

Religious Character Education In Theory and Practice: Literature Study

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Abstract: This study aims to synthesize the theory and practice of religious character education in elementary schools by examining the latest empirical evidence regarding the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in shaping students' honesty, tolerance, and discipline. The method used is a systematic literature review of relevant articles/journals discussing strategies for religious habituation, teacher role models, integration of value-based curriculum, active learning approaches, internalization of monotheism, and the sustainable tarbiyah model. The results of the synthesis indicate a strong consensus: the formation of religiosity is effective when positioned as a value ecosystem that unites three pillars: (1) habituation, (2) integration across subjects and school policies, and (3) reflection. This study formulates the PIR Model (Habituation–Integration–Reflection) as a replicable and context-sensitive operational framework for developing key character profiles. Practical implications include strengthening the role of teachers as good role models, training in facilitating value dialogue, family–community involvement, and standardization of character indicators and portfolios. The main limitation lies in the variation in school contexts and facility support, so local adaptation is necessary. Overall, this study confirms that strong religiosity arises from system coherence, not just sermons, and can be measured through sustained changes in prosocial behavior.

Keywords: Character Education; Religion; Theory and Practice.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk melakukan sintesis teori dan praktik pendidikan karakter religius di sekolah dasar dengan menelaah bukti-bukti empiris terkini mengenai peran Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) dalam membentuk kejujuran, toleransi, dan kedisiplinan siswa. Metode yang digunakan adalah studi pustaka sistematis terhadap artikel/jurnal relevan yang membahas strategi pembiasaan keagamaan, keteladanan guru, integrasi kurikulum bernilai, pendekatan active learning, internalisasi

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tauhid, serta model tarbiyah berkelanjutan. Hasil sintesis menunjukkan konsensus kuat: pembentukan religiusitas efektif ketika diposisikan sebagai ekosistem nilai yang menyatukan tiga pilar, yaitu (1) pembiasaan, (2) integrasi lintas mata pelajaran dan kebijakan sekolah, dan (3) refleksi. Penelitian ini merumuskan Model PIR (Pembiasaan–Integrasi–Refleksi) sebagai bingkai operasional yang replikatif dan peka konteks untuk menumbuhkan profil karakter kunci. Implikasi praktis meliputi penguatan peran guru sebagai uswah hasanah, pelatihan fasilitasi dialog nilai, pelibatan keluarga–masyarakat, serta standardisasi indikator dan portofolio karakter. Keterbatasan utama terletak pada variasi konteks sekolah dan dukungan fasilitas, sehingga adaptasi lokal diperlukan. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa religiusitas yang kokoh lahir dari koherensi sistem bukan sekadar ceramah dan dapat diukur melalui perubahan perilaku prososial yang berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Karakter; Religius; Teori dan Praktek.

A. Introduction

Religious character education as one of the strategic agendas in national and global education. In the midst of accelerating social change, the flow of digitalization, and the complexity of contemporary moral problems ranging from verbal violence in the digital space, intolerance, to competitive pragmatism in schools (Aswat, et al., 2021), educational institutions are required not only to produce students who are proficient in literacy and numeracy, but also morally and spiritually resilient (Jome, 2023). This is where the urgency of religious character education finds its relevance, namely forming a person who is faithful, has noble character, and is able to translate transcendent values into daily ethical practice (Sari, et al., 2022). However, what is the proper relationship between religiosity and character formation? How do you integrate theoretical principles with contextual and inclusive classroom practice? These questions underlie the need for in-depth and systematic literature studies.

Religious character is not merely dogmatic or ritualistic knowledge, but an integration of values that is reflected in moral awareness, good habits, and concrete actions that are consistent in various situations (Basri, et al., 2023). Religious characters touch the cognitive dimensions (understanding values, norms, principles), affective (commitment, empathy, gratitude, appreciation), and psychomotor (ethical behavior and

virtue habits) (Ariyanto, et al., 2022). As an educational construct, it is intertwined with the moral domain of honesty, responsibility, discipline, cooperation, care, justice that derives the source of legitimacy from religious teachings as well as the universal values of humanity (Ayatullah, 2020). Thus, religious character education can be seen as a pedagogical effort that combines transcendental sources of value with the demands of public ethics, so as to remain inclusive in a pluralistic social space.

Classical and contemporary literature provides a diverse lens through which to understand character formation. Theories of cognitive moral development (e.g. Kohlberg's) emphasize the stages of moral reasoning from adherence to rules to universal ethical principles (Sari, et al., 2024). Virtue ethics emphasizes habituation and exemplar as a means of forming stable good habits (Akbar, 2024). The social-cognitive theory (Bandura) underlines the role of modeling, self-efficacy, and self-regulation (Sumianto, et al., 2024). The humanistic tradition places personal integrity, self-awareness, and the actualization of potential as orientations, while the constructivist approach views value as the result of the negotiation of meaning in a learning community (Adziima, 2022). The character education literature formulates a comprehensive framework of the three domains of knowing, feeling, and doing the good that are operationalized through direct learning, habituation, school culture, family participation, and community partnerships (Salisah, et al., 2024). If the religious dimension is linked to the corpus of these theories, then religiosity does not match moral rationality, but rather complements: it provides a source of meaning, intrinsic motivation, a horizon of transcendence, and a broad horizon of responsibility.

The main challenge in education is the translation of concepts into effective pedagogical strategies. In the classroom, teachers are often faced with the tug-of-war between academic, administrative, and systematic value learning demands. The curriculum can contain religious values, but without a consistent school culture and habituation ecosystem, internalization tends to be superficial (Aminu, 2021). Furthermore, a pluralistic social context requires that a sensitive and inclusive approach to religious character education should encourage respect for diversity, interfaith dialogue, and national ethics, not exclusivism (Ambarwati, et al., 2023). On the other

hand, the digital era adds layers of challenges as well as opportunities: students interact with the values that circulate on social media; This is where digital-ethical literacy, content curation, and reflection practices become important. Teachers need to facilitate judgment and prudence that are based on religious values, but expressed through rational and empathetic discourse.

Empirical studies of various countries show that character programs are effective when they combine four pillars: (1) an explicit curriculum that designs achievement and value indicators; (2) active pedagogy of value inquiry, socratic dialogue, ethical case studies, role-play that brings the internalization process to life; (3) the school environment as a community of exemplary virtue of teachers, fair discipline, restorative practices to deal with violations; and (4) a harmonious family-community partnership (Khairunisa, et al., 2025). The failure of character programs, including religious, is often related to inconsistencies between pillars: for example, the curriculum teaches honesty but academic evaluation encourages narrow competition, or schools invite respect for others while communication between school residents is fraught with symbolic violence. In other words, the integrity of the ecosystem is more decisive than the number of value slogans.

A strong reason why this research is in the form of a literature study is the need to map, integrate, and criticize the corpus of knowledge that has been spread across disciplines: education, moral psychology, theology/religious science, sociology of education, and cultural studies. The literature study approach allows the preparation of theoretical synthesis, the identification of patterns of success/failure of practice, and the formulation of conceptual models that can be further tested in field research. Given the variation in local contexts ranging from school culture, family background, to the character of the literature study community, literature also provides a flexible concept map to be adapted contextually.

Religious character education intersects with national projects: moral strengthening, civic literacy, and social cohesion. Religious values that are internalized well will foster social-emotional competencies: empathy, self-control, steadfastness in holding principles, and the capacity for dialogue (Kurniawan, et al., 2021). This

competency supports a conducive learning climate and sustainable academic achievement. In the long run, graduates who are religious and have character have the potential to become responsible, adaptive, and critical citizens of injustice. The literature also shows that the integration of religious values with daily practices (service learning, community projects, social actions) increases the meaning of learning and intrinsic motivation, because learners experience firsthand the relevance of values to real life (Nurlina, et al., 2024).

Practical constraints cannot be ignored. First, the risk of formalism of worship or religious symbols being practiced without appreciation and without impact on moral decision-making. Second, assessment evaluation bias tends to measure declarative knowledge of values, rather than real dispositions and habits. Third, the competence gap of educators does not all teachers receive adequate training to facilitate reflective and safe value dialogue, especially in heterogeneous classrooms. Fourth, the dissonance of values in the digital environment of popular narratives sometimes celebrate fame and utility alone, as opposed to the humility, honesty, and virtue that education promotes. Fifth, the challenge of integrating religious values across subjects is often locked in religious lessons, not coloring science, language, art, and collaborative practices (Sunarti, Ratmiati, 2021). This literature review is therefore important to inventory strategies that effectively address these constraints, for example: authentic character portfolio-based assessments, ethical problem-based learning, or restorative practices that educate rather than punish.

Conceptually, this research requires a clear operational definition so that there is no overlap of understandings. Religious character education in this text is formulated as a series of pedagogical processes that aim to cultivate moral virtues that are sourced and/or in line with religious teachings, internalized through knowledge, appreciation, and practice of virtue in a personal and social context. Religious is understood not as mere ritual piety, but a comprehensive orientation that guides one to act rightly with an awareness of the presence of the Transcendent as well as a human responsibility. Practice refers to school strategies, methods, culture, and policies that establish values

in daily life: communication manners, academic honesty, social concern, discipline, and cooperation.

Given the plurality of religions and cultures, religious character education should be designed with the principles of inclusivity, non-discrimination, and respect for the dignity of each learner. The religious values taught need to be communicated through the universal language of virtue: honesty, compassion, justice, integrity, responsibility (Fachry & Ardi, 2024). Thus, the classroom becomes a safe space for dialogue, fostering mutual respect, and building ethical consensus in differences. This approach is in line with the goal of education in a democratic society: to produce citizens who are believers as well as having deliberative, critical, and collaborative capacities (Rohmatin, et al., 2024).

The theoretical contribution expected from this literature study is the preparation of an integrative conceptual map that links (a) religious normative bases, (b) cross-stream character formation theory, and (c) multi-level implementation design (curriculum, pedagogy, culture, partnerships). Practically, this study intends to offer a set of design principles and implementation recommendations that are adaptive to school conditions: class size, availability of human resources, organizational culture, and student profiles. Recommendations are also directed at the development of valid-reliable and easy-to-use evaluation tools for teachers, including rubric examples, behavioral indicators, and character portfolio formats.

This literature study takes systematic steps: (1) searching for relevant scientific and policy literature; (2) thematic categorization (theory, practice, evaluation, constraints, and solutions); (3) critical analysis to identify coherences, gaps, and overlaps; (4) synthesis to formulate a conceptual model; and (5) formulation of implications for further practice and research. The limitations of the study are consciously acknowledged: as a literature review, the findings are highly dependent on the quality and diversity of references; Field validation of the proposed model requires further empirical research. Nevertheless, the advantage of literature study is the breadth of scope and depth of reflection which is a solid foundation for policy development and pedagogical innovation.

Religious character education needs to be supported by continuous professional development of teachers, ranging from value pedagogy competencies, dialogue facilitation, restorative conflict handling, to the ability to design student-centered learning experiences (Rohmah & Hamidah, 2025). Educational technology can be used to enrich reflection experiences (digital journals, electronic portfolios), moral dilemma simulations, and data-driven social action projects. The mainstreaming of character development across subjects, for example the integration of ethical dimensions in science (environmental ethics), language (polite and argumentative rhetoric), and art (aesthetic appreciation that respects humanity) makes religiosity inseparable from the integrity of the curriculum.

Finally, the need for education that cultivates people who are faithful, knowledgeable, moral, and useful requires us to develop a framework that is solid and flexible. Solid in value base and clarity of purpose; flexibility in strategy, in order to be able to respond to the diversity of contexts and dynamics of the times. This literature study is expected to present a conceptual map for educators, policy makers, and researchers to develop a theoretically solid, practical, operational, and ethically inclusive religious character education program. Through careful integration of ideas and evidence, we can move from jargon to practice: building a school culture that fosters virtue, strengthens family and community partnerships, and equips young people with a moral compass that can withstand the test—whether in the classroom, in the digital world, or in the midst of increasingly complex social realities. Thus, religious character education does not stop as a discourse, but lives as a good habit that is sustainable and impactful.

B. Research Methods

This study is a literature study (*Literature Review*) systematic literature review study with an integrative review design. This design was chosen because it allows the synthesis of findings from different types of publications (qualitative, quantitative, conceptual studies, and practice reports) to build a comprehensive understanding (Andriani, 2022) about the model of formation of religiosity based on Islamic Religious

Education in elementary schools. Synthesis procedure follows a flow *Systematic Narrative Review* that combines PRISMA's step traceability (planning, search, screening, eligibility, and inclusion) with a contextual narrative thematic presentation (Ridlo, 2023).

The main source of data is scientific journal articles that are relevant to the topic of PAI-based religious character education at the elementary and pre-school levels, including studies that are the main references in this research design and others that have been summarized by the researcher. To expand coverage, searches were conducted on databases: Google Scholar, Garuda (Garba Reference Digital), SINTA, DOAJ, and Scopus (if access is available). The year range is set for 2019–2025 in order to capture the post-implementation practices of the 2013 Curriculum, the transition to the Independent Curriculum, and post-pandemic dynamics. National policy literature, textbooks, and curriculum documents can be used as supporting sources for conceptual triangulation.

Search uses structured keywords. The search results are exported (if possible) to an extraction worksheet (spreadsheet) that contains: author, year, context/location, design/method, sample, intervention/approach (habituation, exemplary, curriculum integration, community/family role), religiosity indicators/results, key findings, limitations, and notes of relevance to the synthesized model (Brown et al., 2022).

The main instrument is the data extraction form that the researcher compiles to ensure consistency (Sukmawati, Sudarmin, 2023). This form includes the rubrics: 1) Study identity: author, year, journal, quality credentials (indexation, *Peer-review*). (2) Methodology: design (qualitative/quantitative/mixed), data collection techniques, instruments, analysis. (3) Context & subject: level, character of the school (public/private, elementary/MI), participants (students, teachers, parents). (4) Interventions/strategies: habituation, example, integration of PAI in the curriculum, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. (5) Outcome: indicators of religiosity (faith, worship, morals, discipline, honesty, tolerance), behavior change. (6) Supporting/inhibiting factors: school culture, leadership, facilities, role of parents/community.

The analysis is carried out through a three-stage thematic synthesis:

1. Open coding: marking units of meaning related to strategies for the formation of religiosity (e.g., habituation of worship, example of teachers/uswah, curriculum integration, spiritual activities, parent-community partnerships, restorative practices, authentic assessments).
2. Axial coding: grouping the code into main themes: (a) religious curriculum design; (b) the role of actors (teachers, parents, community); (c) habituation and exemplary practice; (d) school climate/culture; (e) character assessment instruments; (f) contextual factors (locality, resources, post-pandemic).
3. Synthesis (selective coding): stringing the theme together into a conceptual model for the formation of PAI-based religiosity in elementary school, linking *inputs-processes-outputs-outcomes*: inputs (policies, curriculum, human resources, culture), processes (PAI learning, habituation, examples, family-community collaboration), outputs (apparent religious behavior), outcomes (virtue habits and school climate).



Figure 1 research framework

C. Results and Discussion

This research is a literature study that synthesizes the main findings of various studies on the formation of religiosity based on Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at the elementary school level. The focus of the analysis is directed at two axes: (1) the theoretical framework of religious character education, and (2) implementive practices

in schools, especially those related to honesty, tolerance, discipline, and noble morals. In general, the review shows a strong consensus that PAI is effective in shaping religious character when managed as an ecosystem of habituation, exemplary, and curriculum integration, rather than simply a dogmatic knowledge transfer (Qosim & Rouf, 2024; Faizah, 2022; Malik, et al., 2024).

1. Conceptual Foundation: Religiosity as a Cognitive–Affective–Behavioral Integration

The results of the literature synthesis confirm that religious character is a multidimensional construct that includes knowledge of values (*knowing*), appreciation (*feeling*), and the practice of virtue (*doing*). In the context of PAI, these three dimensions are intertwined through the strengthening of faith, habituation of worship, and moral development (Faizah, 2022; Ngulwiyah, et al., 2025). PAI that emphasizes this balance tends to result in a religiosity that does not stop at rituals, but is established in moral habits such as honesty, responsibility, good manners, and care (Giri, et al., 2025; Zalsabella, et al., 2023).

Theoretically, these findings are in line with the ethical paradigm of virtue (*virtue ethics*) who view character as the fruit of consistent and exemplary habituation (*copiar*). In education, this process runs through repeated habituation, meaningful feedback, and social reinforcement (Lickona in the framework of three domains; confirmed in the context of PAI by (Faizah, 2022; StuRat (2024). Thus, religiosity is not constructed solely as normative obedience, but as a stable disposition to choose what is good because it is conscious, understood, and habituated.

2. Role of Actors and Structures: Teachers, Curriculum, and Community

The synthesis underlines three key actor-structures. First, teachers as role models, guides, directors, and evaluators, a position that repeatedly appears as a dominant factor in the formation of religiosity in elementary schools (Gultom, et al., 2024; Study, et al., 2024). Exemplary (*uswah hasanah*) and the quality of teacher-student interaction, both in the classroom and outside the classroom, are the main channels for internalizing values. Second, a curriculum that is grade-oriented and integrated across subjects; This kind of curriculum does not confine religious values to PAI hours, but rather instill

values throughout the learning ecosystem (Amili, 2020; Boty, et al., 2023). Third, the community (family-community) that ensures the resonance of values outside of school. Parental involvement, co-curricular activities, and social environment support strengthen habituation and prevent value dissonance (Fitriyani, 2022; Yulita, et al., 2024).

This triad structure of the teacher–curriculum–community suggests that the formation of religiosity is a project of educational ecology—not a single-subject project. Failure often occurs when one of the pillars is absent: for example, the curriculum emphasizes honesty but the culture of evaluation encourages narrow competition; or schools encourage tolerance while community discourse is full of stereotypes (Hanafiah, et al., 2024; Salsabila, et al., 2024).

3. Pedagogical Strategy: Active Learning, Internalization of Tawheed, and Sustainable Tarbiyah

The cutting-edge literature highlights three main pedagogical strategies. First, *Active Learning* designed specifically for PAI has been shown to enhance religiosity through meaningful-learning experiences, value discussions, social projects, and reflection (Scott, 2020; Qosim & Rouf, 2024). Active learning is not just a variation of methods, but a means to bind cognition–affection to action in a series of authentic experiences.

Second, the internalization of monotheism as a logical-theological foundation of character. Studies at SDIT show that the understanding of monotheism integrated into worship and morals results in a consistent moral orientation – students not only know right and wrong but why to be honest, disciplined, and tolerant (Hidayat, et al., 2022).

Third, the tarbiyah approach emphasizes worship-habitation-muhasabah (self-reflection) in a sustainable manner. Although originally studied on PAI students, this model can be adapted in elementary schools for the development of long-term religious character (Sari, et al., 2025). These three strategies intersect with a general idea: religious values grow as students experience, reflect, and become accustomed to doing good in a supportive culture.

4. Knowledge Gap and Model Direction

Cross-study analysis indicates several gaps: (1) Many works affirm the effectiveness of exemplary and habituation, but have not formulated a structured, scalable, and context-sensitive model (Faizah, 2022; Study et al., 2024; Qosim & Rouf, 2024). (2) Teacher–curriculum–community synergy is often called for, but the mechanisms of collaboration—role flows, indicators, and evaluation cycles—have not been described in detail (Hanafiah, et al., 2024; Yulita, et al., 2024). (3) Studies of tolerance and diversity literacy have existed, but measurements of religiosity connected to tolerance are still sporadic (Putri & Rosyidi, 2024; Risty, et al., 2025).

Based on these gaps, the results of this study propose a conceptual model: PIR (Habituation–Integration–Reflection) Model. The PIR model is as follows. First, habituation: strengthening religious and social routines through daily rituals (prayers, greetings, short recitations), simple service projects, and virtuous practices such as 5S, orderly queuing, and maintaining trust. Second, Integration: embedding religious values in all subjects and school policies through the formulation of affective goals, attitude assessment rubrics, and discipline that is consistent with the values of honesty, tolerance, and discipline. Third, Reflection: the management of moral journals, weekly muhasabah, and structured classroom dialogues to link the learning experience with the internalization of values, so that behavior changes are better maintained.

This model focuses on three priority character profiles: honesty, tolerance, and discipline, as key indicators of religiosity in elementary school. The foundation is in line with the findings (Asih, et al., 2022; Awang, et al., 2021; Putri & Rosyidi, 2024), as well as expanding practice *Active Learning* (Scott, 2020; Qosim & Rouf, 2024).

5. Religious Character Education Practices in Schools (Honesty, Tolerance, and the Like)

A number of publications show that honesty grows strong in a school culture that combines religious habituation with a fair evaluation system and teacher example (Study, et al., 2024; Ngulwiyah, et al., 2025). Routine activities such as joint prayer, reciting the Qur'an before lessons, and dhuha prayers are not only ritual, but serve as daily moral anchors that prepare the disposition to speak and act righteously

(Ngulwiyah, et al., 2025). At the level of learning activities, the discussion of moral cases, such as the dilemma of cheating or not being guided by the framework of claims of evidence or reason, is then closed with a discussion that links decisions with spiritual and social consequences (Qosim & Rouf, 2024).

a. Honesty (Shidiq)

PAI teachers occupy a central position as an example of honesty in the learning and assessment process. Teachers' consistency, for example in the transparency of rubrics, admitting mistakes, and rejecting small gratuities, gives a strong implicit message (Gultom, et al., 2024; Study, et al., 2024). Studies in various contexts have also shown that assessment systems that reduce the pressure of narrow competition (e.g., formative assessments, character portfolios) correlate with decreased dishonest behavior (Boty, et al., 2023).

Family and community collaboration, where parents are involved in applying simple rules at home, honesty in conveying the reason for being late, completing their own tasks, and not manipulating information, so that a school-home value resonance is formed (Syarnubi, et al., 2023; Yulita, et al., 2024). Social service activities with residents test honesty in a real context: donation management, activity reports, and time commitment (Prasetyo, et al., 2021).

Practice indicators include (1) Students dare to admit mistakes without fear of embarrassment (Ngulwiyah, et al., 2025). (2) A decrease in academic violations (cheating), reflected in teachers' records (Hanafiah, et al., 2024). (3) Improving the quality of moral arguments based on PAI values during the discussion of dilemmas (Qosim & Rouf, 2024).

b. Tolerance (Tasāmuḥ)

Key findings. Research shows that student tolerance increases when religious routines are linked to cross-background experiences of togetherness and polite communication practices (Ngulwiyah, et al., 2025). PAI that emphasizes karimah morals fosters empathy and respect for differences, especially when integrated in collaborative projects (Zalsabella, et al., 2023). In the madrasah

environment, memorization and congregational worship activities combined with thematic programs of mutual respect have been proven to strengthen tolerance.

Class strategies include: first, the identified class strategies include three main forms. First, directed dialogue, where teachers facilitate conversations about differences of opinion by upholding speaking manners: not cutting, giving turns, referring to postulates and values, and summarizing without degrading any party. Second, project-based learning, where heterogeneous groups work on community service tasks—such as tidying up public spaces or anti-bullying campaigns—with an emphasis on cooperation and perspective taking. Third, case studies, when students examine real examples of digital intolerance (silent language, stereotypes) and formulate guidelines for internet ethics based on noble morals to be applied in daily activities (Zalsabella, et al., 2023).

The role of teachers and school policies, exemplary teacher language (not labeling, not cornering) and restorative discipline, improving relationships, not just punishing related to reducing horizontal conflicts in the classroom (Hanafiah, et al., 2024; Study, et al., 2024). Parental involvement through non-violent communication workshops reinforces tolerance practices at home (Syarnubi, et al., 2023; Yulita, et al., 2024). Indicators of practice include: (1) Students are able to express disagreement without personally attacking. (2) Increased cross-group collaboration and decreased incidents of bullying. (3) Classroom products (digital ethics posters/comics) that reflect the value of mutual respect (Zalsabella, et al., 2023).

c. Discipline and Responsibility

Studies during the Covid-New Normal transition period show that discipline combined with parental role models strengthens students' Islamic character (Salmia et al., 2023). In school, discipline is present through a consistent routine, arriving on time, queuing, tidying up equipment, praying in congregation bound by a religious narrative of trust and time (Mulyati, et al., 2021). Discipline that relies on meaning (not just punishment) is more durable.

Discipline is not only the domain of PAI; Mathematics, science, and language teachers participate in implementing process standards, such as work plans, realistic deadlines, and behavior rubrics, so that the value of istiqamah is reflected in all subjects (Hanafiah, et al., 2024). Practice indicators are (1) the punctuality of worship and assignments is increased (2) the quality of student self-management (preparing tools, following procedures) is improving, as seen from the teacher's observation.

The results of the literature study synthesis show a strong common thread: religious character education in elementary schools will be effective if it is positioned as a value ecosystem that unites the role of teachers, curriculum, and community rather than just stand-alone PAI subjects. Cross-study findings confirm that religious habituation (rituals, 5S, congregational prayers), teacher exemplary, and integration of values across subjects are the three pillars that are most consistently correlated with the growth of honesty, tolerance, and discipline (Aswat. et al., 2021; Hanafiah, et al., 2024; Study, et al., 2024). These results affirm the PIR (Habituation–Integration–Reflection) design proposed in the research results: virtue does not come from lectures alone, but from meaningful repetitive experiences, linked to conceptual explanations, and reflected systematically.

First, from a theoretical perspective, most of the references are in line with the virtue ethics framework and the moral development approach that combines knowing–feeling–doing. PAI which emphasizes creed (tauhid), worship, and morals and balances the cognitive–affective–behavioral domains, shows a stronger internalization power (Faizah, 2022; Hidayat et al., 2022). Here, the internalization of monotheism serves as a source of intrinsic motivation and a horizon of meaning; He explained why students need to be honest and disciplined, not just what to do. Meanwhile, *Active Learning* Offers methodologies for bridging knowledge and action through real experience: case studies, social projects, contextual learning, and value dialogues (Scott, 2020; Qosim & Rouf, 2024). Research on *Tarbiyah* adding a dimension of sustainability through a package of worship – habituation – meditation that is designed in a process.

Conceptually, these three approaches are intertwined: monotheism provides moral reasons, active learning provides experience, and tarbiyah ensures continuity.

Second, in terms of honesty practice, the literature emphasizes that a fair academic culture, teacher role models in the classroom and evaluation, and consistent ritual habituation work as a system. Students dare to admit mistakes when schools adopt restorative rather than embarrassing handling of offenses (Hanafiah, et al., 2024; Study, et al., 2024). The habituation program of joint prayer, recitation, and dhuha prayer is not the final goal, but an anchor to build an honest disposition in daily judgment and interaction (Qosim & Rouf, 2024). Here, the integration of authentic assessments (character portfolios, narrative observations) is crucial so that honesty is measured at the behavioral level, not just declarative knowledge.

Third, on tolerance, the data showed the most noticeable improvement when religious practices were tied to cross-background experiences of togetherness through collaborative projects, directed dialogue about differences, and communication ethics (Azainil & Komariyah, 2021; Wahyuni & Putra, 2020). PAI acts as a safe space to practice dialogue manners: expressing disagreement without attacking personally, giving reasons with value references, and concluding without condescending. Classroom products (digital ethics posters, anti-bullying comics) reinforce the message of tolerance in the cognitive and affective realms (Zalsabella, et al., 2023). These findings show that tolerance is not an automatic consequence of religiosity; It needs to be redesigned in the learning experience and school interaction policies.

Fourth, discipline is strengthened when school routines are consistent and meaningful: arriving on time, lining up, maintaining cleanliness, and completing assignments with clear process standards. Studies during the Covid transition period show the important role of parents as *Role Model* Discipline and School–Home Cooperation (Zalsabella, et al., 2023). The integration of discipline values across subjects through task planning, realistic deadlines, and process rubrics prevents discipline from being reduced to momentary compliance in PAI hours (Hanafiah, et al., 2024). In other words, discipline is a characteristic of a learning culture, not just a religious rule.

Teacher proved to be the most decisive variable. When a teacher becomes a *Uswah Hasanah* transparent in judgment, consistent in speech-action, empathetic in reprimanding, internalization of values significantly increased (Gultom, et al., 2024; Study, et al., 2024). However, over-reliance on individual figures makes the practice vulnerable. Therefore, the teacher-curriculum-community synergy must be institutionalized: minimum standards of character indicators, classroom/madrasah reflection mechanisms, and two-way communication channels with parents (Hanafiah, et al., 2024; Syarnubi, et al., 2023; Yulita, et al., 2024). This institutional approach minimizes the risk of loss when exemplary teachers are mutated.

Although the pattern of findings is consistent, there are limitations that should be noted. First, some studies focus on one context (private/religious-based schools) so that it requires adaptation when applied in more heterogeneous public elementary schools (Hidayat, et al., 2022). Second, the measurement of religiosity and tolerance is often cognitive; In fact, more valid prosocial behavior changes are captured through portfolios, futures observations, and case studies (Hanafiah, et al., 2024). Third, the variables of parental support and facilities have not been managed evenly; These constraints are repeatedly reported and demand more innovative partnership strategies (Wardani & Rahmawati, 2023).

Answering this gap, this study proposes strengthening the PIR Model as a systemic framework. Habituation is designed in stages, from simple rituals to service projects so that the value is practiced in real situations. Integration is realized through a cross-map curriculum, assessment policies, and restorative discipline so that grades are consistent throughout the school experience. Reflection is institutionalized through weekly *deluhasabah*, moral journals, and student-parent conferences to link experiences, religious reasons, and commitment to improvement. This strategy is compatible with findings on active learning (Scott, 2020), Internalization of Tawheed and Tarbiyah (Panjaitan, et al., 2023), as well as responsive to the demands of authentic evaluation (Hanafiah, et al., 2024).

Practically, this discussion emphasizes that the success of religious character education depends on the coherence of the system, not the abundance of activities.

Schools that want to foster honesty, tolerance, and discipline need to move from ceremonial programs to curriculum and cultural design that establishes virtue, and active family–community collaboration (Azainil & Komariyah, 2021; Yulita, et al., 2024). Thus, religiosity does not stop as a normative discourse, but lives as a measurable, replicative, and sustainable habitus.

D. Conclusion

Based on a systematic literature review study conducted, this study confirms that religious character education in elementary schools becomes effective when Islamic Religious Education is positioned as a value ecosystem that unites habituation, integration, and reflection. The PIR (Habituation–Integration–Reflection) model formulated shows that honesty, tolerance, and discipline do not grow from lectures alone, but from a series of consistent practices, across subjects, and supported by school policies. The role of teachers as *uswah hasanah*, facilitator of value dialogue, and school-family-community liaison is the key to successful implementation. On the other hand, the variation in institutional contexts, cultures, and facilities demands local adaptation so that this model is truly applicable and not uniform. Overall, the study concludes that a solid and sustainable religiosity can only be realized through systemic coherence between students' theories, curriculum, culture, and daily practices that are reflected in real prosocial behavior. These findings also open up space for further research to test the effectiveness of the PIR Model in various elementary school contexts in Indonesia.

The limitation of this study lies in the systematic literature review approach which is secondary and does not involve direct observation in the field. Therefore, further research is expected to be carried out empirically by testing the PIR Model directly on educational objects in various elementary schools in Indonesia to validate its effectiveness in a real context.

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