



Internalization of Islamic Values in Students' Character Formation at PETAMA School, Pahang Malaysia

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the process of students' character formation at PETAMA School, Pahang, Malaysia, and to identify the factors influencing such character development. The study employed a qualitative approach using a case study method conducted from December 2024 to May 2025 at PETAMA School, Pahang, Malaysia. The participants consisted of students and educators directly involved in the character-building process. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, while data analysis employed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman. The findings reveal that character formation at PETAMA is carried out holistically through cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions. The character-building process takes place through three stages: moral knowledge through the teaching of *akhlak*, *aqidah*, *fiqh*, and teachers' role modelling; value implementation through congregational prayers, honesty, responsibility, independence, reward and punishment systems, and supervision of social interaction boundaries; and habituation through structured daily routines. Students' character formation is influenced by internal, external, and institutional factors. Internal factors include self-motivation, health conditions, and previous habits. External factors encompass the roles of teachers, family, peers, school environment, culture, language, and technology. Institutional factors include the discipline of congregational prayers, daily *tazkiyah*, behavioral evaluation, and personal approaches. Overall, PETAMA develops a comprehensive, contextual, and Islamic values-based character education model that has the potential to serve as a reference for character education development in both formal and informal educational institutions.

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INTRODUCTION

Character formation is one of the objectives of national education as stated in Article 1 of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which emphasizes that national education aims to develop students' potential to

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context of Islamic education remain limited. In addition, studies on character formation based on Islamic values in boarding school environments, particularly within the context of Islamic education in Malaysia, are still relatively scarce. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by analyzing the stages of students' character formation through an integrated approach involving knowledge, value implementation, and behavioral habituation in students' daily lives.

From the perspective of Islamic education, character formation is not only oriented toward the development of social morality but also toward the internalization of moral values derived from the Quran and the exemplary conduct of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) (Busral et al., 2025; Engkizar Engkizar et al., 2026). The Prophet Muhammad emphasized the importance of moral development through a hadith stating that he was sent to perfect human morality (H.R. Ahmad). These moral values serve as an essential foundation in Islamic education to shape individuals who are capable of fulfilling their roles as servants of Allah and vicegerents on earth (Jaelani, 2021). Character education in Islam also aims to foster social awareness, responsibility, emotional intelligence, and behavior that aligns with religious norms and social values so that students are able to avoid immoral behavior and develop noble personalities (Annur et al., 2022). Thus, character education based on Islamic values holds a strategic position in establishing balance among students' spiritual, moral, social, and behavioral dimensions.

Based on the explanation above, there is a need for a more comprehensive study on students' character formation, particularly concerning the stages of knowledge, implementation, and habituation within the context of Islamic education. This study aims to analyze students' character formation at PETAMA School, Pahang, Malaysia through the stages of knowledge, implementation, and habituation, as well as to identify the factors influencing students' character formation. This study is expected to contribute to the development of character education studies, particularly those related to character education based on Islamic values. Practically, the findings of this study are expected to serve as a reference for educators, educational institutions, and parents in designing effective strategies for implementing stages of character formation among students. Therefore, this study not only provides an empirical description of students' character formation but also has the potential to become a reference model for the development of character education in both formal and informal educational institutions.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study method to analyze the stages of students' character formation at PETAMA School, Pahang, Malaysia. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables an in-depth exploration of various social phenomena, activities, attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives of individuals or groups within their natural setting (Haniyyah, 2021). The case study method was used to comprehensively understand the process of students' character formation within the context of Islamic education at PETAMA School, Pahang, Malaysia, thereby providing an in-depth description of the stages of knowledge, implementation, and habituation in students' character formation (Gowasa et al., 2024).

This study was conducted at PETAMA School, Pahang, Malaysia, over a four-month period from December 2025 to March 2026 (Bakar & Abbas, 2021). The research participants consisted of seven students, one ustadz, and one ustazah/umi who were directly involved in the students' character-building process at PETAMA School, Pahang, Malaysia. The participants were selected purposively based on their active involvement in character education activities within the school and dormitory environment.

The data collection techniques used in this study included observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation (Ardiansyah et al., 2023; Sari et al., 2025). Observations were conducted directly on students' daily activities in both the school and dormitory settings to understand the implementation of the stages of character formation (Hanadya et al., 2022). In-depth interviews were conducted with teachers and students to obtain information regarding the processes of knowledge acquisition, value implementation, and character habituation in students' daily lives at PETAMA School, Pahang, Malaysia (Hasan, 2022). Meanwhile, documentation was used as supporting data in the form of school regulations, dormitory activity records, daily schedules, and other documents relevant to the focus of the study. Data validity was strengthened through source triangulation by comparing data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation (Engkizar et al., 2026; Hafizah et al., 2025; Jaafar et al., 2025; Kassymova et al., 2025).

Data analysis in this study employed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which consists of data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Rijali, 2019; Ului et al., 2025). Data collection was carried out systematically using various predetermined techniques. Subsequently, the data were reduced through processes of selection, categorization, and simplification based on the focus of the study. The reduced data were then presented in descriptive form to facilitate analysis and interpretation. The final stage involved drawing conclusions by interpreting the research findings and relating them to relevant theories (Qomaruddin & Sa'diyah, 2024).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The research findings were obtained through in-depth interviews with ustadz, ustadzah, and students at PETAMA (Pusat Pembangunan Tamadun Masyarakat Asli Malaysia), observations of learning activities, and document analysis. Data were collected from nine informants consisting of seven students from diverse ethnic backgrounds, ages, and learning levels, as well as one ustadz and one ustadzah who served as character mentors. All interview data were analyzed using thematic coding techniques to identify patterns of character formation developed within the environment of PETAMA School, Pahang, Malaysia. To maintain research ethics and confidentiality, the identities of all informants were anonymized using specific codes.

Analysis of Character Formation

The analysis of character formation at PETAMA School was conducted through a comprehensive examination of interview data from the nine informants. Based on the results of thematic coding, it was found that character formation at PETAMA is holistic in nature, encompassing cognitive dimensions (character knowledge), affective dimensions (value internalization), and psychomotor dimensions (behavioral habituation). These findings are consistent with Lickona's perspective, which states that effective character education must address these three dimensions in an integrated manner (Susanti, 2022).

Conceptually, PETAMA students understand character from various perspectives. Some students interpret character as a process of transformation from negative traits to positive traits. Others perceive character as an individual uniqueness reflected in daily behavior. Meanwhile, the ustadz (I8) and ustadzah (I9), as educators, base the entire process of character formation on Islamic values derived from the Quran and Sunnah, particularly through the exemplary morals of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Table 1. Coding Results: Analysis of Character Formation among PETAMA Students

Code	Theme	Informant	Interview Excerpt
K1.1	Character as Self-Transformation	I4 (Student)	“Character is a transformation within myself from negative traits to positive ones... since being at PETAMA, I have learned a lot about character knowledge.”
K1.2	Character as Individual Uniqueness	I1 (Student)	“Everyone has their own character. Even if we are the same age or from different ethnic groups, each person still has their own unique character.”
K1.3	Character Based on Islamic Values	I8 (Ustadz)	“Character means instilling Islamic values and noble morals, all based on the Quran and Sunnah.”
K1.4	Character as Habituation	I2 (Student)	“Character, in my opinion, includes fasting, congregational prayer, beneficial activities, and learning. Here, I gain useful knowledge.”
K1.5	Religious Character: Congregational Prayer	I5 (Student)	“The character I practice most often is praying on time, reciting the Quran, and repeating memorization.”
K1.6	Social Character: Helping Others	I7 (Student)	“The character most frequently practiced is always smiling, helping those who are in difficulty, and assisting others.”
K1.7	Teacher Role Modeling as the Core of Character Formation	I8 (Ustadz)	“To become role models, we must first become examples for the students... praying together, eating together, and being together in daily activities.”
K1.8	Character Based on Cleanliness	I9 (Ustadzah)	“‘Cleanliness is part of faith’; students enter the classroom in a clean condition, with clean rooms and clean classrooms. Discipline is also emphasized, such as punctuality in prayer and class attendance.”
K1.9	Character Includes Manners and Respect for Teachers	I9 (Ustadzah)	“In terms of morals, students are taught how to respect their friends and their teachers.”
K1.10	Islamic Character Derived from the Quran and Hadith	I9 (Ustadzah)	“Islamic character values are certainly derived from the values outlined in the Quran and Hadith, including honesty, trustworthiness, obedience, compassion, mutual assistance, patience, and perseverance.”

Based on Table 1, ten codes were identified representing how character is understood and implemented within the PETAMA School environment. Code K1.1 indicates that character is perceived as a process of self-transformation, as expressed by informant I4. This understanding is reinforced by code K1.8 from informant I9,

which adds the dimension of cleanliness as a concrete manifestation of Islamic character based on the hadith *annaḥḥafatu minal iman* (cleanliness is part of faith). These findings broaden the understanding of character at PETAMA, which is not only oriented toward moral and social aspects but also includes physical cleanliness as part of the implementation of Islamic values.

Codes K1.3, K1.4, and K1.10 consistently demonstrate the strong religious dimension in character formation at PETAMA. Informants I8 and I9 agreed that all character values are grounded in the Quran and Hadith, with values such as trustworthiness, obedience, honesty, compassion, mutual assistance, patience, and perseverance forming the core character values instilled in students (Engkizar et al., 2023). Salisah et al (2024) emphasized that Islamic Religious Education plays a crucial role in shaping students' character because it provides a value foundation derived from divine revelation rather than merely social construction.

Codes K1.7 and K1.9 highlight the role of teacher role modeling from two complementary perspectives. Informant I8 emphasized role modeling through togetherness in activities such as congregational prayer, shared meals, and sports activities. Meanwhile, informant I9 emphasized role modeling through classroom instruction and the cultivation of manners in respecting teachers and peers. This pattern reflects the implementation of the *uswab hasanah* approach comprehensively, both inside and outside the classroom.

Stages of Character Formation

Character formation at PETAMA School is carried out through three interconnected stages: i) the stage of knowledge (moral knowing), ii) the stage of implementation (*moral action*), and iii) the stage of habituation (*moral habit*). These three stages are consistent with Thomas Lickona's theory of character formation, which emphasizes that genuine character is formed when individuals not only know what is good (*knowing the good*), but also develop the desire to do good (*desiring the good*), and eventually make goodness a habitual way of life (*doing the good*) (Annisa et al., 2024).

Table 2. Coding Results: Stages of Character Formation among PETAMA Students

Code	Theme	Informant	Interview Excerpt
T1.1	Moral knowing: Limited Initial Understanding	I6 (Student)	"I still lack understanding about character, ustadzah... but in terms of practice (implementation) and habituation, I think I'm doing okay."
T1.2	Moral Learning <i>Akhlak, Aqidah, and Fiqh</i>	I2 (Student)	"We learn <i>akhlak, aqidah, and fiqh</i> to educate ourselves. In <i>aqidah</i> lessons here, we usually learn to remember Allah and understand His attributes."
T1.3	Moral Exemplary Morals of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)	I8 (Ustadz)	"We teach them about the morals of the Prophet Muhammad, how he worshipped, preached, interacted with friends, and even how he ate and drank."
T1.4	Moral Classroom Learning and Teacher Role Modeling	I9 (Ustadzah)	"In classroom teaching, we provide good examples outside the classroom as well, along with advice. When we notice inappropriate behavior from students, they are immediately

				reminded.”
T2.1	Moral Congregational Prayer	Action:	I4 (Student)	“We perform Zuhr and Asr prayers in congregation, male and female students together... at 12 o'clock we recite the Quran, and we are taught responsibility and trustworthiness.”
T2.2	Moral Responsibility and Trustworthiness	Action:	I1 (Student)	“I was entrusted to represent male and female students in level 2 and level 3, and I became their leader. From there, I learned to be responsible.”
T2.3	Moral Honesty	Action:	I4 (Student)	“If Umi asks whether we have prayed, we must answer honestly. If we are dishonest, we will be punished.”
T2.4	Moral Independence	Action:	I5 (Student)	“Here we are also taught independence, such as waking up by ourselves, washing our own clothes, and drying them ourselves.”
T2.5	Moral Action: Reward and Punishment System	Reward Punishment	I9 (Ustadzah)	“Rewards are not given every day... they are given to those who complete the Quran most often, maintain cleanliness, and consistently join congregational prayers. Punishments also exist, such as being caned for not praying or receiving cleaning duties for the bathroom.”
T2.6	<i>Moral</i> Maintaining Boundaries	<i>Action:</i> Social	I9 (Ustadzah)	“Interactions between male and female students must be properly regulated. We also wear Islamic clothing, such as covering the <i>aurat</i> .”
T3.1	<i>Moral</i> Structured Routines	<i>Habit:</i> Daily	I2 (Student)	“In the morning we attend class, then at 12 o'clock we recite the Quran, perform Zuhr prayer in congregation, rest and eat until 3 o'clock, then continue with Asr prayer in congregation.”
T3.2	<i>Moral</i> Routines from Dawn until Night	<i>Habit:</i> Daily	I9 (Ustadzah)	“Daily activities begin with the dawn prayer, then classes, personal cleanliness, discipline in congregational prayers, discipline in Quran recitation... habituation in daily activities continues from dawn until night.”
T3.3	<i>Moral</i> Challenges Consistency	<i>Habit:</i> of	I1 (Student)	“The hardest challenge for me is adapting to habits because my character before entering PETAMA was different, so it was difficult to adjust.”

T3.4	<i>Moral Habit:</i> Gradual Student Transformation	I8 (Ustadz)	“When they first came here, some could not even read the Quran... but after studying here for two years, they were finally able to read the Quran... those who previously did not know how to pray are now able to pray properly.”
T3.5	<i>Moral Habit:</i> Behavioral and Moral Improvement	I9 (Ustadzah)	“They changed from not knowing how to pray to understanding prayer. The most visible improvement is in reading the Quran. In terms of attitude, they obey the rules, understand proper manners toward teachers, respect friends, and communicate well.”

Based on Table 2, the stages of character formation at PETAMA School begin with the stage of moral knowing, which focuses on providing students with an understanding of character values through the learning of *akhlak*, *aqidah*, *fiqh*, and teacher role modeling. Code T1.1 indicates that some students initially had limited understanding of the concept of character, as expressed by informant I6. However, continuous learning processes helped students understand Islamic-based character values. This finding is reinforced by codes T1.2, T1.3, and T1.4, which demonstrate that character education is carried out through religious instruction, exemplary morals of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), as well as advice and direct supervision from teachers both inside and outside the classroom.

The next stage is *moral action*, namely the implementation of character values in students' daily lives. Based on codes T2.1 to T2.6, character implementation is manifested through various activities such as congregational prayer, the practice of responsibility and trustworthiness, honesty, independence, the application of reward and punishment systems, and supervision of social boundaries between male and female students. These findings indicate that character formation at PETAMA is not merely theoretical but is practically implemented through students' daily activities within the school and dormitory environment.

The final stage is *moral habit*, which refers to the habituation of character values through continuous daily routines. Codes T3.1 and T3.2 indicate that students follow structured daily activities beginning from the dawn prayer until nighttime activities. These routines include classroom learning, Quran recitation, congregational prayers, personal cleanliness, and discipline in daily activities. Nevertheless, code T3.3 reveals that some students experienced difficulties adapting to new habits in the PETAMA environment. However, the consistent habituation process resulted in significant behavioral changes, as reflected in codes T3.4 and T3.5, where students showed improvement in Quran reading skills, worship practices, rule compliance, manners, and social interaction abilities.

Overall, the findings indicate that character formation at PETAMA School is carried out gradually and integratively through the processes of knowledge, implementation, and habituation. These three stages are interconnected in shaping students' religious, social, and disciplinary character based on Islamic values.

The Knowledge Stage (Moral Knowing)

Based on codes T1.1 to T1.4, the knowledge stage at PETAMA School is implemented through two complementary pathways. First, formal classroom learning covering subjects such as *akhlak*, *aqidah*, and *fiqh*, as explained by informant I2 and

informant I8. Second, direct role modeling and immediate corrective guidance provided by educators, as described by informant I9 in code T1.4. Informant I9 emphasized that when students display behavior that deviates from the values being taught, direct correction is immediately given as part of strengthening moral knowing, ensuring that knowledge does not remain merely at the cognitive level but is directly reinforced through practice.

Nevertheless, informant I6 in code T1.1 acknowledged still experiencing limitations in understanding character-related knowledge. This finding indicates that the moral knowing stage is the most challenging stage, particularly for convert students (*muallaf*) who are newly introduced to Islamic values. Arti et al (2024) emphasized that strengthening character values through Islamic Religious Education requires a gradual and patient approach, as cognitive transformation among students who are newly acquainted with Islam demands time and intensive guidance.

The implementation of the knowledge stage at PETAMA School during classroom learning activities is illustrated in the following figure.



Fig 2. Teachers Providing Character Education to Students at PETAMA The Implementation Stage (Moral Action)

Codes T2.1 to T2.6 indicate that the implementation stage at PETAMA School is carried out through six concrete programs that are consistently integrated into students' daily lives. New findings from informant I9 in codes T2.5 and T2.6 enrich the understanding of this stage through two dimensions that were not previously identified from student informants. First, the implementation of a *reward* and punishment system, including rewards for completing Quran recitation and maintaining cleanliness, as well as sanctions for students who neglect prayer obligations. Second, the supervision of social boundaries between male and female students alongside the obligation to wear Islamic clothing that properly covers the *aurat*.

The *reward* and punishment system described by informant I9 functions as a reinforcement mechanism that strengthens the *moral action* stage. Candra et al (2021), emphasized that habituation methods in Islamic character education require consistent reinforcement systems to ensure that the values taught are deeply internalized. Rewards based on Quran completion provide positive extrinsic motivation, while sanctions such as cleaning duties function as educational consequences without being degrading.

Evidence of the implementation stage through the provision of rewards to students at PETAMA School is presented in the following figure.



Fig 3. The Provision of Rewards to Students at PETAMA

Furthermore, assigning leadership responsibilities to senior students (code T2.2) represents an effective educational strategy. By being entrusted with real responsibilities, students learn character values not merely from theoretical instruction but through direct experience. Stock et al (2024) found that systems emphasizing direct responsibility among students significantly contribute to the development of stronger responsibility and leadership character compared to purely instructional approaches.

Evidence of the implementation of responsibility and leadership assignments, in which senior students guide junior students within PETAMA School programs, is presented in the following figure.



Fig 4. Students Carrying Out Responsibilities and Leadership Duties at PETAMA

The Habituation Stage (Moral Habit)

The habituation stage represents the most decisive phase in long-term character formation. Codes T3.1 to T3.5 document that PETAMA's daily structure is systematically designed to cultivate positive habits among students. Findings from informant I9 in code T3.2 complement code T3.1 from informant I2 by illustrating that habituation routines are not limited to daytime activities but continue comprehensively from the dawn prayer until nighttime activities, forming a holistic *total environment system*.

Informant I1 in code T3.3 acknowledged that the greatest challenge lies in maintaining consistency in habituation practices. Siswanto et al (2021) emphasized that the cultivation of religious character through habituation methods requires long-term consistency and patience. However, code T3.4 from informant I8 and code T3.5 from informant I9 demonstrate highly positive outcomes: students who initially could not read the Quran and were unfamiliar with prayer practices eventually became capable of performing both properly. Moreover, they were able to apply these practices in their hometown communities while demonstrating respectful manners toward teachers and peers. Hasan et al (2024) further emphasized that consistent and structured habituation has been proven to produce significant and measurable character transformation.

Evidence of the habituation stage implemented by students at PETAMA School is presented in the following figure.



Fig 5. Students Engaging in Quran Recitation and Congregational Prayer Activities at PETAMA

Factors Influencing Character Formation

Based on the analysis of interview data from nine informants, the factors influencing character formation among PETAMA students can be categorized into three major groups: i) internal factors originating from within the students themselves, ii) external factors derived from social environments, family influences, and external challenges, and iii) institutional program factors systematically designed by PETAMA School.

Table 3. Factors Influencing Character Formation among PETAMA Students

Code	Theme	Informant	Interview Excerpt
F1.1	Internal Factor: Self-Motivation	I4 (Student)	"The main factor is myself, ustadzah, followed by PETAMA teachers, family, and friends at PETAMA."
F1.2	Internal Factor: Health Condition	I4 (Student)	"The challenge I face is my health condition because I should not get too tired... when I become exhausted, my illness relapses."
F1.3	Internal Factor: Previous Habits	I1 (Student)	"My challenge is my previous character because I used to prefer being alone, but at PETAMA I have changed completely."
F2.1	External Factor: The Role of Teachers/Ustadz	I1 (Student)	"Those who motivate me are umi, ustadz, and my friends here, especially the teachers."
F2.2	External Factor: The Role of Parents	I5 (Student)	"What motivates me here is my mother. She encouraged me to study religion at PETAMA and always gives me support."
F2.3	External Factor: Peer Influence	I7 (Student)	"My motivation comes from friends, umi, ustadz, and everyone at PETAMA."
F2.4	External Factor: School Environment	I1 (Student)	"I practice better character here... we are taught discipline and many other things... we have to follow them, so our character changes from before."
F2.5	External Factor: Negative Influence of Mobile Phones and Internet	I8 (Ustadz)	"Regarding external influences... nowadays students are influenced by phones and the internet because they always have them in their hands... during study days we ask them to store their phones and only use them during holidays."
F2.6	External Factor: Cultural and Language Differences	I8 (Ustadz)	"Because of cultural and language differences, the Malay community sometimes finds it difficult to understand the indigenous students' language, while the students themselves are more familiar with their own language."
F2.7	External Factor: Indigenous Language	I9 (Ustadzah)	"Language is quite challenging because they are accustomed to

	Barriers			their indigenous language, and some of them do not even understand the Malay language.”
F2.8	External Convert Students and Cultural Adjustment	Factor: I9 (Ustadzah)		“Because some of them are converts to Islam, the challenge lies in discipline... changing their previous culture into a more disciplined lifestyle. Therefore, we guide them gently.”
F3.1	Program Discipline in Congregational Prayer	Factor: I1 (Student)		“PETAMA has discipline programs, especially congregational prayers performed on time... if we are trained to be disciplined, God willing, we become better.”
F3.2	Program <i>Tazkirah</i> and Da’wah	Factor: I8 (Ustadz)		“I use my own approach to soften and guide their hearts through <i>tazkirah</i> sessions delivered regularly, especially after Asr prayer.”
F3.3	Program Evaluation and Daily Monitoring	Factor: I9 (Ustadzah)		“Yes, for example, when students are able to read the Quran, they are given marks. There are semester records and daily evaluations as well. Monitoring is carried out continuously by staying close to the students every day.”
F3.4	Program Personal Approach (<i>Face-to-Face</i>)	Factor: I9 (Ustadzah)		“Students who experience problems are called individually for face-to-face or personal guidance in dealing with their difficulties.”

Internal Factors

Codes F1.1 to F1.3 identify three internal factors influencing character formation. Self-motivation emerged as the most fundamental driving factor, as emphasized by informant I4. Previous studies have shown that intrinsic motivation plays an important role in encouraging behavioral change, productivity, and consistency in achieving personal goals (Adriyanto & Prasetyo, 2021). Meanwhile, health conditions (F1.2) and previous habits (F1.3) were identified as internal obstacles that require adaptive and patient educational approaches from teachers and mentors.

External Factors

Codes F2.1 to F2.8 identify eight external factors that interact with one another in shaping students’ character. New findings from informant I9 in codes F2.7 and F2.8 significantly enrich the understanding of external factors. Code F2.7 identifies indigenous language barriers as an additional challenge beyond the Malay-Indonesian language differences previously identified by informant I8 in code F2.6. Furthermore, code F2.8 specifically highlights the condition of convert students who require softer and more adaptive approaches compared to students who have been Muslim since birth.

Informant I9 emphasized that differentiated treatment between convert students and Muslim students represents an important pedagogical consideration.

Judrah et al (2024) stated that teachers' roles in character development must consider students' religious backgrounds because uniform approaches that ignore individual differences may become counterproductive to the character formation process.

The role of teachers remained the most dominant external factor and was mentioned by almost all informants. These findings confirm that the quality and commitment of educators constitute the primary determinant of successful character formation, surpassing the influence of physical facilities or formal curriculum structures.

Institutional Program Factors

Codes F3.1 to F3.4 identify four institutional program factors, including two additional findings derived from informant I9. Code F3.3 reveals that PETAMA has implemented a structured evaluation system in which students' Quran recitation progress is systematically recorded and assessed, semester evaluations are conducted regularly, and daily monitoring is carried out directly by educators. These findings indicate that PETAMA not only implements character-building programs but also maintains an adequate accountability and monitoring system to support students' character development.

Code F3.4 regarding the personal (*face-to-face*) approach represents a humanistic and effective educational strategy. When students encounter academic, social, or economic difficulties, educators conduct personal guidance sessions to understand the context of the students' problems before providing appropriate solutions. Masdaudi & Widodo (2024) emphasized that effective religious character formation requires continuous monitoring and evaluation systems accompanied by responsive individual interventions tailored to each student's needs.

Overall, findings from the nine informants indicate that PETAMA School has developed a comprehensive, contextual, and Islamic values-based character formation model. Additional perspectives provided by informant I9, as a female educator, significantly enriched the data by revealing dimensions of character formation that had not previously emerged from other informants. These dimensions include cleanliness as an Islamic character value, the implementation of reward and punishment systems, supervision of social boundaries, structured daily evaluations, and personal guidance approaches for students experiencing difficulties.

Three core mechanisms were identified as the primary strengths of character formation at PETAMA. First, the existence of an authoritative value foundation in which all character values are consistently grounded in the Quran and *Sunnah*, as confirmed by both educator informants (I8 and I9). Second, the implementation of a comprehensive habituation system extending from dawn until nighttime activities, creating a full-time character-learning environment rather than limiting character education to classroom instruction alone. Third, the establishment of a multi-layered role-modeling and reinforcement system in which teachers serve as role models, senior students guide junior students, and reward-punishment mechanisms reinforce behavioral consistency.

Nurbaiti, Alwy, and Taulabi found that religious character formation among students is most effectively achieved through regular and structured religious habituation activities. These findings strongly align with the conditions at PETAMA, where obligatory congregational prayers, Quran recitation, daily *tazkiyah* sessions, and cleanliness routines serve as the principal pillars of character habituation (Nurbaiti et al., 2020). Similarly, Rosita, Sutisnawati, and Uswatun emphasized that discipline and responsibility values are most effectively instilled through contextual learning and consistent habituation practices (Rosita et al., 2022).

The positive impacts reported by students including feelings of happiness, peace, gratitude, humility, and increased tolerance as well as educators' observations regarding improvements in students' manners and Quran reading abilities,

demonstrate that character formation at PETAMA addresses psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions simultaneously. Pitaloka, Dimiyati, and Edi further emphasized that teachers' active roles in instilling positive values such as tolerance, cooperation, and mutual respect can significantly encourage students' behavioral transformation, particularly within culturally and socially diverse educational environments (Pitaloka et al., 2021).

The major challenges identified across all informants include maintaining consistency among newly enrolled students, language and cultural barriers within indigenous communities, negative technological influences, and students' limited prior religious knowledge. These challenges are structural in nature and therefore require systematic, planned, and sustainable institutional responses. Consequently, the implementation of character education must continuously be strengthened through collaboration among schools, families, and surrounding communities. In line with this perspective, Gowasa, Tampubolon, and Simbolon emphasized that character education positively contributes to children's moral development, particularly in strengthening discipline, responsibility, honesty, and social awareness (Gowasa et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that character formation among students at PETAMA School, Pahang, Malaysia, is carried out through a holistic and sustainable process encompassing the dimensions of moral knowing, *moral action*, and *moral habit*. These three dimensions are integrated through the teaching of Islamic values, educators' role modeling, daily habituation systems, and the reinforcement of discipline and responsibility in students' everyday lives. The findings indicate that successful character formation is influenced not only by students' internal factors but also by social support, school culture, and systematically designed institutional programs. In the context of PETAMA, the integration of Islamic values, habituation approaches, and personal mentoring creates a character education ecosystem that is contextual and adaptive to the backgrounds of indigenous and convert students.

Theoretically, this study strengthens Thomas Lickona's perspective regarding the interrelationship between moral knowledge, moral action, and moral habit in character formation. The study also offers a contextual contribution to the discourse on Islamic values-based character education within indigenous community educational institutions in Malaysia, an area that remains relatively underexplored in previous studies. Practically, the findings may serve as a reference for educational institutions in developing more humanistic, integrative, and sustainable character education models that are responsive to students' social and cultural needs.

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