



# The Mechanisms of Religious Value Internalization in the Formation of Students' Prosocial Behaviour at Rabbani Elementary School, Bandung

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the process of internalizing religious values and its relation to students' prosocial behavior in the context of an Islamic primary school, specifically at SD Rabbani Bandung. This study is motivated by the limited empirical understanding of how religious values are practiced and experienced in students' daily activities at the elementary level. A qualitative case study design was employed. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation involving the principal, teachers, and students, and were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings indicate that the internalization of religious values occurs through four main mechanisms: religious habituation, teacher modeling, positive reinforcement, and socio-religious experiences. Students who not only participate in activities but also understand and reflect on the values tend to demonstrate more consistent prosocial behaviors, such as helping, sharing, and cooperation. The results also highlight the importance of daily interactions and school culture in supporting the transformation of values into observable behavior. This study contributes by providing an empirical description of the process of value internalization in an Islamic primary school context and offering insights for developing more reflective, experience-based character education practices.

## Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji proses internalisasi nilai religius dan kaitannya dengan perilaku prososial siswa di SD Rabbani Bandung. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif dengan pengumpulan data melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan dokumentasi yang melibatkan kepala sekolah, guru, dan siswa. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa internalisasi nilai religius berlangsung melalui empat mekanisme utama, yaitu pembiasaan religius, keteladanan guru, penguatan positif, dan pengalaman sosial-keagamaan. Siswa yang memahami dan merefleksikan nilai-nilai tersebut cenderung menunjukkan perilaku prososial yang lebih konsisten, seperti menolong, berbagi, dan bekerja sama. Temuan juga menegaskan pentingnya budaya sekolah dan interaksi sehari-hari dalam membentuk perilaku siswa.

Penelitian ini memberikan gambaran empiris tentang internalisasi nilai di sekolah dasar Islam serta menjadi masukan bagi pengembangan pendidikan karakter yang lebih reflektif dan berbasis pengalaman.

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## Introduction

Basic education has a strategic role in shaping children's character and social behavior, including in the development of religious values and prosocial behaviors such as empathy, cooperation, and concern for others. (Atin & Maemonah, 2022; Hady et al., 2025). In the context of Islamic education, the internalization of religious values is often regarded as the primary foundation for the formation of students' character. Various studies show that religious learning, habituation of worship, and the school's religious culture contribute to the formation of positive social attitudes in students. (Minhaji et al., 2024; Suroso & Husin, 2024). This indicates that schools not only function as a place for knowledge transfer but also as a space for value formation, with implications for students' social behavior.

However, the assumption that stronger internalization of religious values automatically leads to high levels of prosocial behavior requires critical review. In practice, it is not uncommon to find students who are active in religious rituals but have not yet demonstrated social behavior that consistently reflects those values. This condition indicates that the internalization of values is not enough to stop at symbolic practices or formal rituals, but requires a process of understanding, reflection, and meaningful social experience so that the values truly become part of the student's personality. Thus, the relationship between religiosity and prosocial behavior is nonlinear and influenced by the quality of students' internalization process.

Several studies indicate that the internalization of religious values occurs not only through formal learning but also through habituation, role modeling, and social interaction within the school environment. (M. N. Amin et al., 2024; Minhaji et al., 2024). In addition, other studies emphasize the importance of social rewards, modeling, and repeated experiences in shaping an individual's internal value system. (Rong & Kleiman-Weiner, 2024). Research on prosocial behavior also shows that empathy, self-regulation, and the quality of social relationships are important mediators between the values held and actual actions. (Kelly et al., 2024). Nevertheless, most studies still focus on the presence of religious activities or programs and do not explain in depth how the process of value internalization occurs in students' daily practices.

Furthermore, several limitations in previous studies indicate a research gap. First, many studies were conducted at the secondary education level, thus inadequately reflecting the dynamics of value internalization at the elementary school age, which remains highly influenced by the social environment. Second, existing research tends to emphasize aspects of religious activities or habituation, but has not explicitly outlined how these values are understood, reflected upon, and experienced by students in daily interactions. Third, studies that directly link the mechanisms of religious value internalization to the formation of prosocial behavior in the context of Islamic elementary schools remain limited.

In this study, religious values are not understood in general terms. However, they are operationalized as moral and social values taught within the context of Islamic education and reflected in students' daily behavior. These values include honesty, responsibility, discipline in worship, empathy, concern for others, and a spirit of helping and cooperation. These values are not only conveyed through learning materials but also internalized through habituation, role modeling, and social interactions within the school environment, allowing students not only to understand them but also to embody them in everyday practice.

In line with this, prosocial behavior in this study is understood as voluntary actions aimed at benefiting others or groups. Operationally, prosocial behavior is identified by several indicators, namely sharing with friends, helping friends who are experiencing difficulties, cooperating in group activities, showing empathy toward others' conditions, social concern in joint activities, and adherence to social norms in the school environment. These indicators are used as a reference in the observation and data analysis process to assess the extent to which internalized values manifest in students' actual behavior.

Nevertheless, studies that specifically link the operationalization of religious values to prosocial behavior in students' daily practices remain relatively limited. In addition, there are not many studies that thoroughly examine the role of school culture and teacher practices in transforming symbolic religiosity into actual prosocial behavior. In fact, from the perspective of character education, the quality of social interactions, teacher role modeling, and students' collective experiences are key to bridging values and actions. (Huang et al., 2023; Soininen et al., 2023).

Based on this gap, this study aims to examine in depth how the process of internalizing religious values occurs in the context of Islamic elementary schools, as well as how this process contributes to the formation of students' prosocial behavior. Specifically, this study seeks to answer questions regarding the mechanism of internalizing religious values in everyday school life, the actors involved in this process, and how the internalized values can transform into students' prosocial behavior.

This research is expected to provide a theoretical contribution in strengthening the understanding of the relationship between the internalization of religious values and prosocial behavior, as well as a practical contribution in the development of character education strategies based on religious values that are more contextual and reflective in Islamic elementary schools.

## **Methods**

This study uses a qualitative case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the mechanisms underlying the internalization of religious values and their relationship to the formation of students' prosocial behavior. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore meanings, experiences, and the dynamics of social interactions directly from the participants' perspectives (Creswell, 2007). The case study design is used because the research focuses on a specific context studied intensively and holistically, enabling the analysis of the relationship among religious practices, school culture, and student behavior in context (Creswell, 2012).

The research was conducted at SD Rabbani Bandung for three months. This school was chosen not only because it has a structured religious program, but also because it demonstrates consistency between the values taught and the students' daily practices. In addition, the school has a variety of programs, such as habituation to worship, social activities, and character development, which allows the researcher to observe various mechanisms of internalization within the same context. The selection of this case was based on the consideration that the phenomenon being studied is closely tied to a relatively stable, integrated school culture.

The research participants numbered 13, determined as the final number after the data reached saturation. The participants consisted of 1 principal, 1 Islamic Education teacher, 2 homeroom teachers, and 9 students from grades IV–VI. The selection of participants used purposive sampling, based on informants' involvement and knowledge of the phenomenon under study (Huang et al., 2023). Upper-grade students were chosen because they have longer experience in participating in the school culture and more adequate verbal abilities to reflect on their experiences.

Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document studies. The data collection process was carried out gradually over three months, starting with initial observations to understand the school culture and identify key situations relevant to the research focus. This stage was followed by in-depth interviews with the principal and teachers to obtain an overview of policies and practices regarding the internalization of values. Subsequently, interviews with students were conducted to capture their direct experiences in participating in school activities.

Observations were conducted repeatedly across various activities, such as dhuha prayer, classroom learning, and interactions during breaks, to ensure consistency in the behavior observed. During this process, the researcher also collected supporting documents as material for triangulation. This gradual approach allows the researcher to compare data across time and sources, thereby gaining a deeper and more contextual understanding (Creswell, 2007).

The data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. The analysis process was conducted iteratively from the beginning of data collection. The researcher familiarized themselves with the data by rereading it, then coded relevant data units such as "inviting friends to share," "modeling teacher behavior," and "influenced by gadgets." These codes were then grouped into categories and developed into themes. For example, the codes "sharing meals," "helping friends study," and "encouraging charity" formed the prosocial behavior theme. In contrast, the codes "teacher setting an example" and "advising gently" formed the teacher role model theme. The analysis was conducted reflectively by comparing data across sources to identify patterns and variations in the findings (Nowell et al., 2017).

The validity of the data is maintained through several strategies, namely source triangulation, technique triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. In addition, the researcher prepares an audit trail and engages in reflexivity to control for potential bias in data interpretation. These strategies are carried out to ensure the credibility and reliability of the research findings (Nowell et al., 2017). This study also addresses research ethics. Permission was obtained from the school prior to conducting the research. Informed consent was obtained from teachers and students' parents, and students provided assent after receiving explanations appropriate to their level of understanding. The identities of participants were anonymized using pseudonyms, and all data were stored securely and used only for academic purposes.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Result**

This study aims to examine the process of internalizing religious values applied at SD Rabbani Bandung and to explain how this process contributes to the formation of prosocial behavior in students. All data presented in this section were obtained through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation studies, and were then analyzed thematically according to the research objectives.

### **The School Context as a Space for Value Internalization**

The research results indicate that Rabbani Elementary School in Bandung builds the school environment as a space for the internalization of religious values, integrated into daily activities. Religious values are not only conveyed through formal learning but also present in routines, social interactions, and the arrangement of the physical environment. Morning observations show that activities begin with literacy, Quran memorization, joint prayers, and checks on manners, such as neatness in dress and politeness in speech. Teachers greet students at the gate with personal salutations. One teacher stated: 'We get the children used to being greeted upon arrival. So that they feel valued, it becomes easier to guide them.' Another statement from a homeroom teacher: 'If the children come in a comfortable atmosphere, they are usually more obedient and show less resistance.'

In addition to interactions, the physical school environment also serves as a medium for reinforcing values. Posters about empathy, cooperation, and discipline can be seen on classroom and corridor walls. However, students' responses to this environment are not uniform. In observations, some students immediately follow routines without reminders, while others still wait for instructions.

One teacher said, "There are children who immediately know what to do, but there are also those who need to be reminded continuously."

This shows that the school context provides a framework of values, but students' acceptance of these values still varies.

### **Daily Routine as a Familiarization Mechanism**

Habituation is the dominant mechanism in the internalization of values. Activities such as Dhuha prayer, daily prayers, orderly queuing, and maintaining cleanliness are repeated. An Islamic Education teacher explained: "At first, they just followed along. But over time, it became a habit, even reminding each other."

In observation, students were seen reprimanding their friends who did not queue properly: "Hey, queue first, don't cut in." In lower grades, habituation appeared to form more quickly. Students tended to follow the rules without many questions. On the other hand, in higher grades, variations were found. Some students carried out routines consistently, but some did so formally. A sixth-grade student said, "Sometimes it's tiring, but I still join because it has become a habit." The teacher added, "Older students have started to be critical. If it's not explained, they might follow it but not really internalize it."

This finding indicates that habituation is effective, but it requires reinforcement of meaning, especially for older students.

### **The Exemplary Role of Teachers in Daily Interactions**

Teacher role modeling becomes a very prominent factor in the internalization process. Students appear to imitate the way the teacher speaks, behaves, and resolves conflicts. A homeroom teacher stated, "Those children imitate faster than they listen. So teachers must be careful."

In observing minor conflicts, the teacher does not immediately punish, but guides dialogue. The teacher says to the student: "Try telling your friend that you don't like being treated that way." The student then imitates that pattern in the next interaction: "I don't like it when I'm pushed, please don't next time." One student mentioned: "If the teacher speaks softly, we also become soft." However, role modeling is not always consistent. In crowded classrooms, teachers sometimes speak more firmly or louder. One teacher admitted: "When I'm tired, or the class is noisy, sometimes my voice goes up."

In that situation, the students also appeared noisier. This shows that the effectiveness of role modeling greatly depends on the consistency of the teacher's behavior.

### **Positive Reinforcement and Student Responses**

The school implements positive reinforcement through praise, stickers, and good points. Reinforcement is given for behaviors such as helping friends, being disciplined, and maintaining cleanliness. A teacher said, "We give rewards so that children know which behaviors are good." Observations showed students were enthusiastic about receiving rewards: "I got a star because I helped a friend," said one student.

In lower grades, rewards serve as a fairly strong motivation. Students appear to compete in doing good deeds. However, in some upper-grade students, a different pattern emerges. One student asked: "If I help with this, do I get points?" The teacher explained, "If rewards are used too often, children will focus on the points."

These findings indicate that positive reinforcement is effective as a trigger, but students' responses to rewards vary by age.

### **Social Experience in Religious Activities**

Social activities such as Friday alms, Ramadan donations, and humanitarian aid provide students with hands-on experiences.

In observation, students encouraged each other: "Come on, let's give alms together, so it will be more." A student expressed: "If we collect a little bit at a time, it becomes a lot and can help people." The teacher explained: "We first explain why they should share, not just donate." However, in some cases, students participate in activities because of peer influence. A student said, "Just join in, friends are also participating."

This shows that social experiences provide space to practice values, but students' levels of understanding vary.

### **Variations in Students' Prosocial Behavior**

Prosocial behavior takes various forms, but it is not uniform across all students. Empathy is seen when students help friends: "Why are you crying?" asked a student to their friend.

Helping each other appears in learning activities: "This is how to do it," said a student while helping a friend. However, help is more often given to close friends. A teacher stated, "Children still choose selectively whom to help."

Honesty is seen in some cases: "Ma'am, I wrote it wrong earlier," said a student. However, some students are still hesitant to admit mistakes.

Responsibility is seen in duty activities, but not all students are active. The teacher said, "Usually, it's the same ones who are active; the others just follow along." Cooperation appears in group assignments, but some students dominate.

These findings indicate that these values have appeared, but not consistently across the board.

### **Conditions That Affect Internalization**

Several conditions affect the process of value internalization. Family support becomes an important factor. A teacher stated: "If it is accustomed at home, at school it just continues." On the contrary: "If it is not accustomed at home, it takes longer at school."

The influence of digital media also emerges as an external factor. A teacher stated, "There are children who start speaking harshly due to external influences." In addition, the number of students in the class affects the level of supervision. A teacher said, "Sometimes not all behaviors can be directly monitored."

Beyond the mechanisms described, the findings also reveal the dynamics of roles among teachers, students, and peers in shaping the process of value internalization. This

process does not run one-way from teacher to student, but occurs through mutual interaction in everyday life at school.

### **Dynamics Between Actors in the Internalization Process**

Teachers remain the main actors in providing direction and examples of values. However, in practice, students also play a role as agents who influence each other. In several observations, students seemed to respond more quickly to invitations from friends than to the teacher's instructions. A homeroom teacher conveyed: "Sometimes when the teacher reminds them, it may not be immediately followed. But if a friend says it, usually they respond faster." This is evident in activities such as lining up and classroom cleanliness. A student reprimanded a friend: "Don't throw trash there, or the teacher will get mad." Interestingly, such reprimands do not always cite values as reasons but are often associated with rules or consequences. This indicates that the internalization of values in some students is still at a stage influenced by social norms rather than fully personal awareness.

On the other hand, some students begin to show initiative without external prompting. In an observation, a student was seen helping a friend who was struggling without being asked, then returning to their seat without seeking attention. When asked, the student said, "It's normal. If we can help, we just help." This statement indicates variation in the level of internalization, with some students beginning to act based on internal awareness. However, not all interactions among students reinforce positive values. In some situations, less prosocial behaviors were also observed, such as excessive joking or ignoring friends who need help. A teacher stated, "Sometimes there are also those who are indifferent, especially if they are not close friends."

These findings indicate that friendship relations still play an important role in determining whether prosocial behavior emerges. In other words, values are not yet entirely universal in students' practice, but are still influenced by social closeness. Overall, the data show that the process of internalizing religious values does not occur linearly, but rather through the interaction of various mechanisms and actors. Habituation forms routines, role modeling provides concrete examples, positive reinforcement triggers initial responses, and social experiences offer space for practice. Meanwhile, interactions among students both strengthen and diversify the outcomes of this process.

In practice, students' prosocial behavior appears on a diverse spectrum, ranging from spontaneous and situational to those still dependent on external guidance. This variation indicates that the internalization of values is a gradual process influenced by experiences, environment, and social relationships that students encounter daily.

## **Discussion**

### **Mechanism of Internalizing Religious Values**

Research results indicate that the internalization of religious values at SD Rabbani occurs through several mechanisms, not only formal religious teaching but also daily life, role modeling, and practical experiences. There are four important pathways evident, and this pattern aligns with previous research and theories on value acquisition.

One of the main mechanisms is the habituation students routinely practice, such as performing religious services (Dhuha prayer, memorization, communal prayer), daily etiquette (greetings, polite behavior, class rules), and other religious practices as part of the school routine. This habituation makes religious values not just a theory, but part of students' daily lives. This finding is consistent with research in Islamic schools and madrasas that "habituation + religious activities + communal life" is a means of effectively internalizing religious values (M. N. Amin et al., 2024; Riwanda et al., 2024), and religious values learned from classroom learning become the basis for the formation of positive

social attitudes (Firmansyah et al., 2023). Through continuous habituation, students gain repeated positive experiences that ultimately help them absorb values deeply, making them part of the school culture. This concept approaches the psychological theory that repetition and reinforcement help form moral habits.

The next mechanism is role modeling. Teachers and school staff don't simply give orders; they also demonstrate religious, moral, and social behavior, such as politeness, good manners, helping students, paying attention, and warm communication. When students consistently see these real-life examples, they tend to imitate and then internalize those values as part of their identity. Qualitative research in Islamic schools and madrasas shows that this type of process modeling, consistency, and a supportive environment is highly effective in shaping religious and social character (Djuaini, 2025). Thus, schools become living "spaces of values," not simply places for the transfer of formal knowledge, but where religious values are experienced, practiced, and constructed through daily interactions.

The third mechanism is positive reinforcement. When students demonstrate good behavior aligned with religious values, they receive appreciation in the form of praise, recognition, and moral rewards (e.g., "goodness point" cards, stickers, or verbal praise). This form of reinforcement signals that good behavior is valued, thus motivating students to repeat it. Contemporary models of value internalization also emphasize the importance of social reinforcement. When moral actions receive social rewards (respect, acceptance, appreciation), individuals are more likely to maintain and generalize the behavior even when external reinforcers are absent. For example, a new computational model of "internal social reward" explains how humans develop their own internal rewards from social responses, meaning that moral actions can persist and extend to new situations (Rong & Kleiman-Weiner, 2024). In other words, positive reinforcement in schools helps values become part of students' social and moral instincts, not just formal obligations.

The fourth mechanism is direct experience, not just theory or personal habituation, but also collective and social activities such as charity, community service, socio-religious activities, group collaboration, and so on. When students engage in real-life practices, they learn practical values such as empathy, solidarity, and social responsibility. Research in Islamic schools shows that internalizing values through socio-religious activities such as extracurricular activities, charity programs, social service, and direct community involvement is very effective in shaping religious and social character (Chen, Lin, et al., 2020; Minhaji et al., 2024). These experiences provide real meaning for students, where values are not merely abstract but have a direct impact on shared life. This forms a moral commitment not out of fear, but out of growing conviction and empathy.

The combination of the mechanisms above shows that internalizing religious values is not achieved through formal education or a single method. Modern theories on value internalization support a multi-modal approach, namely modeling, habituation, reinforcement, and concrete experiences, because this allows values to become part of identity, not simply external norms. For example, a literature review on the internalization of religious values shows that religious education should ideally not be limited to the classroom but rather integrated throughout school life, both in the formal and non-formal curriculum (Anwar, 2023). Furthermore, religious education helps students face emotional challenges by providing guidance on values and norms and strengthening their spiritual aspects (Khodijah et al., 2024).

Recent research on the internalization of values through the hidden curriculum in Islamic institutions also highlights that the values of tolerance, moderation, social responsibility, and empathy are more effectively fostered when they are instilled through school culture, not just religious instruction. This confirms that it is not simply the presence of religious rituals, but rather how these values are taught and reflected in

school life that determines the success of internalization (Zammit & Taylor, 2023). Thus, the findings at Rabbani Elementary School demonstrate that internalization occurs through habituation, role modeling, reinforcement, and social practices, consistent with empirical evidence and consistent with character education theory (K. Amin et al., 2024).

### **The Role of Teachers, Peers, and Religious Programs**

In a school context such as Rabbani Elementary School, the roles of various stakeholders, including teachers, peers, and religious programs, are crucial in shaping students' character and prosocial behavior. Teachers at Rabbani Elementary School are not only academic instructors but also serve as tangible role models through their attitudes, speech, manners, and daily interactions. This teacher role model is crucial; when teachers consistently exemplify religious values and good morals, students tend to emulate and internalize these values as part of their identity.

Empirical research supports this. A longitudinal study of elementary school-aged students showed that teacher-child closeness correlated with increased perceptions of social support from peers throughout the school year. This means that teachers can "transmit" a positive social atmosphere that influences student dynamics (Chen, Lin, et al., 2020; Soininen et al., 2023). In other words, teachers help create a classroom climate where students feel valued and safe, which are essential conditions for the development of prosocial behavior.

Furthermore, a study in early childhood (kindergarten) found that when teachers act as facilitators and motivators by providing emotional support, facilitating social interactions, and appreciating good actions, children's prosocial skills develop more effectively (Wildiana & Baqi, 2025). Thus, teachers at Rabbani Elementary School are not simply "teacher-in-relation," but rather pillars of character who shape students' moral identity through interactions and concrete examples.

Peers also play a crucial role. In the school environment, peers help reinforce moral and social norms through daily interactions, group work, mutual assistance, and shared activities. For many students, peers can serve as models of "how to behave," especially when those norms are consistent with the religious values taught at school. Research shows that perceptions of peer acceptance are strongly correlated with prosocial behavior among early adolescents (Saputri & Ayriza, 2021). Other studies suggest that peer interactions, particularly within positive peer groups, can shape students' character and social values in elementary school (Laursen & Veenstra, 2021; Wardani & Suriani, 2024). This means that when the peer environment supports moral and social behavior, students are more likely to engage in prosocial behavior, such as helping, cooperating, sharing, and supporting one another. At Rabbani Elementary School, the structure of activities such as joint duty, group work, and socio-religious activities provides a forum for peers to practice these values. So the internalization of values not only occurs individually but also becomes a group norm, which is easier to maintain because there is social support from friends.

In addition to teachers and peers, structured religious programs such as regular charity giving, community service, religious values teaching, and other socio-religious activities provide concrete platforms for implementing religious values. Thus, students not only "learn values" theoretically but also "experience" and "practice" them in real life. Research in Islamic school contexts shows that the combination of a formal curriculum and extracurricular or religious activities consistently increases the likelihood that students will develop prosocial behavior (Cahayaningsih et al., 2025; Hady et al., 2025). Concrete experiences such as charity giving or social activities make values like empathy, solidarity, and responsibility relevant and meaningful, rather than abstract. This

facilitates the transformation of religious values into positive social character and behavior.

The synergy among teachers, peers, and religious programs creates an adaptive school environment in which teachers establish moral standards and provide concrete examples, peers reinforce social norms horizontally, and religious programs provide a platform for concrete, collective value practice. Recent quantitative research supports this model: a large-scale study in China found that teacher supervision, positive peer behavior, and family support were simultaneously positively associated with prosocial behavior and reduced deviant behavior among adolescents (Huang et al., 2023). This means that an integrated social environment of teachers, peers, and the social environment provides a strong foundation for students' character and moral development.

While the roles of teachers, peers, and programs are clearly important, their effectiveness depends on the quality of interactions and consistency of implementation. For example, if teacher-child relationships are poor, peers form negative cliques, or religious programs are merely symbolic, the internalization of prosocial values and behavior may be suboptimal. Studies show that when teachers and students experience conflict or poor classroom management, it correlates with increased feelings of injustice or even peer victimization—conditions that can hinder prosociality (Chen, Jiang, et al., 2020). Similarly, if peer interactions are unsupportive or undirected, they can reinforce negative norms or deviant behavior. Therefore, the teacher's role as a facilitator and manager of the social environment remains crucial.

With a school environment where teachers serve as moral role models, peers reinforce social norms, and religious programs provide concrete practices, the internalization of religious values can be effective, not merely as doctrine, but as part of students' character and way of life. This combination of agents allows values to become firmly rooted, internalized, and embodied in daily behavior. This research confirms the importance of a holistic approach to character education, in which religious education in schools must involve academic, social, psychological, and environmental aspects to foster holistic character development.

### **Internalization of Religious Values and Students' Tendencies for Prosocial Behavior**

Analysis of research findings at Rabbani Elementary School shows a fairly clear path: when students understand the meaning of relevant religious values in shaping their behavior (Sivasubramaniam & Hayhoe, 2017), they gain practical experience and apply it, and receive social reinforcement from teachers and peers, they are more likely to engage in prosocial behavior (helping, sharing, and comforting friends). In other words, it's not simply a mechanical ritual, but rather a reflection of meaning and concrete practice that drives values to act.

The concept of the internalization of values in Islamic education emphasizes that values are not merely taught cognitively but are instilled through a series of processes, including role modeling, habituation, internalization, and culturalization, within the school environment. The formation of students' religious character must be carried out through a comprehensive approach that involves habituating worship, fostering valuable social interactions, and the role of teachers as key moral figures in students' lives (Wahyuddin, 2020). According to them, the internalization process not only aims to develop religious understanding but also guides students to demonstrate concrete behaviors such as honesty, empathy, social awareness, and helpfulness in everyday life. This thinking is highly relevant to research findings from Rabbani Elementary School in

Bandung, which found that religious habits (morning prayer, Dhuha prayer, charity), teacher role models, and school culture directly shape students' prosocial behavior.

Theoretically, these findings align with two main frameworks: moral internalization theory, which explains how external rules become part of an individual's moral identity, and empathy-based prosocial theory, which suggests that understanding values triggers emotional sensitivity toward others, leading to helpful actions. At Rabbani Elementary School, students who could explain why they gave alms or helped a friend (not simply because they were told to) were more likely to exhibit prosocial behavior, demonstrating that understanding and experience translate into action.

These findings are also consistent with global evidence, which has found a positive but moderate correlation between religiosity and prosociality, with significant heterogeneity, with self-reported rather than directly measured behavior having a stronger effect, and numerous moderators playing a role in this relationship. These findings strengthen the argument that the quality of internalization (rather than ritual frequency alone) is the primary determinant of whether religiosity can be considered prosocial (Kelly et al., 2024).

Furthermore, empirical studies suggest an important mediating mechanism where self-regulation or deliberate self-control can mediate the relationship between religiosity and prosocial behavior. This means that religiosity fosters self-regulation skills, which then enable concrete prosocial actions. These results are relevant to the situation at Rabbani Elementary School, where students who receive habituation and reflection tend to have better behavioral control when faced with opportunities to do good (Alghanam & Shehadeh, 2025).

Furthermore, research that treats empathy as a key variable finds a similar pattern: internalized religiosity increases empathy, and empathy then predicts prosocial tendencies, especially when peer relationships are supportive. Thus, a possible pathway is understanding values → growing empathy/concern → prosocial actions, just as observed in the field (Alghanam & Shehadeh, 2025). Research at Rabbani Elementary School and international evidence both suggest that religiosity indicates prosocial behavior when it is internalized with quality: understood, reflected upon, practiced, and supported by the environment. Therefore, effective character education interventions must emphasize meaningful reflection, practical experience, and social reinforcement so that religious values truly become drivers of prosocial behavior, rather than merely formal habituation (Kelly et al., 2024; Tsang et al., 2021).

### **Implications of Findings for Islamic Education and Character Building**

Based on the findings, there are several practical implications for Islamic education policy and practice at the elementary level. First, strengthening teachers' capacity as agents in moral formation involves training that demonstrates good manners, provides feedback that promotes moral reflection, and builds warm relationships that encourage the internalization of values. International evidence shows that the quality of teacher-child interactions is directly related to children's social and prosocial development (Soininen et al., 2023)

Second, designing reflective habituation programs should not be limited to ritual routines but should also include learning moments that explain the meaning of values and provide opportunities to practice them through reflection after carrying out charitable activities and group discussions on mutual assistance. Third, harnessing the power of peers constructively through peer mentoring programs or cooperative groups can help values become group norms, so that social pressure supports prosocial behavior, rather than detracting from it. Developmental literature emphasizes the role of peer influence as

both a risk and an opportunity, depending on group norms (Laursen & Veenstra, 2021). Fourth, involve families more systematically. Inconsistencies between home and school reduce the effectiveness of internalization. School-parent collaboration through workshops, regular communication, and home-based guidance is crucial for strengthening the transfer of values. Theoretically, an integrated approach among teachers, peers, and home creates a social ecosystem in which religious values are not only taught but also become part of everyday practice. This is consistent with international research on the impact of the educational environment on prosociality (Salminen et al., 2022). Building character is not simply a formal school task, but rather a broad social process that unites education, family, and society.

## **Conclusion**

This study shows that the internalization of religious values at SD Rabbani Bandung occurs through mechanisms integrated into the school's daily practices, namely habituation, teacher role modeling, social reinforcement, and direct experience in socio-religious activities. These mechanisms not only shape students' cognitive understanding of values but also encourage the emergence of prosocial tendencies in everyday interactions, such as sharing, helping, and cooperating. These findings affirm that the internalization of religious values does not occur automatically through ritual activities alone, but through processes that involve meaningful social experiences, supportive interpersonal relationships, and the consistency of the school environment in presenting values as a way of life. Thus, the effectiveness of value internalization is greatly influenced by the quality of interaction, the depth of understanding, and students' active involvement in contextual social experiences, not just by the intensity of religious activities conducted routinely.

Scientifically, this research provides an empirical contribution by clarifying how the mechanism of internalizing religious values operates in the context of Islamic elementary schools and how it relates to the formation of students' prosocial behavior. These findings can serve as an initial framework for understanding the relationship between religious values and social behavior in primary education, particularly by emphasizing the interplay among habituation, role modeling, social reinforcement, and direct experience as a unified process. In addition, this research provides an interpretative contribution by showing that the quality of value internalization is more determinative than the mere frequency of religious practices.

Conceptually, these findings open the space to view the internalization of values as a dynamic, contextual process influenced by the interaction between individuals and their social environment. Practically, the results of this study imply the importance of developing value-based character education strategies grounded in religious principles that are not only normative but also reflective and contextual, through strengthening the role of teachers as role models, creating a consistent learning environment, and integrating social activities as a real and meaningful space for students to internalize values.

This research has limitations because it was conducted in a single school context using a case study approach, so the findings are not intended to be widely generalized. In addition, the research's focus remains limited to the school environment. It does not yet fully examine the roles of the family or the wider social environment in the process of value internalization. Variations in student characteristics and social backgrounds have also not been analyzed in depth in this study.

Therefore, future research is recommended to test these findings across various school contexts to examine variations in the mechanisms of value internalization. Further studies also need to examine the interaction between schools and families as part of the value

education ecosystem, and to use a longitudinal approach to examine the sustainability of students' prosocial behavior over the long term. In addition, the use of quantitative designs or mixed methods can be considered to strengthen understanding of the relationship between the internalization of religious values and prosocial behavior at a larger scale and to test the consistency of the findings across more diverse populations.

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