

Internalization of Pesantren Culture in Shaping Student Character: A Qualitative Case Study at SMP Simanjaya Sekaran, Lamongan

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Available Online

<http://www.jurnal.unublitar.ac.id/index.php/briliant>

History of Article

Received 21 April 2026

Revised 31 July 2026

Accepted 20 August 2026

Published 24 August 2026

Keywords:

Character Formation,
Habituation, Internalization,
Pesantren Culture, Student
Character

Abstract: Pesantren culture has increasingly been integrated into formal schooling to strengthen students' religious and moral character. However, its effectiveness depends on the systematic internalization of pesantren values through educational practices rather than their transmission as religious knowledge alone. This study examines the internalization of pesantren culture at SMP Simanjaya Sekaran, Lamongan, and its contribution to student character formation. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with the principal, curriculum coordinator, Islamic education teacher, teachers, pesantren educators, and students, complemented by participant observation and document analysis. Data were analyzed through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that pesantren culture is internalized through four interconnected mechanisms: institutional and curricular integration, daily religious habituation, teacher exemplarity and continuous supervision, and the development of student self-regulation. These mechanisms manifest in practices such as salam and musafahah, congregational prayer, recitation of Aqidatul Awam and Ratibul Athos, Qur'anic memorization, cleanliness, discipline, and respectful interpersonal conduct. Observations further indicate that students demonstrate disciplined behavior with limited dependence on direct supervision. Thus, pesantren culture is internalized through the systematic integration of values, routines, exemplary practices, and sustained reinforcement, transforming pesantren values into everyday character.

Kata Kunci:

Budaya Pesantren, Internalisasi,
Karakter Siswa, Pembentukan
Karakter, Pembiasaan

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Abstrak: Budaya pesantren semakin banyak diintegrasikan ke dalam pendidikan formal untuk memperkuat karakter religius dan moral siswa. Namun, efektivitas integrasi tersebut bergantung pada internalisasi nilai-nilai pesantren melalui praktik pendidikan yang sistematis, bukan sekadar penyampaian pengetahuan keagamaan. Penelitian ini mengkaji internalisasi budaya pesantren di SMP Simanjaya Sekaran, Lamongan, serta kontribusinya terhadap pembentukan karakter siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semiterstruktur dengan kepala sekolah, koordinator kurikulum, guru Pendidikan Agama Islam, guru, pendidik pesantren, dan siswa, yang

dilengkapi dengan observasi partisipatif dan analisis dokumen. Data dianalisis melalui kondensasi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa budaya pesantren diinternalisasikan melalui empat mekanisme yang saling berkaitan, yaitu integrasi kelembagaan dan kurikulum, pembiasaan keagamaan sehari-hari, keteladanan guru dan pengawasan berkelanjutan, serta pengembangan regulasi diri siswa. Mekanisme tersebut diwujudkan melalui praktik salam dan musafahah, salat berjamaah, pembacaan Aqidatul Awam dan Ratibul Athos, hafalan Al-Qur'an,

kebersihan, kedisiplinan, dan perilaku saling menghormati. Hasil observasi juga menunjukkan bahwa siswa mampu menunjukkan perilaku disiplin dengan ketergantungan yang terbatas pada pengawasan langsung. Dengan demikian, budaya pesantren diinternalisasikan melalui integrasi nilai, rutinitas, keteladanan, dan penguatan yang berkelanjutan sehingga nilai-nilai pesantren berkembang menjadi karakter dalam kehidupan sehari-hari.

INTRODUCTION

Character formation has become an increasingly important concern in contemporary Islamic education (Aprillia et al., 2023). Schools are not only expected to develop students' academic competence but also to cultivate moral dispositions, religious commitment, social responsibility, and ethical behaviour that can be demonstrated in everyday life. In this context, Islamic education cannot be limited to the transmission of religious knowledge. Rather, it needs to facilitate the transformation of religious values into habits and patterns of behaviour. Tsani argues that Islamic education has an important role in developing values, good habits, and positive attitudes so that students become mature and responsible in their daily lives (Tsani, 2013). This perspective places character formation not merely as an additional component of schooling but as an integral dimension of the educational process.

One educational tradition that has historically placed character formation at the centre of its practice is the *pesantren*. Pesantren education is characterized not only by religious instruction but also by a cultural environment in which students learn through habituation, discipline, social interaction, exemplary conduct, and continuous guidance (Aprilia et al., 2022). Recent studies demonstrate that pesantren culture can function as a significant medium for character education. Miftahuddin, Aman, and Yuliantri, for example, show that Islamic character formation in an Islamic boarding school is implemented through religious learning, including *akhlāq*, *'aqīdah*, *fiqh*, and Islamic history, combined with educational practices that support the development of students' character (Miftahuddin et al., 2024). Similarly, Yusutria and colleagues emphasize that the evolution of character education in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools involves an effort to prepare students for social, technological, and global changes without abandoning noble character and the distinctive values of pesantren (Yusutria et al., 2024). Thus, the strength of pesantren education lies not only in what students learn but also in the cultural environment through which religious values are repeatedly experienced and practiced.

The internalization of Islamic values requires a process that moves beyond cognitive understanding toward habitual and meaningful action (Ningrum et al., 2025). Nursikin and Nugroho, in their study of the internalization of Qur'anic values in an Islamic education system, demonstrate that internalization involves the integration of religious values into the broader educational system rather than treating them as isolated religious teachings (Nursikin & Nugroho, 2021a). More recent research at Madrasah Kulliyatul Mu'allimin Al-Islamiyyah Gontor similarly indicates that Islamic values can be embedded through systematic educational strategies that influence students' attitudes, behaviours, and achievements (Idawati et al., 2024a). These studies suggest that the effectiveness of value internalization depends on the extent to which values become part of the institutional culture and are repeatedly reinforced through educational practices. In other words, character is more likely to develop when students encounter consistency between what is taught, what is modelled by teachers, and what is practised in their daily environment.

The relationship between pesantren culture and formal schooling is particularly important in the context of educational institutions that operate within or alongside pesantren environments (Aprilia & Sufirmansyah, 2025). The integration of pesantren values into formal schools raises a significant educational question: how can a cultural system that traditionally develops character through intensive religious and communal life be transformed into a systematic school culture without reducing it to formal religious instruction? Previous research has established that Islamic boarding school culture can be incorporated into formal educational settings. Bali, for instance, found that Islamic boarding school culture can be applied as a mechanism for developing student

character through internalization, guidance, and continuous development (Bali & Putriana, 2026). However, much of the existing research focuses either on character education within boarding schools themselves or on the general implementation of Islamic values. Less attention has been given to the specific mechanisms through which pesantren culture is internalized in a formal junior high school that serves students with different levels of participation in the pesantren environment.

This gap is particularly relevant because the transfer of pesantren culture into a formal school is not necessarily automatic. Students may possess different family backgrounds, levels of religious habituation, and degrees of exposure to pesantren life. Consequently, the school needs to construct institutional mechanisms that enable pesantren values to become shared practices. These mechanisms may include curriculum integration, daily religious habituation, teacher exemplarity, behavioural supervision, environmental management, and the reinforcement of social responsibility. The issue is therefore not simply whether pesantren values are present in the school, but how those values are transformed into repeated practices and eventually become part of students' everyday character.

Another important dimension concerns the relationship between continuity and educational modernization. Pesantren institutions have historically demonstrated an ability to respond dynamically to changes in the educational and social environment. Yusuf and Taufiq show that *kiai* responses to governmental regulations and educational change are not necessarily characterized by the abandonment of traditional pesantren values. Instead, pesantren actors may creatively integrate established traditions with modern educational developments in response to changing social needs (Yusuf & Taufiq, 2020). This perspective provides an important conceptual basis for examining formal schools associated with pesantren: modernization does not necessarily require the replacement of pesantren culture. Instead, pesantren values may be reorganized and institutionalized within contemporary educational structures (Aprilia & Munifah, 2022).

This study addresses this issue by examining SMP Simanjaya Sekaran, Lamongan, a formal junior high school operating within a pesantren-based educational environment. The school provides an appropriate context for examining the internalization of pesantren culture because its educational practices combine formal academic learning with religious habituation, *tata krama*, discipline, cleanliness, worship practices, teacher exemplarity, and continuous behavioural guidance. The unit of analysis in this study is the process of internalizing pesantren culture within the educational practices of the school, particularly the mechanisms through which pesantren values are translated into students' everyday behaviour.

The study asks: How is pesantren culture internalized in the educational practices of SMP Simanjaya, and how does this internalization contribute to student character formation? The purpose of this study is therefore to analyse the mechanisms through which pesantren culture is institutionalized and internalized within a formal junior high school and to explain its contribution to the formation of students' character. The study argues that pesantren culture becomes educationally effective when it is not merely transmitted as religious knowledge but institutionalized through the interconnected processes of curricular integration, daily habituation, teacher exemplarity, continuous supervision, and the gradual development of students' self-regulation.

The article is organized around this argument. Following the introduction, the method section explains the qualitative case study design, data sources, data collection procedures, and analytical process. The findings and discussion then examine the internalization of pesantren culture through institutional and curricular integration, daily religious habituation, teacher exemplarity and supervision, the development of self-regulation, and the challenges encountered in implementation. The article concludes by synthesizing how pesantren culture can be transformed into a sustainable school culture for student character formation.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design to examine the process of internalising pesantren culture within educational practices at Simanjaya Sekaran Junior High School, Lamongan. The qualitative approach was chosen to understand the meanings, practices, interactions and educational processes that enable pesantren values to be integrated into the daily lives of pupils, including how these values are institutionalised, practised, monitored and gradually internalised within the school environment. The case study design was used to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in its natural context, with a particular focus on the internalisation of pesantren culture in formal schools situated within a pesantren-based educational environment, as well as the interrelationship between institutional policies, the curriculum, daily routines, teachers' practices, pupils' behaviour and the pesantren environment as a unified educational phenomenon (Creswell, 2007); (Aprilia et al., 2025). This context is all the more relevant as the Simanjaya Junior High School curriculum document for the 2026/2027 academic year highlights the integration of character development, religious practice, discipline, responsibility, independence, social awareness, and a healthy lifestyle as part of pupils' development.

The research participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their involvement, experience, and roles in the implementation and oversight of pesantren culture at Simanjaya Junior High School, namely the headteacher, the curriculum coordinator, the student affairs coordinator (who is also a PAI teacher), a pesantren educator, a science teacher, and two female pupils. This selection was intended to obtain diverse perspectives on character building through institutional leadership, curriculum implementation, religious education, learning, pesantren culture, and pupils' experiences. Data sources also included school documents and participatory observation, meaning the study utilised three complementary sources of evidence: interviews, observation, and documentation. The interviews explored perceptions and experiences regarding the integration of Islamic boarding school values, particularly etiquette, discipline, worship, cleanliness, teachers' exemplary behaviour, habit formation, student supervision, and the relationship between the school's education and the Islamic boarding school, whilst the observations focused on religious activities, social interactions, discipline, cleanliness, the neatness of Islamic attire, behaviour in the classroom, and adherence to school rules. The document analysis covered the Educational Unit Curriculum (KSP), teaching and learning materials, and school regulations, particularly the KSP, which serves as the institutional foundation for the development of educational objectives, graduate profiles, the organisation of learning, and the character of pupils, and which has been established for the 2026/2027 academic year. The use of various data sources enables a comparison between institutional intentions, informants' statements, observed practices, and the provisions of the documents, thereby strengthening the basis for interpretation through triangulation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Data analysis was carried out interactively throughout the research process, following the framework developed by Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, which encompasses data condensation, data presentation, and the drawing and verification of conclusions (Miles et al., 2013). Data condensation was carried out through the selection, organisation, coding and categorisation of information relevant to the themes of institutional integration, religious practices, etiquette, discipline, teachers' exemplary behaviour, supervision, hygiene, social responsibility and self-regulation. The data were then presented in thematic patterns and relationships by comparing information from various informants with observational findings and documents to identify consistency, complementarity, and variations in the findings. Conclusions were subsequently drawn and verified through repeated comparison with empirical evidence to determine whether pesantren culture functions solely as religious education or has been integrated into the practice of school life. The analytical process yielded five main categories, namely (1) the integration of pesantren values into institutional structures and the curriculum, (2) daily religious practices, (3) teachers' exemplary behaviour and ongoing supervision, (4) behavioural discipline and self-regulation, and (5) the integration of pesantren character with contemporary academic

competencies, which subsequently form the analytical framework for the presentation of findings and discussion (Miles et al., 2013).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Institutional Integration of Pesantren Culture

The internalization of pesantren culture at SMP Simanjaya Sekaran begins with the institutional integration of pesantren values into the school's educational system. The findings indicate that pesantren culture is not positioned merely as an extracurricular religious activity but is incorporated into the school's vision, curriculum, graduate profile, behavioural expectations, and daily educational practices.

The School Operational Curriculum (*Kurikulum Satuan Pendidikan/KSP*) demonstrates this orientation by placing religious commitment, *akhlāq al-karīmah*, discipline, responsibility, independence, social care, and healthy living among the important dimensions of student development. The curriculum also establishes learning objectives that encompass knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Thus, character is institutionally positioned alongside academic competence rather than being treated as a secondary outcome.

This institutional orientation is reinforced by the curriculum coordinator's explanation that the school deliberately designs its educational system to strengthen the character students acquire through pesantren life. The school seeks to maintain students' religious and ethical formation while simultaneously developing contemporary academic competencies, including science and English. This indicates that the school does not separate religious character from academic achievement but seeks to integrate the two within its graduate profile.

Such integration is consistent with Nursikin and Nugroho's argument that internalization of Islamic values requires their incorporation into the wider educational system rather than their treatment as isolated religious knowledge (Nursikin & Nugroho, 2021). Idawati et al. similarly demonstrate that Islamic values can be embedded systematically within educational strategies to strengthen student character (Idawati et al., 2024). The findings therefore suggest that the first stage of internalization is institutionalization. Pesantren values become educationally effective when they are translated into institutional objectives, curriculum, rules, and expectations. In this sense, SMP Simanjaya does not merely bring pesantren practices into school; it reconstructs them as part of the school's educational culture.

Daily Habituation as the Core Mechanism of Internalization

The second finding indicates that daily routines are the primary mechanism in the process of internalising the pesantren culture at SMP Simanjaya Sekaran, Lamongan. The pesantren culture is internalised through religious and ethical practices that are carried out repeatedly and are integrated into the rhythm of school life. These practices include *salam*, *musafahah*, reading *Aqidatul Awam* and *Ratibul Athos*, implementation of *salat dhuha*, memorisation of the Qur'an, the imparting of religious advice, fostering good hygiene habits, and polite interaction with teachers and peers. The morning routine clearly illustrates this process. Teachers greet pupils at the school entrance; pupils offer greetings and shake hands in accordance with established norms before taking part in religious activities together. Based on the interview findings, these practices are carried out routinely and are not merely ceremonial activities performed at specific times.

The observational data corroborates the findings of the interviews. Pupils were observed to participate in religious activities punctually and in an orderly manner, forming neat rows for prayer, paying attention throughout the activities, interacting politely with teachers and guests, keeping the environment clean, and dressing neatly. The repetition of these practices is of great significance because the internalisation of values cannot be achieved through cognitive understanding alone. Pupils may understand that discipline, respect and cleanliness are values advocated by religion, but they may not necessarily be able to apply them consistently. Habituation provides pupils with repeated opportunities to transform their religious knowledge into tangible behaviour.

This process can be explained through the perspective of Self-Determination Theory, developed by Deci and Ryan. In this theory, the internalisation of values takes place through the development of behavioural regulation, starting with external regulation, that is, behaviour carried out due to external demands, supervision, or consequences; then introjected regulation, when values begin to be accepted but are still practised to avoid guilt or to gain recognition; identified regulation, when students begin to understand and acknowledge the importance of these values; and finally integrated regulation, when values are aligned with the individual's personal identity and principles. (Ryan & Deci, 2018); (Deci & Ryan, 2013); (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In the context of Simanjaya Junior High School, activities such as greeting one another, shaking hands, performing the Dhuha prayer, and maintaining cleanliness and order were initially carried out due to the existence of rules and teacher supervision. However, through repetition, setting a good example, and explanations regarding the religious and ethical significance of each practice, pupils have the opportunity to move from external compliance towards a more conscious acceptance of these values. At a more advanced stage, disciplined, courteous behaviour and maintaining cleanliness are no longer carried out merely because they are being supervised, but because they are understood as part of the students' responsibilities and sense of identity as learners within a pesantren-style educational environment.

This process of socialisation can also be understood through Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus. Habitus refers to dispositions formed through repeated social experiences, which subsequently influence the way individuals think, feel, and act in their daily lives (Bourdieu, 1977); (Bourdieu, 1990). Religious practices, patterns of interaction, discipline and a culture of cleanliness, when consistently practised at school, shape a social environment that enables the values of the pesantren to become part of the pupils' practical dispositions. Within this framework, the culture of the pesantren is not merely present as religious material or symbols, but also as cultural and social capital that is learnt through direct involvement in everyday practices. The findings of Miftahuddin, Aman, and Yuliantri indicate that Islamic character education in a boarding school environment develops through the integration of religious learning and character-building practices (Miftahuddin et al., 2024). The findings at Simanjaya Secondary School broaden this perspective by demonstrating that certain pesantren practices can be systematically adapted and integrated into the formal school environment. Thus, daily habit-forming can be understood as a gradual process that links values, practices, and the development of self-regulation. This process can be formulated as follows:

Pesantren Values → Repeated Practice → External Compliance → Acceptance of Values → Self-Regulation → Character Development.

The significance of habit formation lies in its ability to integrate religious and ethical values into pupils' daily routines and behavioural dispositions. Through consistent practice, teachers setting a good example, social reinforcement, and opportunities to understand the meaning behind each action, the values of the pesantren have the potential to evolve from externally imposed rules into principles that are accepted, internalised, and independently put into practice in everyday life.

Teacher Exemplarity and Continuous Supervision

The third finding indicates that teachers fulfil two interrelated roles in the internalisation of pesantren culture: as role models and as agents of ongoing supervision. The internalisation of values takes place not only through the subject matter taught, but also through teachers' behaviour and their consistency in reinforcing the expected values. The headteacher explained that supervision is carried out with regard to language, politeness, discipline, interpersonal relationships and pupils' behaviour both inside and outside the classroom. Pupils who display behaviour that is not in line with the school's values are given warnings and guidance, whilst teachers are required to set an example through their words and day-to-day behaviour. As the headteacher stated, "*Guru itu tidak hanya mengajarkan, tetapi juga harus memberi contoh kepada siswa. Kalau ada anak yang kurang sopan atau kurang disiplin, langsung diarahkan dan*

dibimbing.” (Headteacher Interview, 2026). The Islamic Education teacher also emphasised that the pesantren background of the majority of pupils provides an initial foundation for character building, as they are already accustomed to religious practices, discipline, cleanliness, and respect for teachers. According to the Islamic Education teacher, *“Anak-anak sudah memiliki kebiasaan dari lingkungan pesantren, seperti mengaji, disiplin, menjaga kebersihan, dan menghormati guru. Di sekolah tinggal memperkuat dan membiasakan agar menjadi karakter.”* (Interview with a PAI Teacher, 2026).

Teachers’ exemplary behaviour creates consistency between the values taught and those experienced by pupils in school life. Teachers do not merely act as conveyors of norms, but serve as role models who demonstrate how those norms are embodied in everyday behaviour. This is also evident from the experience of a science teacher who observed the influence of pesantren culture on pupils’ discipline and humility. He stated, *“Saya melihat anak-anak lebih terbiasa disiplin dan lebih tawaduk kepada guru. Budaya pesantren itu terasa dalam keseharian mereka, meskipun pembelajarannya juga mata pelajaran umum.”* (Interview with a Science Teacher, 2026). Interestingly, this process also affects teachers, as they need to adapt to the school’s pesantren-oriented culture. A science teacher added, *“Sebagai guru saya juga harus menyesuaikan dengan budaya yang ada di sekolah, karena nilai-nilai pesantren bukan hanya untuk siswa, tetapi juga menjadi bagian dari lingkungan sekolah.”* (Interview with a Science Teacher, 2026). Thus, teacher supervision is not merely a form of behavioural control, but serves as a transitional mechanism that provides guidance, correction and reinforcement until pupils gradually develop more stable patterns of behaviour leading to self-regulation. This finding is consistent with research showing that Islamic character education requires an educational environment that integrates values through systematic practice (Idawati et al., 2024);(Khoir et al., 2026).

From External Discipline to Self-Regulation

The most significant finding concerns the movement from externally supervised discipline toward self-regulated behaviour. The principal emphasized that the ultimate goal of behavioural guidance is for students to behave appropriately whether teachers are present or absent. This distinction is crucial for understanding the meaning of internalization. Behaviour that occurs only because a teacher is watching may represent compliance, whereas behaviour that continues when direct supervision is reduced provides stronger evidence that a value has become personally meaningful. The observation data support this interpretation. Students were described as appearing accustomed to discipline and order and as being able to comply with school regulations without strict teacher supervision. The internalization process can therefore be interpreted as a gradual transition:

External Regulation → Repeated Habituation → Behavioural Consistency → Self-Regulation.

This finding complements Bali’s research showing that Islamic boarding-school culture can contribute to student character development through systematic cultural practices (Bali & Putriana, 2026). However, the present study places particular emphasis on self-regulation as an indicator of internalization. The implication is that the success of pesantren-based character education should not be evaluated solely by whether students comply with rules while under supervision. A more meaningful indicator is whether students increasingly maintain appropriate behaviour across situations and contexts, including situations in which immediate supervision is limited. Thus, the internalization of pesantren culture at SMP Simanjaya can be understood as a movement from institutionally imposed discipline toward personally regulated character.

Environmental Continuity between Pesantren and School

Another important finding is the continuity between the pesantren environment and the formal school environment. Many students experience religious learning and behavioural formation in the pesantren and then encounter similar expectations at school. Consequently, school practices reinforce rather than contradict the values students encounter in the pesantren.

The ustadzah explained that pesantren values are integrated into academic and non-academic school activities. The Madrasah Diniyah also collaborates in developing religious learning so that pesantren and school programs can complement each other. Students are accustomed to religious practices such as *Aqidatul Awam*, *Ratibul Athos*, *salat dhuha*, congregational prayer, *tata krama*, and cleanliness.

The continuity of pesantren culture is also evident in the pupils' sense of responsibility towards the environment, particularly through the habits they have acquired within the pesantren setting such as cleaning their rooms, looking after their personal belongings, and taking responsibility for the cleanliness of communal areas, which are subsequently reinforced at school through classroom and school grounds cleaning activities. This continuity demonstrates that the values of responsibility, independence, and care for the environment do not end with practices at the pesantren, but are reinforced through daily activities at school. The school curriculum further strengthens this process through an educational orientation that explicitly emphasises religious practice, character building, discipline, responsibility, independence and social awareness as integral parts of pupils' development. Consequently, pupils receive a relatively consistent educational experience across both the pesantren and school environments, meaning they do not face conflicting messages regarding values and behavioural expectations, but rather encounter patterns of behaviour that share a similar direction in both educational settings. The consistency of this experience is a key factor in the process of internalisation, as the same values are continually practised, reinforced, and embodied in various contexts of the pupils' lives. This finding is consistent with the view that (Yusutria et al., 2024) that contemporary pesantren education continues to evolve and adapt, whilst maintaining character education as one of its key foundations. The case of Simanjaya Junior High School demonstrates that the cultural values of the pesantren can be sustained even when implemented within the structure of formal school education, particularly when these values are incorporated into the curriculum, daily routines and the students' day-to-day responsibilities.

Character Formation, Social Responsibility, and Contemporary Competence

The internalization of pesantren culture at SMP Simanjaya is not limited to individual religious behaviour. The findings also indicate its connection with social responsibility, cleanliness, solidarity, and the development of contemporary competencies. The ustadzah described activities through which students are encouraged to care for others, including collecting donations when a friend is ill. Students are also guided to maintain classroom and environmental cleanliness. These practices extend character formation beyond personal obedience toward social and communal responsibility. This finding is consistent with the broader understanding of Islamic character education in which moral development encompasses relationships with God, oneself, other people, and the environment (Tsani, 2013);(Aprilia et al., 2026). In the school context, religious values therefore become visible through concrete social practices.

At the same time, SMP Simanjaya continues to emphasize academic competencies. The curriculum coordinator explained that the school seeks to maintain pesantren-based character while developing science, English, and other contemporary competencies. The school has also explored Cambridge- and IB-oriented approaches as part of its effort to strengthen academic competitiveness. This combination suggests that pesantren culture does not necessarily function as an alternative to modern education. Instead, it can provide an ethical foundation for contemporary educational development. Yusuf and Taufiq's study of pesantren responses to educational regulation similarly demonstrates that pesantren institutions can negotiate change while maintaining their distinctive religious identity (Yusuf & Taufiq, 2020). The case of SMP Simanjaya consequently illustrates a model of transformative continuity: pesantren values remain the cultural and moral foundation, while their forms of transmission are adapted to the institutional requirements of contemporary schooling.

Challenges and the Gradual Nature of Internalization

Although the process of internalising pesantren culture at Simanjaya Junior High School takes place in a relatively systematic manner, the research findings indicate that character development does not occur automatically, uniformly, or without obstacles. Teachers identified a number of challenges in helping pupils adopt these habits, including laziness, boredom, waning enthusiasm, tardiness after break time, behaviour associated with the search for self-identity, and reluctance to participate in certain activities. These findings are important to avoid an overly idealistic interpretation of pesantren-based character education, as pupils remain at the adolescent stage of development, with diverse personalities, family backgrounds, social experiences, and developmental needs. Thus, the existence of pesantren culture does not eliminate variations in pupils' behaviour, but provides a framework of values and educational mechanisms that enable such variations to be channelled through ongoing guidance. The teacher also emphasised the importance of family education, as character-building at school can face challenges when the values instilled at school are not sufficiently reinforced within the family environment. This demonstrates that the internalisation of values is a multidimensional process influenced by interactions across various educational environments; consequently, its success is not determined solely by the school, but also by the continuity of these practices at home, in the pesantren, and within the students' social environment.

Therefore, the effectiveness of the Simanjaya Junior High School model does not lie in its ability to produce entirely uniform behaviour amongst pupils, but rather in its ability to establish sustainable cultural mechanisms through guidance, correction, habit formation, setting a good example, and reinforcing values. The research findings indicate that the internalisation of pesantren culture takes place through an interconnected system, namely Institutional Integration → Daily Habituation → Teachers' Exemplary Behaviour → Continuous Supervision → Behavioural Practice → Self-Regulation → Character Formation. This sequence demonstrates that pesantren values do not stop at the level of policy or institutional rules, but are translated into daily practices that are continuously observed, guided, and reinforced by teachers. Melalui proses yang berulang, siswa secara bertahap memiliki kesempatan untuk bergerak dari kepatuhan terhadap tuntutan eksternal menuju perilaku yang lebih sadar dan terregulasi secara mandiri. Dengan demikian, kontribusi utama penelitian ini terletak pada temuan bahwa budaya pesantren menjadi semakin terinternalisasi ketika nilai-nilainya tidak lagi hanya berfungsi sebagai preskripsi kelembagaan, tetapi berkembang menjadi kebiasaan, disposisi, dan perilaku yang secara bertahap diatur oleh kesadaran siswa sendiri. Proses tersebut sekaligus memperlihatkan bahwa pembentukan karakter merupakan proses dinamis yang membutuhkan kesinambungan antara struktur kelembagaan, praktik budaya, relasi pedagogis, pengawasan, dan lingkungan sosial siswa.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the internalization of pesantren culture at SMP Simanjaya Sekaran is a systematic and continuous process through which pesantren values are transformed into everyday educational practices and gradually developed into students' character. The process extends beyond religious instruction by integrating pesantren values into the school curriculum, daily routines, teacher behaviour, supervision, and the wider school environment. Four interconnected mechanisms support this process: institutional and curricular integration, daily religious habituation, teacher exemplarity and continuous supervision, and the development of student self-regulation. These mechanisms are reflected in practices such as *salam*, *musafahah*, *Aqidatul Awam*, *Ratibul Athos*, *salat dhuha*, Qur'anic memorization, cleanliness, discipline, and respectful interpersonal conduct. Observations further indicate that students can maintain disciplined and orderly behaviour with limited dependence on direct teacher supervision.

The findings highlight *transformative continuity* as a useful perspective for understanding the relationship between pesantren culture and formal schooling. Transformative continuity refers to the process through which core pesantren values are maintained while their transmission is

institutionally adapted to the structure and demands of contemporary formal education. At SMP Simanjaya, pesantren culture does not replace academic development but provides an ethical foundation alongside contemporary competencies. However, internalization is gradual and not uniform, as students' behaviour may also be shaped by individual characteristics, family background, peer interaction, and the broader school environment. Therefore, sustained habituation, teacher exemplarity, supervision, and collaboration among the school, pesantren, and family remain important for maintaining the continuity of character formation.

Theoretically, this study contributes to character education by emphasizing that the internalization of pesantren culture should be assessed not merely through students' compliance with institutional rules but through the development of stable and increasingly self-regulated behaviour. Practically, the findings suggest that schools seeking to integrate pesantren culture should prioritize systemic cultural integration rather than treating religious programs as isolated activities. Effective implementation requires alignment among curriculum, institutional practices, daily routines, teacher modelling, supervision, and the school environment so that pesantren values can be consistently reinforced and ultimately embedded in students' everyday behaviour.

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