Integration of Religious Values to Reduce the Decline of Adolescent Ethics in High School

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ABSTRACT

Ethical decline among adolescents is one of the main challenges in education today. This study aims to examine how the integration of religious values into moral education can mitigate the ethical decline among adolescents at High School, a boarding school that combines religious and general education. This research used a case study approach with qualitative methodology, involving participant observation, in-depth interviews with teachers and students, and documentation. This research was conducted at Nurul Jadid High School. The results indicate that the integration of religious values into the curriculum and extracurricular activities plays a significant role in improving students' morals and ethics, particularly in the areas of discipline, respect, and responsibility. Furthermore, the role of teachers as moral role models and a positive school environment also influence the successful internalization of religious values in students. However, challenges in its implementation include the gap between the teaching of religious theory and the implementation of these values in daily life. This study recommends a more contextual and integrative approach to address this challenge and strengthen religion-based moral education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most concerning social issues is the moral decline among adolescents. Rapid technological advances and cultural globalization have significantly impacted the way young people think, act, and behave (Alsaleh, 2024). Banafsa et al. (2025), Damanik et al. (2024), and Rozi et al. (2025) have also conducted research on this issue. In today's world, moral values once held in high regard have changed, even completely declined. Student promiscuity, harassment on social media, verbal and physical violence in the classroom, and declining empathy for others are clear signs of their ethical problems. As the primary setting for character development, educational institutions play a crucial role in addressing this issue, working with families (Birhan et al., 2021). Therefore, it is crucial to develop a well-thought-out plan to improve adolescent

morality, including incorporating religious values into formal education (Astuti et al., 2024; Holid et al., 2025; Kamila, 2023).

The curriculum's emphasis on religious principles plays a crucial role in shaping the character of students in Islamic boarding schools like Nurul Jadid High School. Despite the inclusion of religious principles in education, some students demonstrate moral degradation in their subjects. This manifests itself in dishonesty in completing assignments, disobedience to teachers, and a diminished sense of responsibility. The impact of an out-of-school environment inconsistent with Islamic boarding school principles, a lack of supervision over the application of religious principles in the classroom, and a lack of innovative methods for internalizing these principles are some of the contributing factors to this phenomenon (Dinata & Ali, 2024; Zakwan et al., 2024; Munif et al., 2024). This contributes to the lack of success in efforts to shape students' religious character. Therefore, both within and outside the Islamic boarding school environment, a more contextual and integrative approach is needed to incorporate religious ideas into moral teaching (Huda, 2024).

Numerous previous studies have examined the role of religious belief in strengthening adolescents' ethical foundations and the importance of moral education in shaping students' character. These studies indicate that the process of internalizing religious principles is strongly influenced by the curriculum, school environment, and teacher involvement. Among these, studies by Hartati (2025), Haryanto et al. (2023), and Rozi et al. (2025) highlight the importance of these elements in helping students grow as individuals. However, most of these studies have not comprehensively examined the implementation of integrating religious principles in Islamic boarding school-based educational environments such as Nurul Jadid High School. Without examining the actual practice of integrating religious values as a solution to the decline in adolescent ethics in schools, most studies have focused solely on theoretical elements or more general scenarios. Therefore, this study aims to provide a flexible and contextual strategic paradigm for using faith-based education to shape students' character.

This work is particularly time-sensitive given the increasing complexity of moral dilemmas, particularly globalization, which introduces external values that are not necessarily consistent with religious moral ideals. Because schools are the primary institution for socialization after the family, they are crucial in preventing moral decline in their students (Villarejo-Carballido et al., 2019). Furthermore, Islamic boarding schools like Nurul Jadid High School, which combine religious and general education, are a key component in addressing this issue. Moral education focused on religion will be more effective if supported by a strong integrative approach. The purpose of this research is to make a significant contribution to the development of an educational paradigm that can promote spiritual ideals and help adolescents resolve their ethical issues. Therefore, we hope that this study's findings will enhance students' character both intellectually and practically.

The primary objective of this study is to comprehensively examine how incorporating religious values into moral instruction can reduce ethical decline among

Nurul Jadid High School students. Specifically, this study will examine how students can successfully incorporate religious values into their lives to strengthen their morality in the face of modern challenges. It also aims to examine the extent to which teachers, curricula, and school environments can influence students' ethics through moral instruction grounded in religious ideas. By examining best practices and the challenges encountered in this area, this study will offer a comprehensive analysis that can serve as a reference for other educational institutions in creating contextual and sustainable models of religious character education.

This study supports the notion that incorporating religious teachings into moral education can significantly mitigate the risk of ethical decline in adolescents. We can achieve more significant character transformation when we teach religious concepts intellectually and assimilate them through habits, role models, and a positive school climate (Watung et al., 2023; Islamic et al., 2024). This integrated approach not only influences students' cognitive understanding of beneficial and evil but also helps them develop behaviors and attitudes that align with religious teachings. This study argues that religious-based moral education should be implemented holistically, addressing affective, cognitive, and psychomotor elements, to develop individuals with strong ethical and spiritual awareness in all their behaviors. It is hoped that moral development can be achieved in schools more effectively and sustainably.

2.　METHOD

This research employs a case study style and qualitative methodology. This method was chosen to provide a profound understanding of the context, meaning, and dynamics of religious value formation in student character development. The primary focus of this research is the overall moral education program at Nurul Jadid High School, which encompasses extracurricular, co-curricular, and intracurricular activities. Because Nurul Jadid High School is a boarding school with a relatively strong religious-based character development framework, it was chosen as the research location. This institution's presence makes it an intriguing research subject, particularly regarding the effectiveness of the strategies used to shape students' morality. This study aims to provide a profound understanding of specific incidents involving religious-based moral teaching that occurred at Nurul Jadid High School, rather than to generalize.

Three primary methods were used to collect data: participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Students' daily behavior and learning activities related to moral education and the application of religious beliefs were observed to gather data. The principal, religious education teachers, and eleventh-grade students deemed to have direct knowledge of how religious principles are applied in education and character development were interviewed. In addition, a documentation approach was used to collect written and visual data, including character guidelines, curriculum materials, religious activity schedules, and student development activity records.

In this study, data analysis refers to the three-stage analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman. The first stage is data reduction, which is the process of removing

data irrelevant to the research focus; the second stage is data presentation, which is organizing and visualizing data to facilitate analysis; and the third stage is data verification, which is the process of drawing credible conclusions based on comprehensive and consistent evidence. To enable academics to fully understand how religious ideas are incorporated as a strategy to shape student morality at Nurul Jadid High School, these analysis procedures were conducted simultaneously and reflectively.

3.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results
Religious Education in Character Building

In the process of character development among adolescents, religious education plays a crucial role in fostering positive ethics and morals among high school students. In an era of technological advancement and rapid social change, adolescents face increasingly complex challenges, particularly when confronted with temptations and negative influences that can undermine social norms. Therefore, integrating religious values into character education is one way to address the decline in ethics among young people. The religious education received in schools must encompass the spiritual, moral, and social aspects of students so they have a strong foundation to face life's challenges and play a positive role in society.

The following Table 1 illustrates the results of interviews with several teachers and students regarding the implementation of religious education in character education in high schools.

Table 1. Results of Interviews

Aspects Discussed	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Student 1	Student 2
The Influence of Religious Education on Ethics	Positive	Positive	Negative	Positive
The Role of Religion in Character Building	Very Important	Important	Less Important	Very Important
Methods Used in Religious Education	Lectures & Discussions	Social Activities	Practice and lecture	Group Discussion
Obstacles in the Implementation of Religious Education	Lack of Time	Insufficient teaching materials	Not Interesting	Too Theoretical

Interviews with several teachers and students revealed that religious education has varying impacts on students' ethical development. Teachers consider religious education crucial for shaping students' character, while students hold varying views regarding the impact of religion on their ethics. Some students believed that religious education was very beneficial in developing their morality, while others felt less interested due to uninteresting methods or overly theoretical teaching. Furthermore, challenges faced in implementing religious education included limited time and inadequate teaching materials.

The interview data, a fairly clear pattern emerged regarding the impact of religious education on students' ethics. The majority of teachers believed that religious education

plays a crucial role in shaping students' character, with a focus on moral and social values taught through lectures, discussions, and social activities. However, students provided varying assessments, with some feeling that religious education had little impact on their daily lives because the methods used did not meet their needs. Some students found religious education too theoretical and unengaging, while others perceived significant benefits from religious teaching in shaping their character. This pattern indicates a discrepancy between teachers' expectations and the reality on the ground.

The patterns found in these interviews indicate a discrepancy between teachers' expectations regarding the influence of religious education on student character and the reality on the ground. Although the majority of teachers felt that religious education was crucial, students felt that the teaching methods used did not meet their needs. This suggests that while religious values are crucial in shaping adolescent character, the delivery method must be tailored to students' interests and tendencies to be more effective. Delivering religious education material that is more interactive and relevant to students' daily lives could be a step towards increasing its influence in shaping students' ethics and morals at the secondary school level.

Integrating Religious Values in Schools

To mitigate ethical decline in adolescents in secondary schools, one relevant strategy is the integration of religious values into the learning process. Observations indicate that adolescents in secondary schools face various challenges in developing positive character and behavior, particularly related to ethics and morality. Integrating religious values can strengthen students' moral awareness and provide guidance for living in accordance with religious teachings. This approach can be implemented through various means, including religious instruction in the curriculum, extracurricular activities based on spiritual values, and strengthening the role of teachers as favorable role models. Instilling religious values is expected to be an integral part of addressing the increasingly complex behavioral problems of adolescents. Therefore, it is important to examine the implementation and effectiveness of this strategy in secondary schools. Below is presented the percentage of changes in student behavior in Figure 1.
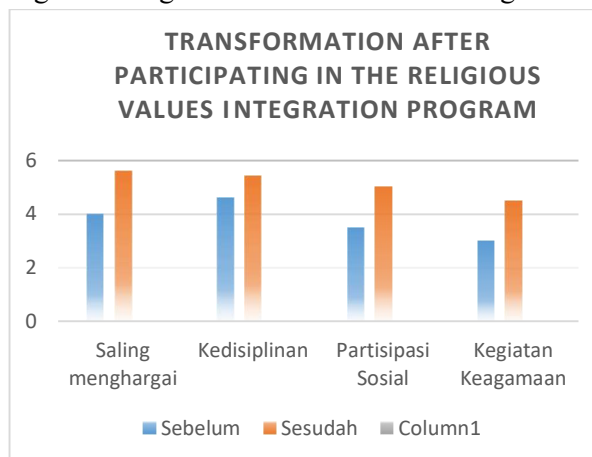
Figure 1. Percentage of Changes in Student Behavior

Observations indicate significant differences in the behavior of adolescents participating in a religious values integration program at school compared to those not involved. The data obtained illustrate positive changes in mutual respect among classmates, discipline in following school rules, and participation in social activities. The following figure shows a graph depicting changes in student behavior after participating in religious-based activities. The graph shows an increase in the number of students involved in religious activities outside of class hours, such as religious study groups and social and religious activities. This reflects a strong relationship between participation in religious-based activities and improved ethical behavior among adolescents in secondary schools.

The observations, it can be concluded that the integration of religious values has a positive impact on the development of ethical behavior among adolescents in secondary schools. Learning processes that prioritize religious values can improve students' attitudes and behavior, both in social and academic contexts. The graph shows that students involved in religious-based activities showed significant improvements in mutual respect, discipline, and social awareness. Therefore, the results of this observation indicate that the integration of religious values into secondary school education can be an effective tool in shaping better adolescent character, reducing ethical decline, and creating a more harmonious school environment.

The pattern seen in the data visualization indicates a significant improvement in the moral and ethical aspects of students participating in faith-based programs. The graph illustrates that student participation in religious activities, both inside and outside of school hours, is directly proportional to improvements in their social attitudes and discipline. In this case, the observed pattern reflects a direct relationship between the strengthening of religious values and the development of adolescent characters. Students who actively participate in religious activities, such as religious study groups or religious social activities, tend to have better behavior than those who do not participate in similar activities. This illustrates how the integration of religious values into students' daily lives can be a key factor in improving their ethics and morality.

We can interpret the observed decrease in ethical decline in adolescents as a positive outcome of incorporating religious values into school life. These findings indicate that religious integration is related to spiritual aspects and makes a significant contribution to the development of students' moral character. The patterns formed in this observation align with the theory that religion plays a crucial role in providing a solid ethical foundation for individuals. Students involved in faith-based activities demonstrate a more profound understanding of values such as honesty, discipline, and mutual respect. Therefore, applying religious values in everyday life can help students align their behavior with more universal moral principles, thereby reducing the tendency to engage in negative behaviors that often arise from social pressure.

The Role of Teachers and the School Environment
The involvement of teachers and the school environment is a crucial element that cannot be ignored in efforts to shape the morals and character of secondary school

students. In addition to imparting knowledge, teachers serve as role models for students in terms of behavior, interactions, and the delivery of moral and religious teachings. A supportive, well-organized, and culturally friendly educational environment also significantly influences students' personal development. Students' morals are more easily formed when teachers actively incorporate religious and ethical values into the learning process and are supported by a positive school culture, according to documentation collected from teaching and learning activities, teacher-student interactions, and the school environment. Therefore, a character-building strategy through instructor involvement and a supportive school environment is a key component in halting the decline in adolescent ethics.

Figure 2. Students Shaking Hands with the Teacher

The figure demonstrates the crucial role of educators in instilling ethical and religious values in their students. The teaching process carried out by teachers not only focuses on the intellectual aspect but also touches the emotional and moral aspects of students. The Beneficial Character Building activity, held every morning before class, aims to shape students' attitudes for the better and more positive. The image shows students neatly dressed in uniforms and shaking hands with their teachers.

This simple yet meaningful activity teaches students basic ethics that need to be applied in everyday life. This activity not only teaches greetings but also instills good habits in students. Through this habituation, they learn good manners and experience spiritual values that can guide them in overcoming life's challenges. Such character building is crucial because it will help shape individuals with integrity, empathy, and a high moral awareness in their actions, both inside and outside the school environment.

Figure 3. Reading of Prayer Before Teaching and Learning Activities

Figure 3 shows the recitation of prayers before teaching and learning activities, which is part of the character-building efforts carried out by teachers to help students internalize ethical and religious values. In this activity, students are invited to recite prayers and salawat together, guided by the teacher. This activity is held every morning before the start of the teaching and learning activities, with the aim of encouraging students to start the day with a positive spirit and good intentions. The recitation of prayers serves not only as a means of prayer but also as a forum for encouraging a sense of obligation, discipline, and empathy for others. Through this activity, students are expected to build strong spiritual character and create a calm and conducive atmosphere for better learning. This task is an important first step in forming beneficial habits in the school environment.

The images demonstrate the interaction patterns between teachers and students, which form the basis for character development in students at school. The first image shows students actively communicating with their teachers in an activity aimed at character development, including a handshake that symbolizes respect and discipline. On the other hand, the second image shows a moment of communal prayer before the teaching and learning activities, reflecting the spirit of togetherness and positive attitudes established at the start of the day. These patterns, both through physical activities such as handshakes and spiritual activities such as prayer, demonstrate a deliberate effort to instill moral and religious values in students. Their dedication is clearly visible in their daily lives, which focus not only on cognitive aspects but also on emotional and moral aspects, thus creating a balance in character education at school.

The patterns formed in these images demonstrate a holistic approach to character education in schools. Activities such as handshakes and communal prayer aim to instill positive habits that can influence students' morals and ethics. The interaction between teachers and students in this activity indicates that teachers' role as role models is significant in shaping students' character. The prayer recitation before the teaching and learning activities also has a meaning beyond a mere religious ritual; it serves to foster discipline, a sense of responsibility, and empathy, which are crucial in students' social lives. This pattern leads to the formation of constructive habits that will be internalized within students, which will ultimately influence their character development both at school and in society.

Discussion

This study aims to identify the impact of character building on students through the integration of religious values in secondary schools, as well as to measure improvements in students' social and emotional abilities, leadership skills, decision-making, and resilience (Andrei, 2023; Dehshiri, 2022). The results indicate that the integration of religious values into education not only improves students' moral attitudes but also enhances their social skills, decision-making skills, and resilience in facing challenges (Nuryadi et al., 2025). These findings align with previous research showing that religious values-based education can strengthen character and improve students' social

behavior. This indicates that religious values applied in students' daily lives can have a positive impact on developing better and more responsible personalities.

However, despite the similarities with previous research, students internalize religious values differently. For example, this research paper emphasizes the value of learning that involves teachers as moral role models, beyond just the curriculum. This study contrasts with several studies that emphasize cognitive learning as the primary means of conveying religious values (Chiril et al., 2022; McLoughlin et al., 2021; Skrefsrud, 2022). The application of religious values through direct interactions and affective learning models involving teachers as concrete examples was found to be more effective in influencing students' attitudes and behaviors, particularly in the context of social ethics and leadership. Therefore, these findings add to the existing literature by demonstrating that character building through direct teacher role models has a greater impact than purely cognitive approaches.

In terms of improving social and emotional skills, this study found that students who actively participated in faith-based activities showed significant improvements in interpersonal relationships and self-control. This aligns with findings from studies by Mulyana (2023) and Zuhri et al. (2023), which suggest that religious education can help students develop better emotional and social skills, particularly in dealing with conflict and working in teams. Strengthening religious values through social activities at school, such as religious study groups and sharing activities, has been proven to be an effective means of improving students' discipline, emotional control, and social empathy. Furthermore, programs like Peer Guidance also provide a space for students to learn and teach positive values to their peers, which supports the development of their social skills. (Chan & Luo, 2022; Coyne-Foresi & Nowicki, 2021; Li et al., 2023)

Students involved in faith-based character-building programs have also demonstrated improved leadership and decision-making skills. Students who participate in character-building social activities, such as Friday Sharing, demonstrate better decision-making and group leadership skills. This aligns with research by Amin (2024), Moorthy et al. (2021), and Mukherjee & Ghosh (2022), which suggests that student involvement in religious values-based activities can enhance their leadership and decision-making abilities. Programs that integrate religious values into every aspect of school life help students to understand more morally grounded leadership principles, such as honesty, responsibility, and cooperation, which in turn shape them into better leaders.

Furthermore, this study also demonstrated increased student resilience in facing various academic and social challenges. Students involved in faith-based activities demonstrated greater resilience in the face of stress and pressure, both inside and outside the school environment. These findings support research by Zalukhu (2025) and Zellma & Mąkosa (2024), which states that religious education can increase student resilience by providing a solid moral foundation for facing various difficulties. Strengthening character through religious activities prepares students for life's challenges and equips them with the skills to remain calm and productive under pressure.

Overall, the results of this study have significant theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of faith-based character education theory, emphasizing the importance of integrating religious values into students' daily lives. Practically, these results provide recommendations for educational policies that place greater emphasis on affective learning and the role of teachers as moral role models. The implementation of a religion-based program that involves all components of the school, from teachers and students to the school environment, has proven effective in improving character and increasing social, emotional, and leadership skills and student resilience.

This research makes an important contribution to the development of a religion-based character education model that can be implemented in various schools, particularly Islamic boarding schools. Therefore, the findings of this study are relevant not only to Nurul Jadid High School but also to other schools facing similar issues related to the decline in adolescent ethics. However, this study has limitations in terms of scope and methodology, which should be followed up with further research that is more comprehensive and involves other external variables to provide a more complete picture of the integration of religious values in moral education in various school contexts.

4.   CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the integration of religious values into moral education at Nurul Jadid High School has a significant positive impact on the ethical development of adolescents. The main findings of this study indicate that an integrative approach that combines religious theory with daily practice can improve students' character, particularly in aspects of discipline, respect, responsibility, and social concern. This confirms that religious education, consistently implemented in the formal curriculum, extracurricular activities, and through teacher role models, can be an effective tool in improving students' moral behavior. In this context, teachers and the school environment play a crucial role in the successful internalization of religious values. Teachers function not only as instructors but also as role models in students' daily lives. With a positive and conducive school culture, religious values can be more easily accepted and applied by students in their daily lives. Therefore, the success of integrating religious values depends heavily on the active involvement of teachers, students, and all school elements in supporting the implementation of faith-based education.

Furthermore, this study also identifies challenges that must be faced in the effective implementation of religious values. The study identifies the gap between the cognitive delivery of religious values and their effective and behavioral implementation in students as one of the main challenges. Despite teaching religious values in the classroom, these values won't significantly influence student behavior without deep internalization in daily life. This phenomenon demonstrates the importance of a more contextual and integrative approach to instilling religious principles in moral education. Furthermore, external factors such as the influence of social media and uncontrolled promiscuity also pose challenges to shaping students' ethics. Therefore, an integrative approach that combines religious education with

strict monitoring of external influences is essential to creating an educational environment that can strengthen students' character.

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