

From Religious Knowledge to Moral Practice: A Multisite Study on the Internalization of Honesty in Pesantren-Based Madrasahs

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Honesty
Internalization,
Islamic Education,
Character Formation,
Academic Integrity

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This study aims to examine the internalization of Islamic teachings as a transformative process connecting religious knowledge with students' honest character in pesantren-based secondary education. Employing a qualitative multisite case study design, data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Data were analyzed interactively using data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that honesty internalization operates systematically through six interconnected strategies: exemplary conduct (*uswah hasanah*), habituation (*ta'wid*), contextual learning integration, moral advice (*mau'idzah hasanah*), supervision with reflective discipline, and school-pesantren-family collaboration. These strategies effectively bridge the gap between cognitive moral understanding and actual behavior, leading to enhanced academic integrity, improved social trust, and sustained honest dispositions. The study implies that fostering student integrity requires an ecological character-building model that moves beyond rote knowledge transmission to leverage continuous habituation, teacher modeling, and cross-environmental synergy. Consequently, educational practitioners must design integrated curricula that embed moral values into everyday practice.

Article History:

Received: January 07, 2025; Received in Revised Form February 12, 2025; Accepted: March 07, 2025;

Available online: March 18, 2025

Please cite this article in APA style as:

Arifin, S., Munif, M., & Winarno, A. (2025). From Religious Knowledge to Moral Practice: A Multisite Study on the Internalization of Honesty in Pesantren-Based Madrasahs. *Journal of Social Studies and Education*, 3(2), 147-163.

INTRODUCTION

Honesty (*al-shidq*) is a fundamental moral value whose development is essential not only for individual religious maturity but also for social integrity. In education, honest students are expected to demonstrate responsibility, trustworthiness, and consistency between faith, speech, and action (Shihab, 2002). Islamic teachings place honesty at the center of ethical life, as emphasized in Qur'an 33:70 and Prophetic traditions that associate truthfulness with

righteousness and righteousness with Paradise. Contemporary Islamic education further emphasizes that moral values should be developed through integrated mechanisms involving knowledge, habituation, exemplary conduct, and institutional culture (Wasehudin et al., 2024; Lukman et al., 2024). Similarly, Islamic religious education teachers contribute to religious school environments through role modelling and habituation (Aimi, 2025; Akhyar et al., 2024; Setiawan et al., 2025). Thus, strengthening honesty is both a religious and educational necessity.

Despite its normative importance, honesty remains a complex challenge in contemporary education. Academic competition, achievement pressure, fear of sanctions, peer influence, and normalized shortcuts may encourage students to separate moral knowledge from actual behavior. This indicates that understanding religious principles does not automatically produce consistent moral conduct. Recent studies show that character formation requires systematic internalization through habituation, discipline, modelling, and meaningful educational experiences rather than knowledge transmission alone (Febriana et al., 2025; Tsani et al., 2024; Ok et al., 2023). Transformative religious education similarly emphasizes learning processes that connect religious understanding with students' lived experiences and practices (Ju'subaidi et al., 2024; Ma'arif et al., 2024). Consequently, the challenge for Islamic education is not merely to teach honesty but to transform it into a stable disposition expressed in everyday decisions, particularly when students encounter academic, social, and personal pressures.

This problem is also reflected in preliminary field observations conducted at MA Nurul Qadim Kalikajar and MA Model Zainul Hasan Genggong, Probolinggo. Initial interviews with Islamic Religious Education and Akidah Akhlak teachers indicated a gap between students' cognitive understanding of honesty and its practical implementation. At MA Nurul Qadim, Mudhoffir Irwani reported that students generally understood Qur'anic and Hadith teachings concerning honesty, yet some copied classmates' assignments, avoided independent work, or provided manipulative explanations for lateness. At MA Model Zainul Hasan, Royhan Nur Iskandar described similar patterns when students experienced academic pressure or peer influence. Erina Rahmatika Ulya, an eleventh-grade student, also acknowledged that fear of academic consequences could encourage shortcuts inconsistent with Islamic teachings. Such conditions correspond with findings that Islamic character formation depends on continuous habituation, supervision, and school culture (Noor et al., 2025; Safitri et al., 2025; Taufikin et al., 2025), indicating that religious knowledge alone is insufficient.

Previous studies have established that Islamic character education can

strengthen students' moral development through religious instruction, habituation, exemplary behavior, advice, discipline, and supportive educational environments. Recent research particularly highlights the importance of integrated mechanisms for strengthening Islamic character (Lukman et al., 2024; Wasehudin et al., 2024). In pesantren-based settings, philosophical values, moral traditions, and structured religious practices can further shape students' ethical dispositions (Umar et al., 2024; Maslani et al., 2025). Other studies demonstrate that moral education can operate through culturally embedded practices and systematic character-building models across traditional and modern pesantren (Ar et al., 2025; Sunandar et al., 2025). However, much of this scholarship addresses honesty as part of general character education or emphasizes normative strategies without sufficiently explaining how values become internalized when students face academic and social pressures. This leaves an important gap concerning the mechanisms connecting religious knowledge, personal awareness, and actual moral behavior.

The present study addresses this gap by examining the internalization of Islamic teachings as a transformative process connecting religious understanding with students' honest character in two pesantren-based madrasahs. Its state of the art lies in analyzing how values move from doctrinal knowledge toward personal awareness, habitual action, and moral consistency within educational practice. This perspective is consistent with research emphasizing transformative religious education and the integration of Islamic values into sustained educational processes (Ju'subaidi et al., 2024; Tsani et al., 2024). It also extends studies showing that pesantren environments cultivate character through religious culture, teacher modelling, and continuous practice (Aimi, 2025; Sunandar et al., 2025). The study therefore does not treat honesty merely as an expected outcome but investigates the mechanisms through which teachers and educational environments facilitate its formation. Comparing two institutions further enables identification of shared patterns and contextual differences, particularly when moral choices conflict with academic, social, or personal pressures.

The novelty of this study is its emphasis on the practical transformation of Islamic values into honest behavior through a comprehensive internalization process. Rather than separating religious instruction from character formation, the study views them as interconnected through teachers' modeling, habituation, guidance, supervision, discipline, and the creation of a value-based educational culture. The research is important because it addresses the persistent inconsistency between students' moral knowledge and their actual behavior in settings that are expected to possess strong religious cultures. By examining this inconsistency directly, the study seeks to provide a more realistic understanding

of how honesty can become part of students' identity rather than remain a learned concept. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of Islamic education practices that are more consistent, contextual, and behavior-oriented in strengthening students' integrity.

The research problem concerns how Islamic values can be internalized effectively when students already understand honesty intellectually but do not consistently practice it. The provisional argument is that stronger honest character is likely to emerge when teachers function not only as instructors but also as moral exemplars and when religious values are reinforced through habituation, guidance, supervision, discipline, and a supportive school culture. Internalization is therefore expected to bridge the gap between knowing honesty as a religious obligation and practicing it as a personal commitment. This study contributes by identifying the strategies through which such internalization is implemented and by examining its implications for students' character. Accordingly, the research asks how Islamic teaching values are internalized at MA Nurul Qadim and MA Model Zainul Hasan and what implications this process has for students' development of honest character.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design using a multisite case study approach to explore the internalization of Islamic teachings in developing students' honest character. A qualitative design was selected because the phenomenon involves values, meanings, experiences, awareness, and behavioral processes that cannot be adequately understood through numerical measurement. The multisite case study enabled examination of Islamic value internalization within real-life educational contexts. The research focused on how Islamic Religious Education teachers implemented exemplary conduct, habituation, *mau'izhah*, supervision, discipline, and religious educational culture. This approach is consistent with studies emphasizing contextual and integrated processes in Islamic character formation (Lukman et al., 2024; Wasehudin et al., 2024). It also reflects transformative Islamic education, which connects religious learning with students' lived experiences and character development (Ju'subaidi et al., 2024; Febriana et al., 2025). The multisite design facilitated comparison of similarities, differences, and distinctive internalization practices across the two institutions.

The research was conducted at MA Nurul Qadim Kalikajar, Paiton, Probolinggo, East Java, and MA Model Zainul Hasan Genggong, Pajajaran, Probolinggo, East Java. Both institutions were purposively selected because they operate within strong pesantren-based educational environments and integrate Islamic values with formal education. Their differences in institutional culture,

educational management, and character-building practices provided an appropriate basis for multisite comparison. Pesantren environments are particularly relevant because sustained religious practices, discipline, and habituation support students' character formation (Sunandar et al., 2025; Pendidikan et al., 2025). Data were collected through passive participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Participants included madrasah principals, PAI or Akidah Akhlak teachers, and selected students directly involved in the internalization process. Observation examined teachers' strategies and students' behavior, while documentation included lesson plans, regulations, activity records, photographs, and relevant educational documents (Noor et al., 2025; Supriyandi et al., 2025).

Data were analyzed interactively through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification, following the framework of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. Data condensation involved selecting, focusing, simplifying, categorizing, and transforming interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents into information relevant to Islamic value internalization and students' honesty. Condensed data were displayed through narratives, thematic categories, matrices, and cross-site comparisons to identify patterns within each institution. Conclusions were continuously drawn and verified by comparing information across participants, observations, and documents. Trustworthiness was strengthened through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking. This procedure is consistent with qualitative research examining Islamic character formation through multiple educational mechanisms and contextual evidence (Ikhrām et al., 2023; Ratnawulan et al., 2025). Finally, cross-site analysis identified common patterns, contextual differences, and distinctive practices, strengthening the explanatory depth of the findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Islamic Value Internalization at the Two Research Sites

The findings from interviews, observations, and documentation show that Islamic value internalization at MA Nurul Qadim Kalikajar and MA Model Zainul Hasan Genggong was implemented systematically and continuously. The process was embedded not only in classroom instruction but also in daily interactions and institutional activities. Across the two sites, six strategies were consistently identified: (1) exemplary conduct (*uswah hasanah*), (2) habituation (*ta'wid*), (3) integration of Islamic values into learning, (4) moral advice (*mau'idzah hasanah*), (5) supervision and discipline, and (6) collaboration among the madrasah, pesantren, and parents. These strategies were implemented as interconnected practices rather than isolated programs.

Table 1. Strategies for Internalizing Islamic Values

No.	Internalization Strategy	Main Form of Implementation	Observed Orientation
1	<i>Uswah hasanah</i>	Teachers demonstrate honesty, discipline, responsibility, and consistency	Students imitate teachers' behavior
2	<i>Ta'wid</i>	Repeated religious and character-building activities	Honesty becomes a routine
3	Learning integration	Islamic values are connected with assignments, examinations, and daily experiences	Religious knowledge is connected with practice
4	<i>Mau'idzah hasanah</i>	Personal advice, reminders, and moral guidance	Students develop moral awareness
5	Supervision and discipline	Monitoring behavior and enforcing institutional rules	Honest behavior is consistently reinforced
6	Madrasah–pesantren–family synergy	Coordination and continuity of character guidance	Values are reinforced across environments

Exemplary Conduct as the Primary Strategy

At MA Nurul Qadim Kalikajar, *uswah hasanah* emerged as one of the most prominent strategies. Teachers demonstrated honesty through punctuality, responsibility, fairness, appropriate communication, and consistency between what they taught and what they practiced. Observation also showed that teachers arrived before lessons, participated in congregational prayer, maintained classroom discipline, assessed students objectively, and acknowledged mistakes when necessary.

The interviews indicated that students perceived teachers' behavior as a direct reference for their own conduct. Qurrata A'yun stated, "I see the teachers always provide an example of being honest, both in their words and actions. They are disciplined and fair to all students." Dwi Nur Inayah similarly explained, "Teachers do not only tell us to be honest, but they also give examples in their daily lives." These statements indicate that students recognized honesty as something demonstrated through behavior rather than merely explained through instruction.

The same pattern appeared in the second site. At MA Model Zainul Hasan Genggong, exemplary conduct was also positioned as an important starting point for character formation. Teachers consistently demonstrated the behaviors expected from students, creating a daily environment in which honesty, discipline, and responsibility were visible in interpersonal and academic activities. Thus, the findings from both sites indicate that teachers' conduct functioned as a direct source of students' experiences with Islamic values.

Habituation of Honest Behavior

The findings at MA Nurul Qadim indicate that habituation (ta'wid) was used to transform moral expectations into repeated daily practices. Religious and character-building activities were conducted routinely so that students encountered reminders concerning discipline, responsibility, and honesty on a continuous basis. Students reported that activities initially performed because of institutional rules gradually became familiar practices.

Qurrata A'yun explained, "The teachers always encourage us to be honest in both words and actions. Over time, I feel accustomed to being more disciplined and trying to do my assignments myself without depending on friends." Adelia Agustin similarly stated, "At first we did it because it was a rule at the madrasah. But because we were reminded and accustomed to it every day, it gradually became a habit." These statements show a progression from compliance with institutional rules toward repeated individual practice.

At MA Model Zainul Hasan Genggong, habituation was likewise embedded in the daily educational environment. The findings show that character-building activities were not treated as temporary programs. Instead, they were continuously reinforced through routine educational and religious activities, allowing students to encounter honesty repeatedly in different situations. This continuity was reflected in students' increasing responsibility in completing assignments, following rules, and interacting with teachers and peers.

Integration of Islamic Values into Classroom Learning

The results demonstrate that Islamic value internalization was integrated into classroom learning rather than restricted to separate religious activities. At MA Nurul Qadim Kalikajar, teachers connected lessons concerning Qur'anic verses, Hadith, morality, and the exemplary conduct of the Prophet with situations encountered by students in their academic and social lives. Assignments, examinations, interpersonal relationships, and the courage to acknowledge mistakes were among the situations used to contextualize honesty. Bapak Abdullah stated:

"In every lesson I always try to connect the material with the students' real lives. When discussing verses, hadith, or moral topics, I invite them to think about how these values are applied when completing assignments, taking examinations, or interacting with friends."

Bapak Mudlaffir Irwani similarly explained:

"If I only explain the verses or theory, they may understand, but they may not necessarily be able to apply it. Therefore, I often provide cases that they experience themselves and discuss them together so they understand how

honesty is applied in everyday life.”

Students also confirmed this practice. Qurrata A'yun stated that PAI teachers connected lessons with honesty in assignments and examinations, while Dwi Nur Inayah explained that connecting lessons with everyday situations helped her understand not only the meaning of honesty but also how to practice it.

Moral Advice and Personal Guidance

The findings also show that mau'idzah hasanah was delivered through repeated, communicative, and personal guidance. At MA Nurul Qadim, teachers did not limit advice to situations in which students violated rules. Moral reminders were also provided after lessons, during religious activities, and through informal interactions outside the classroom. Teachers frequently emphasized honesty, responsibility, trustworthiness, and accountability. Bapak Mudlaffir Irwani explained:

“Usually I approach the student first and talk to them normally. After that, I give advice gently so that they can understand their mistake. If we immediately scold them, they usually close themselves off. A personal approach is more effective than reprimanding them in front of other students.”

Students also described the advice as an ongoing reminder. Nabila Putri Syakib recalled a teacher's message: “You must be yourself, become a person of good character, be honest and have integrity, because one day you will become a leader in society.” Adelia Agustin added that teachers encouraged students not to be afraid to tell the truth even when they had made mistakes.

Supervision, Discipline, and Institutional Reinforcement

The findings indicate that supervision and discipline functioned as complementary mechanisms in the internalization process. Students were monitored not only in formal learning but also in their daily activities. Institutional rules provided behavioral boundaries, while teachers reinforced honesty through reminders and direct supervision. At both research sites, discipline was associated with responsibility for completing academic tasks, following examination procedures, and maintaining appropriate conduct.

The observed practices indicate that discipline was not solely punitive. It was incorporated into the broader process of character formation. Teachers combined monitoring with explanation, guidance, and repeated reminders so that students could understand the relationship between their actions and the values taught by the madrasah. This pattern was particularly visible in the integration of honesty into academic activities and everyday interactions.

Collaboration among Madrasah, Pesantren, and Family

Another recurring finding was the role of collaboration among the madrasah, pesantren, and family. At MA Nurul Qadim, communication between teachers and parents was maintained regarding students' development, while activities in the madrasah were aligned with the religious culture of the pesantren. The continuity of guidance meant that students encountered relatively consistent messages about honesty in the madrasah, pesantren, and home.

Adelia Agustin explained:

"My parents also remind me of the same thing at home, especially when studying and doing assignments. So what is taught at the madrasah continues at home."

At MA Model Zainul Hasan Genggong, the same collaborative pattern was identified. The head of the madrasah emphasized that honesty should not only appear while students were at school but should continue at home and in society. He stated:

"Our hope is that honesty does not only appear when children are at the madrasah, but becomes a habit that they carry at home and in society. Therefore, guidance must be carried out together by the madrasah, pesantren, and parents."

Implications for Students' Honest Character

Changes in Understanding and Moral Awareness

The findings show that internalization was associated with changes in students' understanding of honesty. Students increasingly described honesty not merely as a school rule but as an Islamic value that should guide everyday decisions. The process involved repeated exposure to religious teachings, teacher modeling, classroom discussion, and personal guidance.

At MA Model Zainul Hasan Genggong, the findings indicate that students developed a broader understanding of honesty through continuous internalization. Honesty was increasingly associated with personal responsibility and the obligation to act consistently even when direct supervision was absent. The overall findings from both sites identify changes in understanding and moral awareness as the first major implication of the internalization process.

Changes in Everyday Behavior

The findings further indicate observable changes in students' daily behavior. Students demonstrated greater responsibility in completing assignments, followed academic rules, and increasingly attempted to complete academic work independently. At MA Nurul Qadim, students specifically reported becoming accustomed to completing assignments themselves rather than relying on peers.

Observation at MA Model Zainul Hasan also showed students

participating in learning activities in an orderly manner, completing assignments independently, and following rules during evaluation. Teachers consistently reinforced academic integrity, resulting in honesty becoming increasingly visible as part of students' everyday learning behavior.

Changes in Social Interaction

Honesty was also associated with changes in students' social relationships. At MA Nurul Qadim, observation showed students interacting with teachers and peers through mutual assistance, open discussion, respect for different opinions, and constructive communication. Students reported increased trust and respect among peers.

Nabila Putri Syakib stated:

"I feel that my friends now respect one another more. When we are entrusted with something, we also try to take care of it because we are learning together to be honest."

At MA Model Zainul Hasan, the findings similarly showed more open and respectful social interaction. Honesty was increasingly associated with mutual trust, responsibility, and harmonious relationships among students.

Development of an Integrity-Based Academic Culture

A further finding was the emergence of an academic culture emphasizing honesty, responsibility, and discipline. At MA Nurul Qadim, students increasingly completed assignments independently, followed academic regulations, and valued the learning process as a form of personal responsibility. Bapak Abdullah stated:

"We always emphasize that learning success is not only measured by the grade obtained, but also by the process of achieving it. A grade earned honestly is more valuable than an achievement obtained through improper means."

At MA Model Zainul Hasan, the same pattern appeared. The head of the madrasah emphasized that academic achievement should be obtained through honest processes, while teachers observed increasing student independence and responsibility during assignments and evaluations.

Sustainability of Students' Honest Character

The final finding concerns the sustainability of honest character beyond immediate compliance with school rules. At MA Model Zainul Hasan, students increasingly viewed honesty as a value that should accompany them beyond the madrasah. Nabila Putri Syakib stated:

"I try to remain honest wherever I am, not only at the madrasah. What the teachers teach me, I also apply at home and when I interact with friends."

Erina Rahmatika Ulya similarly explained:

"I hope this habit of honesty will continue because even after leaving

school, we will still face many situations that require honesty.”

Resti Aulia added that continuous habituation could become preparation for students’ future social lives:

“If we become accustomed to being honest from now, hopefully later in society we will not easily follow bad things. So honesty can remain a habit.”

Observation further showed responsibility in completing tasks, discipline in following rules, and honesty in interactions with teachers and peers. These findings indicate that the internalization process was increasingly reflected in students’ behavior rather than remaining limited to their understanding of Islamic teachings.

Cross-Site Results

The cross-site findings reveal a consistent pattern across MA Nurul Qadim Kalikajar and MA Model Zainul Hasan Genggong. Both institutions implemented honesty internalization through the same six major strategies: *uswah hasanah*, *ta'wid*, integration into learning, *mau'idzah hasanah*, supervision and discipline, and collaboration among the *madrrasah*, *pesantren*, and parents.

Table 2. Cross-Site Comparison of Findings

Dimension	MA Nurul Qadim Kalikajar	MA Model Zainul Hasan Genggong
Teacher modeling	Strong emphasis on teachers’ consistency, punctuality, honesty, and responsibility	Teachers function as daily examples of honesty and discipline
Habituation	Routine religious activities and repeated reminders	Continuous character-building activities integrated into school culture
Learning integration	Honesty connected to assignments, examinations, and daily cases	Honesty reinforced through academic activities and learning processes
Moral advice	Personal, communicative, and humanistic guidance	Repeated moral reminders integrated into student development
Supervision	Daily monitoring and reinforcement of discipline	Academic and behavioral supervision
Family/ <i>pesantren</i> involvement	Active communication and continuity of guidance	Joint responsibility for sustaining honesty beyond school
Main observed implication	More independent learning, trust, and academic integrity	Stronger academic integrity, social trust, and continuity of honesty
Sustainability	Honesty increasingly practiced as a daily habit	Honesty increasingly viewed as a value for life beyond school

The cross-site results also show six major implications of internalization: changes in students’ understanding of honesty, changes in attitudes and moral awareness, changes in everyday honest behavior, improved social interaction, development of an integrity-based academic culture, and sustainability of honest

character.

Overall, the empirical results demonstrate a consistent sequence across the two sites: Islamic values were presented and modeled, repeatedly practiced, reinforced through learning and guidance, monitored through institutional mechanisms, and supported by the wider educational environment. The resulting changes were visible in students' understanding, attitudes, behavior, social relationships, academic practices, and efforts to maintain honesty beyond the immediate school context.

Discussion

The findings indicate that internalization of Islamic teachings at MA Nurul Qadim Kalikajar and MA Model Zainul Hasan Genggong operates as a continuous and multidimensional process rather than a one-way transfer of religious knowledge. This finding is consistent with studies emphasizing that Islamic character formation requires integrated processes involving knowledge, habituation, leadership, and educational culture (Wasehudin et al., 2024; Umar et al., 2024). It also supports transformative religious education, where Islamic learning is connected with students' lived practices and moral development (Ju'subaidi et al., 2024; Rivaldi & Ramadhan, 2024). However, the present study extends this literature by showing how these mechanisms specifically interact in developing honesty. Its contribution lies in conceptualizing internalization as an ecological process involving teachers, madrasahs, pesantren, and families. This integrated pattern represents the study's principal novelty.

Teacher exemplary conduct emerged as a central mechanism through which students experienced honesty in practice. Rather than functioning only as transmitters of religious knowledge, teachers became behavioral references whose consistency shaped students' interpretation of Islamic values. This finding corresponds with the *uswah hasanah* model, which positions exemplary conduct as an important pedagogical mechanism in Islamic Religious Education (Wahidi & Syahidin, 2024). It also aligns with research showing that Islamic educational leadership can support students' character development (Rivaldi & Ramadhan, 2024). Nevertheless, the present findings extend these studies by identifying teacher modelling as the experiential entry point through which honesty moves from doctrinal understanding to observable practice. The contribution is therefore the specification of modelling as a mechanism of value internalization, while the novelty lies in demonstrating its relevance to honesty under academic and interpersonal pressures.

The findings further show that habituation transforms honesty from an externally regulated expectation into an increasingly familiar behavioral practice. Repeated religious activities, independent academic work, reminders, and daily discipline provided opportunities for students to practice honesty across contexts. This result is consistent with research emphasizing habituation and

discipline as important components of Islamic character formation (Febriana et al., 2025; Supriyandi et al., 2025). It also corresponds with evidence that structured religious practices, such as halaqah, facilitate moral-value internalization in pesantren environments (Noor et al., 2025). However, the present study adds an important dimension by showing that habituation operates across both religious and academic situations, allowing honesty to become a transferable behavioral disposition. Its contribution is therefore the identification of habituation as a bridge between moral awareness and behavioral consistency, while its novelty lies in connecting this mechanism specifically to honest conduct.

Another important finding concerns the contextual integration of Islamic values into ordinary classroom learning. Teachers connected Qur'anic teachings, Hadith, and moral concepts with assignments, examinations, interpersonal relationships, and everyday experiences. This finding supports studies arguing that Islamic education should integrate character formation with students' learning experiences rather than isolate moral education from academic processes (Wasehudin et al., 2024; Ratnawulan et al., 2025). It also resonates with pesantren-based educational models that combine religious traditions with contemporary educational demands (Pendidikan et al., 2025; Haryanto et al., 2025). However, the present study differs by highlighting students' actual moral dilemmas as instructional resources. The contribution lies in demonstrating how contextual learning enables students to interpret honesty as practical responsibility. The novelty is therefore the identification of real academic and social dilemmas as a pedagogical bridge between Islamic principles and students' moral decision-making.

The findings also demonstrate that *mau'idzah hasanah*, supervision, and discipline are most effective when combined with supportive interpersonal guidance rather than implemented through punishment alone. Teachers used dialogue, personal reminders, and repeated moral guidance to encourage students to acknowledge mistakes and choose honest responses. This finding complements research on teachers' strategies for developing religious and disciplinary character (Supriyandi et al., 2025) and research emphasizing the urgency of noble-character education for students' social behavior (Safrilsyah et al., 2024). However, the present study reveals that corrective mechanisms become more meaningful when students are encouraged to understand the moral consequences of their actions. Its contribution lies in positioning discipline as reflective guidance rather than merely behavioral control. The novelty is the identification of a humanistic reinforcement mechanism combining supervision, empathy, dialogue, and moral reasoning to strengthen voluntary honesty.

The cross-site findings further indicate that sustainable internalization depends on continuity among the madrasah, pesantren, and family. This finding is consistent with research demonstrating that Islamic character formation involves collaboration among teachers, parents, and broader educational

environments (Syafri & Budin, 2025). It also corresponds with comparative evidence showing that traditional and modern pesantren employ different institutional models while maintaining character-building functions (Sunandar et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the present study extends these perspectives by positioning environmental continuity as a condition for sustaining honesty beyond direct teacher supervision. This is particularly relevant amid contemporary challenges to character education in Society 5.0, where students encounter increasingly complex social and digital influences (Zuhri et al., 2025; Subandi et al., 2025). The contribution is an ecosystem-oriented explanation of honesty formation, while the novelty lies in demonstrating how consistency across educational environments supports the durability of internalized values.

Overall, the study develops an integrated explanation of how Islamic teachings become students' honest character through mutually reinforcing mechanisms: teachers model values, students repeatedly practice them, classroom learning contextualizes them, *mau'idzah* develops reflection, supervision reinforces conduct, and the madrasah–pesantren–family ecosystem sustains internalization. This finding strengthens previous models emphasizing integrated character education (Umar et al., 2024; Wasehudin et al., 2024) while extending transformative approaches to the specific moral domain of honesty (Ju'subaidi et al., 2024; Ikhram et al., 2023). The principal contribution is therefore a process-oriented framework that explains not only what Islamic character education seeks to achieve but how honesty is progressively constructed through interaction between knowledge, awareness, practice, and environment. Its novelty lies in deriving this integrated internalization pattern from comparative evidence across two pesantren-based madrasahs, thereby moving beyond teacher-centered explanations toward an ecological account of moral character formation.

CONCLUSION

The most important finding of this study is that the internalization of Islamic teachings strengthens students' honest character when it is implemented as a continuous educational process rather than merely as the transmission of moral knowledge. At MA Nurul Qadim Kalikajar and MA Model Zainul Hasan Genggong, honesty was developed through exemplary conduct (*uswah hasanah*), habituation, Islamic learning, moral advice (*mau'izhah hasanah*), supervision and discipline, and collaboration among madrasahs, pesantren, and families. The central lesson is that students' understanding of honesty becomes meaningful when religious values are consistently experienced, practiced, and reinforced within their educational environment. Scientifically, this study contributes by conceptualizing Islamic value internalization as an integrated process connecting moral knowledge, awareness, habituation, and ethical action, while highlighting the role of the pesantren-based educational ecosystem in sustaining character formation. Nevertheless, the study is limited by its focus on

two madrasahs and its qualitative interpretation of context-specific experiences, which may constrain broader generalization. Future research should examine other institutions, regions, and character dimensions and consider longitudinal or mixed-method approaches to assess the sustainability and measurable development of Islamic character internalization.

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