

Global Dialogues in Humanities and Pedagogy

Assessing the Effectiveness of Values Education in Islamic Schools in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Values education in Islamic schools represents a critical component of Indonesia's educational landscape, serving as a mechanism for character formation and moral development among Muslim youth. This study examines the effectiveness of values education implementation in Islamic schools across Indonesia, investigating how these institutions integrate religious teachings with contemporary pedagogical approaches to cultivate ethical character and civic responsibility. Drawing upon empirical evidence from multiple Islamic educational institutions, this research explores the relationship between values education curricula, instructional practices, and observable outcomes in students' moral reasoning, religious behavior, and social conduct. The findings reveal that effective values education in Islamic schools requires coherent integration of Islamic principles across formal curriculum, school culture, and community engagement, supported by qualified educators possessing both religious knowledge and pedagogical competence. While Indonesian Islamic schools demonstrate considerable strengths in transmitting religious knowledge and fostering Islamic identity, challenges persist regarding assessment methodologies, contemporary relevance, and preparing students to navigate pluralistic contexts while maintaining religious commitments.

INTRODUCTION

Values education has emerged as an increasingly prominent concern within global educational discourse, reflecting widespread recognition that schooling serves purposes extending beyond academic knowledge transmission to encompass moral formation and character development. Within the Indonesian context, this emphasis on values education takes on particular significance given the nation's constitutional commitment to Pancasila philosophy, which emphasizes belief in God, humanitarianism, national unity, democracy, and social justice as foundational principles guiding national life. Islamic schools, comprising a substantial segment of Indonesia's educational landscape through institutions such as madrasah and Islamic-oriented private schools, occupy a unique position in this values education endeavor by explicitly integrating Islamic teachings with national educational objectives. According to Lickona (1991), effective character education requires comprehensive approaches that engage students' moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action, creating coherent educational environments where values are explicitly taught, consistently modeled, and actively practiced. This tripartite framework provides a useful lens for examining how Islamic schools in Indonesia approach the multifaceted challenge of cultivating moral character grounded in religious principles while preparing students for engagement in diverse contemporary contexts.

The Indonesian educational system reflects the nation's identity as the world's largest Muslim-majority country, with Islamic schools serving approximately fifteen percent of the total student population through various institutional forms. Madrasah, Islamic schools operating under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, provide curricula combining national academic standards with enhanced Islamic religious instruction, while private Islamic schools affiliated with various Islamic organizations offer alternative educational pathways emphasizing religious formation alongside academic achievement. Parker and Raihani (2011) and Muhsyanur (2023) documented how Indonesian Islamic schools navigate complex terrain balancing religious authenticity, national citizenship preparation, and global competitiveness concerns, creating distinctive educational cultures that shape students' moral development and worldview formation. Understanding values education effectiveness within these institutions requires examining not only formal curriculum content but also the broader school culture, teacher-student relationships, pedagogical approaches, and connections between school and wider Muslim community contexts that collectively contribute to moral formation processes.

Theoretical foundations for values education in Islamic contexts draw upon rich intellectual traditions emphasizing moral development as central to Islamic education philosophy. Classical Islamic educational thought, exemplified by scholars such as Al-Ghazali, conceptualized education primarily as character formation aimed at cultivating virtuous individuals who embody Islamic ethical ideals in

personal conduct and social relationships. Halstead (2007) analyzed how Islamic educational philosophy emphasizes integrated development of intellectual, spiritual, moral, and physical dimensions, rejecting dichotomies between religious and secular knowledge while viewing all learning as ultimately oriented toward understanding and fulfilling one's purpose as God's vicegerent on earth. Contemporary Islamic educational theorists have sought to articulate how these classical principles can inform educational practice within modern institutional contexts, addressing questions about appropriate pedagogical methods, assessment approaches, curriculum design, and the relationship between traditional Islamic knowledge and contemporary disciplines. These theoretical discussions provide conceptual frameworks informing values education practice within Indonesian Islamic schools, though implementation varies considerably depending on institutional philosophy, resources, and leadership commitments.

The Indonesian national education system has increasingly emphasized character education across all school types through policies such as the National Character Education Movement launched in 2010 and subsequent initiatives integrating values education throughout curriculum implementation. Zuchdi et al. (2010) examined how Indonesian educational authorities conceptualized character education as cultivation of eighteen core values including religiosity, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democratic attitudes, curiosity, national spirit, patriotism, achievement appreciation, friendliness, peace-loving attitudes, literacy engagement, environmental care, social awareness, and responsibility. Islamic schools embrace these nationally prescribed values while interpreting them through Islamic frameworks and adding specifically Islamic ethical concepts such as taqwa (God-consciousness), akhlaq (moral character), adab (proper conduct), and ihsan (excellence in all endeavors). This integration of national and Islamic value frameworks creates both opportunities and tensions, as schools work to demonstrate that Islamic values align with citizenship preparation while maintaining distinctive religious identity and avoiding reduction of Islamic ethics to generic moral teachings.

Pedagogical approaches to values education in Islamic schools encompass diverse methodologies ranging from direct instruction in religious knowledge and ethical principles to experiential learning emphasizing character development through practice. Traditional approaches often emphasize memorization of Quranic texts and hadith (prophetic traditions), study of Islamic jurisprudence and theology, and teacher-centered instruction transmitting authoritative religious knowledge to students. However, contemporary Islamic educational reformers have advocated more student-centered, experiential approaches engaging learners actively in moral reasoning, ethical deliberation, and practical application of Islamic values in authentic contexts. Noddings (2002) argued that effective moral education requires caring relationships between teachers and students, opportunities for dialogue about ethical questions, practice in caring behaviors, and confirmation of students' capacity for moral growth. These pedagogical principles resonate with Islamic educational

traditions emphasizing the teacher-student relationship as central to character formation, though implementation requires adapting general educational principles to Islamic contexts while remaining faithful to religious foundations.

Assessment of values education effectiveness presents significant methodological challenges, as character development and moral growth resist straightforward measurement through conventional testing approaches (Muhsyanur et al., 2021). While knowledge of religious teachings and ethical principles can be assessed through examinations, the deeper outcomes values education seeks—including internalized commitment to values, consistent moral behavior across contexts, and development of ethical reasoning capacities—require more complex assessment strategies. Berkowitz and Bier (2005) reviewed research on character education effectiveness and identified multiple outcome domains including knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and developmental competencies, each requiring appropriate assessment methodologies. Indonesian Islamic schools have traditionally emphasized religious knowledge assessment through examinations in Islamic studies subjects, but increasingly recognize the need for broader assessment approaches including observation of student behavior, documentation of service activities and religious practices, teacher evaluations of character development, and student self-reflection on moral growth. These assessment challenges complicate efforts to rigorously evaluate values education effectiveness and identify practices most conducive to positive character development outcomes.

The contemporary context for Islamic education in Indonesia includes both opportunities and challenges shaping values education implementation. Indonesia's democratic political environment, relatively moderate Islamic religious landscape, and pluralistic social fabric create conditions supporting diverse expressions of Islamic education while raising questions about preparing students to engage constructively across religious and ideological differences. Azra et al. (2007) examined how Indonesian Islamic educational institutions navigate tensions between religious particularity and pluralistic citizenship, noting that some schools emphasize exclusive Islamic identity while others promote interfaith understanding and collaborative engagement across difference. Global Islamic educational reform movements advocating integrated curricula, modern pedagogical methods, and engagement with contemporary knowledge have influenced Indonesian Islamic schools, though implementation varies considerably across institutions with different philosophical orientations, resource levels, and leadership priorities. Understanding values education effectiveness requires examining these contextual factors that enable or constrain schools' capacity to implement comprehensive character education aligned with both Islamic principles and contemporary educational understandings.

METHOD

This research employed a qualitative case study approach to examine values education implementation and effectiveness across six Islamic schools in Indonesia,

representing diverse institutional types, geographic locations, and educational philosophies. The selection of case study methodology was guided by Stake (2005), who emphasized case studies' capacity to provide in-depth understanding of complex phenomena within real-world contexts, particularly valuable when investigating multifaceted educational processes that resist reduction to simple variables or linear causal relationships. The six participating schools included three madrasah operating under Ministry of Religious Affairs jurisdiction and three private Islamic schools affiliated with major Islamic organizations, spanning urban and rural settings across Java, Sumatra, and Sulawesi regions. School selection employed purposive sampling criteria prioritizing institutions recognized for substantive commitment to values education, sufficient operational duration to assess outcomes, willingness to participate in research activities, and diversity of institutional characteristics enabling examination of varied approaches to Islamic values education. Data collection occurred over a twelve-month period through multiple methods including classroom observations of Islamic education instruction and broader school activities, semi-structured interviews with school leaders, teachers, students, parents, and community members, document analysis of curriculum materials, school policies, and student work, and field notes documenting school culture and informal interactions.

The analytical framework drew upon Yin (2018), who outlined systematic procedures for case study analysis including detailed case descriptions, within-case analysis identifying patterns and themes in individual schools, cross-case synthesis examining similarities and differences across contexts, and interpretation relating empirical findings to theoretical frameworks and existing research. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were coded using thematic analysis procedures identifying recurring themes related to values education goals, implementation practices, perceived outcomes, and factors influencing effectiveness. To enhance credibility and trustworthiness, the research employed multiple strategies including triangulation across data sources and collection methods, member checking whereby participants reviewed preliminary findings and interpretations, prolonged engagement with each school site enabling development of contextual understanding, and reflexivity regarding researcher assumptions and interpretive frameworks. According to Miles et al. (2014), qualitative data analysis requires systematic, transparent procedures while maintaining flexibility to pursue emergent insights and unexpected findings that surface during investigative processes. Ethical approval was obtained from relevant institutional review boards, and all participants provided informed consent with assurances of confidentiality protecting individual and institutional identities in research publications and presentations.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Curriculum Design and Integration of Islamic Values

The analysis of curriculum approaches across participating Islamic schools revealed considerable variation in how institutions conceptualized and structured values education within their educational programs. All schools included formal Islamic religious studies as core curriculum components, typically encompassing Quranic recitation and interpretation, hadith studies, Islamic jurisprudence, Islamic history and civilization, and Arabic language instruction. However, schools differed substantially regarding whether they treated values education primarily as a separate curricular domain confined to religious studies classes or pursued more integrated approaches embedding Islamic values throughout all subject areas and school activities. Schools embracing integrated approaches demonstrated more systematic attention to identifying opportunities for values education across mathematics, science, social studies, language arts, and other academic subjects, developing curriculum materials and instructional strategies that explicitly connected disciplinary content with Islamic ethical principles and character development objectives.

One particularly effective practice observed involved collaborative curriculum planning where religious studies teachers worked alongside subject area specialists to identify natural connection points between academic content and Islamic values, creating learning experiences that simultaneously advanced disciplinary understanding and moral formation. For example, in one school's science curriculum, teachers framed environmental science units around Islamic concepts of stewardship and human responsibility as God's khalifah (vicegerent) on earth, examining both scientific principles and ethical obligations regarding environmental care. Social studies instruction incorporated Islamic perspectives on justice, community responsibility, and governance while examining historical and contemporary political systems. Language arts classes analyzed literary texts through lenses informed by Islamic ethical frameworks while developing critical literacy skills. These integrated approaches appeared more effective than isolated religious instruction in helping students recognize Islamic values' relevance across life domains and develop capacities to apply ethical principles in varied contexts requiring moral judgment and decision-making.

However, curriculum integration presented significant implementation challenges, particularly regarding teacher preparation and time constraints. Many academic subject teachers expressed limited confidence in their knowledge of Islamic teachings and uncertainty about appropriate ways to integrate religious content with their disciplinary expertise. Even teachers personally committed to Islamic values sometimes struggled to move beyond superficial mentions of religious concepts to substantive integration that enriched both subject matter understanding and moral formation. School leaders identified teacher professional development as a critical need, though most schools lacked systematic programs equipping teachers across disciplines with knowledge and pedagogical strategies for

values integration. Time pressures associated with covering required academic content for standardized examinations frequently marginalized values education considerations, as teachers prioritized test preparation over character development objectives not directly assessed through conventional academic measures.

The research also revealed tensions between traditional Islamic knowledge transmission approaches and contemporary educational emphases on critical thinking, student-centered learning, and active construction of understanding. Some schools maintained traditional pedagogical models emphasizing memorization of religious texts, teacher authority in interpreting Islamic teachings, and student reception of transmitted knowledge with limited opportunities for questioning or independent exploration. Other schools experimented with more dialogical approaches encouraging students to grapple with ethical questions, examine how Islamic principles apply to complex contemporary situations, and develop moral reasoning capacities rather than simply memorizing correct answers. Teachers in schools pursuing more student-centered approaches reported that while these methods engaged students more actively and seemed to foster deeper understanding, they also created risks of students developing interpretations inconsistent with orthodox Islamic teachings or becoming confused by exposing multiple perspectives without adequate guidance toward sound conclusions. Balancing respect for Islamic tradition and authoritative religious knowledge with contemporary pedagogical understandings of effective learning remains an ongoing challenge for Indonesian Islamic schools seeking to strengthen values education.

School Culture and Hidden Curriculum

Analysis of school culture revealed that values education effectiveness depended substantially on coherence between formal curriculum and the broader school environment, including daily routines, behavioral expectations, teacher-student relationships, discipline practices, and institutional symbols and rituals that collectively constitute the hidden curriculum (Muhsyanur, 2024). Schools demonstrating greatest apparent impact on student character development cultivated comprehensive Islamic environments where values permeated all aspects of school life rather than being confined to religious instruction periods. These schools established clear behavioral expectations grounded in Islamic ethical principles, consistently reinforced through modeling by teachers and administrators, recognition of students exemplifying desired values, and corrective responses to behavior inconsistent with Islamic moral standards. Daily practices such as communal prayers, Quran recitation before classes, Islamic greetings and expressions in school discourse, and visible Islamic symbols throughout physical spaces created environments continuously communicating Islamic identity and values.

Teacher-student relationships emerged as particularly influential factors shaping students' moral development and religious commitment. Students consistently identified teachers who demonstrated genuine care, maintained high

ethical standards in their own conduct, took personal interest in students' well-being beyond academic performance, and connected Islamic teachings to students' lived experiences as most influential in their character formation. These findings align with Noddings' (2002) emphasis on caring relationships as foundational to moral education, though participants interpreted caring through Islamic frameworks emphasizing teachers' responsibilities to guide students toward religious devotion and ethical conduct while showing compassion and concern for their holistic development. Teachers who embodied Islamic values in their behavior while maintaining appropriate boundaries, demonstrating consistency between professed beliefs and actual conduct, and showing authentic enthusiasm for Islamic teachings appeared most successful in inspiring students to internalize religious values rather than merely conforming to external expectations.

However, observations also revealed inconsistencies between espoused values and actual school practices that potentially undermined values education effectiveness. Some schools promoted Islamic values of equality and justice while maintaining practices that privileged students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds or demonstrated favoritism based on academic achievement. Instances of teachers or administrators behaving in ways inconsistent with Islamic ethical principles—such as showing disrespect toward students, failing to fulfill responsibilities reliably, or displaying hypocrisy between religious rhetoric and actual conduct—created cynicism among students about authentic commitment to values being taught. Several student interview participants expressed frustration with what they perceived as superficial religiosity emphasizing external conformity to Islamic practices without corresponding attention to internal sincerity or ethical conduct in relationships. These observations underscore the importance of institutional integrity and authentic embodiment of values throughout school culture, as students prove highly attuned to discrepancies between stated ideals and organizational realities.

Discipline and classroom management practices reflected varied approaches to cultivating moral behavior, ranging from punitive models emphasizing external control and consequences for misbehavior to developmental approaches viewing discipline as opportunities for moral learning and character growth. Schools employing more punitive approaches often relied on negative consequences, public shaming, or corporal punishment to enforce behavioral compliance, justified through references to traditional Islamic educational practices or parental cultural expectations. However, students subjected to these approaches sometimes demonstrated behavioral compliance without corresponding internalization of values, describing their motivation as avoiding punishment rather than genuine commitment to Islamic principles. Alternative approaches observed in some schools emphasized restorative practices, helping students understand consequences of misbehavior, making amends for harm caused, and developing improved self-regulation capacities. Teachers implementing these approaches reported greater

effectiveness in promoting genuine moral development, though they required more time, skill, and emotional labor than simpler punitive responses.

Table 1. Observed School Culture Elements and Their Relationship to Values Education Effectiveness

School Culture Element	High Effectiveness Schools (n=2)	Moderate Effectiveness Schools (n=3)	Lower Effectiveness Schools (n=1)
Daily Islamic Practices Integration	Comprehensive, meaningful	Regular but somewhat routine	Minimal, inconsistent
Teacher Modeling of Islamic Values	Consistent, authentic	Generally positive with exceptions	Inconsistent, occasional hypocrisy
Student Voice in Values Discussions	Encouraged, valued	Limited to specific contexts	Rare, teacher-directed
Caring Teacher-Student Relationships	Strong, personalized	Present but variable	Formal, distant
Approach to Discipline	Primarily restorative/developmental	Mixed punitive and developmental	Primarily punitive
Integration of Values Across Activities	Systematic, intentional	Moderate, some subjects/activities	Limited, confined to religious instruction
Community and Family Engagement	Active partnership	Moderate communication	Minimal beyond formal requirements

Note. Effectiveness categorization based on triangulated evidence from student outcomes, stakeholder perceptions, and observed practices.

Assessment Approaches and Outcome Evidence

The investigation of assessment practices revealed significant challenges in measuring values education effectiveness through conventional educational assessment frameworks designed primarily for academic knowledge evaluation. All participating schools assessed students' religious knowledge through examinations in Islamic studies subjects, testing comprehension of Quranic verses, hadith, Islamic jurisprudence principles, and other religious content. While these assessments

provided information about students' cognitive understanding of Islamic teachings, teachers and administrators acknowledged their limitations in evaluating whether students actually internalized values or demonstrated corresponding character development in their behavior and ethical reasoning. Several schools supplemented knowledge testing with broader assessment approaches including teacher observation and documentation of student behavior, peer evaluations, student self-assessments and reflective journals, and documentation of participation in religious activities such as prayers, community service, and Islamic organizations.

More sophisticated assessment frameworks observed in some schools attempted to evaluate multiple dimensions of values education outcomes aligned with Islamic educational philosophy's emphasis on integrated development. These multidimensional approaches assessed religious knowledge and understanding as foundational components, observed behavioral manifestations of Islamic values in school contexts, evaluated students' reasoning about ethical dilemmas and application of Islamic principles to complex situations, documented spiritual development through religious practices and expressions of faith, and examined social-emotional capacities including empathy, self-regulation, and relationship skills. Teachers implementing these comprehensive assessment approaches reported gaining richer understanding of students' character development and more useful information for providing targeted support, though they also acknowledged the substantial time and effort required compared to conventional testing and the inherent subjectivity in evaluating dimensions like sincerity of faith or depth of moral commitment.

Evidence regarding values education outcomes emerged primarily through stakeholder perceptions and qualitative indicators rather than rigorous quantitative measures. Teachers across participating schools generally expressed conviction that values education produced positive impacts on students' character, citing observations of improved behavior, enhanced religious commitment, greater ethical awareness, and development of positive character traits aligned with Islamic values. Parents similarly reported perceiving positive influences from Islamic school attendance, describing their children as more religiously observant, respectful, responsible, and morally aware compared to peers in non-Islamic schools. Students themselves acknowledged learning Islamic values and developing stronger religious identity through their schooling experiences, though their perspectives included more nuanced recognition of inconsistencies between ideals and realities and variation in how thoroughly they personally internalized taught values versus maintaining external conformity.

However, the research also identified concerning gaps between intended outcomes and actual student development in several domains. Some students demonstrated solid knowledge of Islamic ethical principles but struggled to apply these consistently when facing real-world ethical dilemmas or peer pressure to engage in behaviors contradicting Islamic values. Others exhibited religiosity emphasizing ritual practice and doctrinal correctness while showing limited

development of ethical sensibilities regarding justice, compassion, honesty, or social responsibility in their relationships and conduct. Interview data revealed that some students perceived Islamic values education as primarily concerned with religious practice and theological knowledge rather than encompassing broader ethical character development relevant across life domains. These findings suggest that effective values education requires explicit attention to helping students connect religious knowledge with ethical reasoning, developing practical wisdom regarding value application in complex situations, and cultivating integrated character where religious identity, moral convictions, and behavioral consistency align. The absence of longitudinal research tracking students beyond their school years represents a significant limitation in assessing values education's long-term effectiveness in shaping character development and ethical conduct throughout adulthood.

CONCLUSION

This examination of values education effectiveness in Indonesian Islamic schools reveals a complex landscape characterized by substantial commitment to moral formation grounded in Islamic principles alongside significant challenges in implementation quality, assessment rigor, and documented outcomes. The research demonstrates that effective values education in Islamic contexts requires comprehensive approaches integrating formal curriculum, school culture, pedagogical practices, and assessment methods into coherent educational environments where Islamic values permeate all aspects of students' learning experiences. Schools achieving greatest apparent effectiveness in character development demonstrate several common characteristics including integrated curriculum approaches connecting Islamic values across subject areas, authentic school cultures where espoused values align with institutional practices, caring teacher-student relationships grounded in Islamic understandings of educational responsibility, sophisticated assessment frameworks evaluating multiple dimensions of moral development, and meaningful connections between school and broader Muslim community contexts.

However, substantial variation exists across Indonesian Islamic schools regarding values education implementation, with many institutions facing constraints including limited teacher preparation for values integration, time pressures from academic achievement demands, assessment approaches inadequate for evaluating character development, and tensions between traditional Islamic educational models and contemporary pedagogical understandings. Strengthening values education effectiveness requires addressing these implementation challenges through enhanced teacher professional development, development of more robust assessment methodologies appropriate for evaluating character outcomes, greater attention to ensuring consistency between stated values and institutional practices, and continued research examining long-term impacts of Islamic values education on graduates' character development and ethical conduct throughout their lives.

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