principles but also motivates them to implement these values in practical contexts. Schools have integrated innovative programs such as digital *quran* learning, eco-religious schools, and spiritual reflection classes, which combine modern technology and thematic activities with traditional religious instruction, enhancing engagement and promoting meaningful application of spiritual lessons.

In addition to program innovation, collaboration between schools, families, religious institutions, and community organizations plays a crucial role in reinforcing religious values outside formal learning environments. Yusuf et al. (2025) emphasize that active participation of parents in school initiatives complements teachers' structural responsibilities, creating a shared framework for value transmission. Furthermore, cross-cultural collaboration within Islamic educational institutions positively influences character development, fostering tolerance, empathy, and openness to cultural diversity among students (Amri et al., 2025). By integrating experiential learning with collaborative strategies, schools can establish a holistic educational ecosystem that not only strengthens students' religious understanding but also encourages the internalization of moral and spiritual values in daily practice, ensuring continuity between school-based and community-based character development.

3. Methods

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a literature-based design. The primary focus of the research is to examine strategies for developing students' religiosity in schools through various religious activities and programs implemented within the school environment. By adopting a qualitative approach, this study emphasizes in-depth understanding and interpretation of existing literature rather than quantitative measurement, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of practices, approaches, and strategies that contribute to religious character formation.

The data sources for this study consist of relevant literature, including peer-reviewed journal articles in SINTA, books, government regulations, and previous research reports related to religiosity development in educational settings. These sources were selected based on their relevance, credibility, and contribution to understanding the implementation of religious education, teacher modeling, school culture, innovative religious programs, and collaboration with families and the community. The inclusion of multiple types of literature ensures triangulation and strengthens the reliability and validity of the findings.

The research process involved a systematic literature search, selection, and synthesis. Initially, literature relevant to PAI, character building, and strategies for enhancing religiosity among students was identified using academic databases and institutional repositories. Selected studies were then critically analyzed to extract

key themes, patterns, and approaches employed in schools to foster religiosity. Thematic analysis was applied to organize the findings into categories such as habituation, teacher modeling, school environment, innovative religious programs, and community collaboration. This analytical process allowed the researchers to identify recurring strategies, evaluate their effectiveness, and compare findings across different studies to provide a holistic view of religiosity development in schools. This method enables the study to provide a comprehensive synthesis of existing knowledge on how schools implement and support strategies for nurturing students' religiosity. By relying on literature review, the study highlights effective practices, identifies gaps in current research, and proposes recommendations for enhancing religious education and character development within the school context.

4. Results

The literature review indicates that strategies for developing students' religiosity in schools can be implemented through several main approaches: habituation and religious culture, teacher modeling, strengthening the school environment, innovative religious programs, and collaboration among schools, families, and the community. Each approach plays a strategic role in shaping a holistic and sustainable religious character. Essentially, strategies for developing students' religiosity focus on habituation, modeling, school culture, innovative religious programs, and collaboration with families and communities. These strategies have proven effective in reinforcing students' religious values and cultivating continuous spiritual character.

The term "strategy" linguistically refers to "tactics," "tips," "tricks," or "methods," while generally it denotes a broad guideline for action aimed at achieving predetermined objectives (Mahmudah, 2018). The word "strategy" originates from the Greek term *strategos*, meaning an effort to achieve victory. Initially, it gained popularity in the military domain, signifying tactics, plans, or patterns. In technical terms, strategy encompasses a carefully designed plan of activities intended to achieve a specific goal (Hadisi, 2014).

Daily religious practices constitute the most fundamental strategy for nurturing students' religiosity. Activities such as congregational prayers, reading the Qur'an before lessons, voluntary fasting, and morning charity have been proven effective in shaping students' religious character. Research by Lestari et al. (2023) shows that religious habituation at SD Muhammadiyah 11 Randegan, including Qur'an memorization (*tahfidz*), *ta'lim muta'alim*, self-reflection (*muhasabah*), and Friday blessings, positively impacts students' awareness of worship, social care, and courteous behavior.

Through consistent repetitive activities, spiritual values are internalized into positive habits that foster discipline, responsibility, and sincerity in worship. Dahlan (2022) emphasizes that habituation is a primary strategy in the internalization of religious values because it trains students to practice Islamic teachings in daily life rather than merely understanding them cognitively. Additionally, routine activities such as memorization evaluations, joint prayers before and after lessons, and Islamic holiday commemorations serve as platforms to strengthen students' morality and spirituality.

The religious culture within schools creates an environment that naturally instills faith and piety. This aligns with the findings of Lestari et al. (2023), which highlight that a school's success in shaping religious character is largely determined by the continuity between formal spiritual activities (such as congregational prayers) and informal social-religious activities based on empathy. Structured and enjoyable habituation activities are able to cultivate a religious school culture, where every activity is imbued with divine values. Efendy and Irmwaddah (2022) note that

religious culture in schools functions as a social system that fosters spiritual solidarity among school members and encourages moral behavior.

Teachers hold a central position as role models (*uswah hasanah*) in developing students' religiosity. Numerous studies indicate that students are more likely to imitate teachers' behavior rather than merely follow verbal advice (Zulkifli et al., 2023). Teachers who demonstrate virtuous character, discipline, and simplicity have a strong psychological impact in shaping students' religious character. Teachers also act as spiritual guides and moral counselors, not only teaching religious values but also guiding students to apply them in real-life behavior. In this context, teachers serve as moral educators, instilling honesty, discipline, and tolerance through daily interactions. This aligns with findings by Khoiruddin and Sholekah (2023), which show that the success of religious education in schools heavily depends on teachers' pedagogical competence and moral modeling.

Role modeling is further strengthened by the principal as a spiritual leader who cultivates a religious climate across all school policies. According to Lestari et al. (2023), leadership that emphasizes spirituality can enhance religious awareness among teachers and students by creating a sense of belonging to the religious values instilled in the school. Principals play a crucial role as policy directors and guardians of the school's religious culture. Spiritually oriented leadership fosters an organizational climate that encourages all school members to practice religious values collectively. The modeling demonstrated by school leaders becomes intrinsic motivation for students to act religiously without coercion.

The school environment serves as a strategic venue for internalizing religious values. A conducive environment is a crucial external factor in shaping students' religious character. Schools that implement the 5S culture create a harmonious atmosphere filled with humanistic values (Revola et al., 2025). The use of religious symbols, such as moral posters, Qur'anic verses, and well-designed prayer rooms, further strengthens the school's spiritual atmosphere. According to Nata and Yakub (2023), a religiously oriented environment functions as a hidden curriculum that indirectly teaches moral and ethical values. This culture shapes religious awareness not through coercion but through social modeling and reinforcement within the learning environment.

Religious culture in schools is developed not only through formal activities but also via the hidden curriculum, including social interactions, courteous habits, and teacher-student communication patterns based on Islamic values. Thus, schools become social spaces functioning as moral laboratories for students. Moreover, involvement in student organizations such as Islamic Spirituality Groups (*Rohani Islam/Rohis*), student councils (*Organisasi Siswa Intra Sekolah/OSIS*), and Qur'an memorization groups provides opportunities for students to actively participate in religious activities. Family and community participation further extend the impact of religiosity development, as values instilled at school are reinforced through home practices and the broader social environment.

Literature also emphasizes the need for innovation in PAI methods to make them more contextual and engaging. Teachers are encouraged to use participatory approaches, project-based learning, or experiential learning that motivates students to apply religious values in real life. Some schools develop thematic religious programs, such as Islamically-oriented green schools, Islamic character classes, and digital Qur'an learning, integrating technology with Qur'anic education. These innovations enhance student engagement in religious activities while simultaneously addressing the challenges posed by the digital era, which demands more adaptive and flexible educational methods. Among the widely implemented strategies, digital Qur'an learning stands out, enabling students to read and memorize the Qur'an through interactive applications.

Eco-religious schools integrate environmental care with faith-based principles, fostering cleanliness and ecological awareness as part of spiritual practice. Additionally, spiritual reflection classes provide a structured space for weekly self-evaluation, where teachers and students engage in introspection and spiritual growth (Primandini & Sunarso, 2025). These approaches collectively demonstrate a modern, holistic effort to nurture both religious understanding and practical skills in contemporary learning environments. According to Lestari et al. (2023), the use of digital media in religious education helps bridge the learning preferences of millennial students who tend to be visual and interactive, without compromising the essence of spiritual values.

Religiosity development strategies are more effective when implemented through synergy among schools, families, and communities. Schools act as value centers, while families and communities reinforce implementation. Programs such as parental Qur'an study sessions, Islamic parenting classes, and community-based religious-social activities exemplify this collaboration. Support from religious families and social environments strengthens the success of religious character education in schools. The effectiveness of religious character development depends on the synergy among schools, families, and communities: schools act as facilitators of values, families reinforce habits, and communities provide spaces for social application (Santi et al., 2025)

Islamic parenting activities, parental Qur'an studies, and community charity are concrete examples of collaboration that strengthen students' religious values outside school. This model is known as the "tri-center education approach" (school, home, and community), aligning with Ki Hadjar Dewantara's concept (Fadllurrohman et al., 2023). Therefore, cross-environmental educational collaboration is key to creating a learning ecosystem that strengthens students' spirituality and morality holistically. Primandini and Sunarso (2025) further note that inter-institutional cooperation, such as with nearby mosques, religious organizations, and social institutions, can broaden the reach of religious character education effectively and sustainably.

Effective strategies for developing religiosity do not rely solely on the cognitive aspect through PAI learning but also require internalization through habituation, modeling, a religious environment, and social collaboration. These strategies create an educational system that integrates knowing, doing, and being, as emphasized in the Islamic character education paradigm. Implementing these strategies requires ongoing commitment and innovation from all stakeholders, enabling schools to become centers for nurturing faithful, knowledgeable, and morally upright individuals.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the multifaceted strategies employed by schools to foster students' religiosity, aligning with and extending prior research on religious education and character development. The results demonstrate that effective religiosity development in schools relies on a combination of habituation, teacher modeling, a supportive school environment, innovative religious programs, and collaboration with families and communities. This comprehensive approach confirms the arguments of Hadi et al. (2025) and Hidayah et al. (2025) that religious habituation and internalization through lived experiences are essential for embedding values in students' daily routines. Repetitive practices such as congregational prayers, Qur'an recitation, and ethical reflection become not only routine but internalized habits that translate into observable moral and spiritual behaviors. These findings corroborate the notion that habituation is not merely a cognitive exercise but a lived experience, echoing Dahlan's (2022) emphasis on

internalizing religious values through consistent practice rather than rote understanding.

Teacher modeling and leadership also emerge as critical components in developing religiosity, consistent with Hadisi et al. (2025) and Hussain (2025). Teachers function as moral exemplars, transmitting religious values through their conduct, while principals reinforce a school-wide spiritual climate by embodying ethical leadership. Zulkifli et al. (2023) and Khoiruddin and Sholekah (2023) study's findings affirm that students are more influenced by observed behavior than by verbal instruction alone. This aligns with the result, highlighting the role of teacher modeling and spiritual leadership in shaping both individual character and collective school culture. The synergy between teachers' daily conduct and leadership-driven policy creates an organizational climate conducive to sustained religiosity, providing intrinsic motivation for students to act morally without coercion.

Furthermore, the importance of the school environment and culture is reinforced by both the literature and the study results (Retnasari et al., 2023; Baihaqi & Sutarna, 2025). Schools that integrate physical infrastructure, religious symbols, and designated worship spaces, alongside structured cultural practices such as the 5S principles, establish a holistic learning environment that embeds moral and spiritual values in daily routines. Active student participation through organizations such as Rohis and OSIS, combined with the hidden curriculum, ensures continuous reinforcement of these values. This finding extends Fitriana et al.'s (2024) work by highlighting the school's environment as not merely a backdrop but an active agent in religiosity development, shaping both social behavior and spiritual identity.

Innovative religious programs and collaborative strategies further enhance this ecosystem. Programs like digital Qur'an learning, eco-religious schools, and spiritual reflection classes illustrate how experiential learning and technology integration can contextualize religious values, supporting active application in daily life (Zakiyah et al., 2024). Collaboration with parents, religious institutions, and community organizations strengthens the continuity of value transmission beyond school boundaries, consistent with Yusuf et al. (2025) and Amri et al. (2025). Such cross-environmental synergy fosters tolerance, empathy, and cultural openness, ensuring that character formation is not isolated within classrooms but reinforced across home and community contexts.

The implications of these findings suggest that schools aiming to cultivate holistic religiosity should adopt an integrative approach that combines habitual practice, teacher modeling, supportive school culture, innovative programs, and active collaboration with families and communities. By doing so, schools can create an ecosystem that nurtures students' moral, spiritual, and social development in a sustainable manner, aligning with the Islamic character education paradigm that emphasizes knowing, doing, and being.

6. Conclusion

Based on the results of the literature review, it can be concluded that strategies for developing students' religiosity in schools must be conducted holistically, in an integrated manner, and sustainably. Effective strategies involve a combination of religious habituation, teacher role modeling, a spiritually enriched school environment, and contextual religious learning innovations. Schools need to cultivate a religious culture that encompasses all aspects of life so that Islamic values can be internalized naturally by students. Furthermore, the tri-center education collaboration, among schools, families, and communities, plays a crucial role in reinforcing students' religiosity across different environments. Families function as habit reinforcers, schools as value facilitators, and communities as spaces for social application. Thus, PAI in schools can optimally serve as a means to shape the character, spirituality, and morality of the younger generation.

Despite offering valuable insights into strategies for developing students' religiosity in schools, this study has limitations due to its reliance on secondary literature, which may not fully capture contextual nuances or practical challenges in diverse school settings. The lack of empirical evidence on the long-term effectiveness of specific strategies, such as habituation, teacher modeling, innovative religious programs, and collaborative approaches, limits understanding of their sustained impact on students' spiritual and moral development. Furthermore, variations in cultural, social, and institutional contexts may affect the generalizability of the findings. Future research should address these gaps by conducting empirical, longitudinal, and comparative studies across different school types and regions, employing mixed-method approaches to both measure the effectiveness of interventions and explore students' perceptions and experiences. Such research would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how religiosity development strategies can be effectively adapted and implemented to foster holistic moral, spiritual, and social growth among students.

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Ethical approval was obtained for this study. The manuscript represents original work and has not been previously published, nor is it under consideration by another journal.

Data Disclosure Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.



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