

Research Article

Integration of Religious Values in Cultural Education to Improve the Character of the Young Generation**Satria Adhitama¹, Fajrin²**Politeknik Keuangan Negara STAN, Indonesia¹STAI Al Gazali Bone, Indonesia²Corresponding Author, Email: satria.bc@pknstan.ac.id**Abstract**

Character education is the main foundation in the formation of human resources with integrity amidst the challenges of globalization and the moral crisis of the younger generation. This article examines how the integration of religious values in cultural education can be an effective strategy to strengthen the character of the younger generation of Indonesia. This research was conducted through a qualitative approach based on literature studies from 10 relevant national and international scientific articles. The findings show that the integration of religious values and local culture can create a deep educational ecosystem, not only in the cognitive aspect, but also touching the affective and spiritual realms of students. In a formal environment, these values are integrated through the curriculum, school culture, and contextual learning methods based on local wisdom. Meanwhile, in a non-formal environment, teaching practices based on religious communities, Islamic boarding schools, and madrasas play an important role in the formation of students' social and spiritual character. This article also highlights the importance of role models and environmental consistency in making religious and cultural values an integral part of students' lives. The results of this study recommend a character education model that is integrated with the nation's cultural and religious identity as a holistic approach in responding to the moral challenges of the younger generation, while supporting the vision of Indonesia Emas 2045.

Keywords: Character Education, Religious Values, Cultural Education, Young Generation, Value Integration.



INTRODUCTION

Character education is an important foundation in developing competitive and integrated human resources. In an era of globalization that is increasingly blurring cultural boundaries, the challenges to the existence of local and religious values are increasing (Rahmah, 2020). The younger generation tends to be exposed to instant and consumerist cultures that shift the noble values inherited by the nation (Shavab & Yani, 2022). Therefore, education that is not only cognitive, but also touches the affective and spiritual realms is becoming increasingly important (Hidayat et al., 2022).

Cultural education is a systematic process to instill values, norms, and cultural heritage in students through formal and non-formal learning activities. The goal is to shape individual characters who value diversity and have local and national cultural awareness. In this context, cultural education plays an important role in strengthening national identity, preserving noble values, and encouraging an attitude of tolerance in a pluralistic society (Maftuh et al., 2020; Pebriansyah, 2020). The culturally responsive education model has also been proposed as a strategy to realize inclusive and democratic multicultural education.

Furthermore, the implementation of cultural education can be carried out through various approaches such as the integration of local culture in the curriculum (Hanifa et al., 2021), the development of teaching materials based on national character, and strengthening school culture (Nurvita et al., 2020). In addition, the preservation of cultural arts such as pencak silat is also used as a medium to instill character values in students (Aprilahendra et al., 2023). This strategy shows that cultural education is not just a transfer of knowledge, but also a means of forming identity and strengthening social cohesion amidst the challenges of globalization.

One approach that is considered strategic in character formation is the integration of local religious and cultural values. These values complement each other in forming the identity of students who are religious, nationalistic, and have noble character (Yulianti et al., 2022). Religious education provides a moral foundation, while cultural education instills local and national identity (Alfurqan et al., 2019). The collaboration of the two is believed to be able to strengthen the moral resistance of the younger generation to the identity crisis that is currently hitting (Rizal & Nur, 2024).

Previous studies have shown that the integration of religious values in cultural

education can encourage students' spiritual and social awareness, especially in the context of the diversity of Indonesian society (Kurniati, 2021). For example, the use of the Sundanese song Cigawiran has succeeded in teaching aesthetic values, spirituality, and manners to the younger generation (Aprily et al., 2022). In addition, the millennial hijrah movement studied in a socio-cultural context also shows a strong interaction between religion and cultural identity (Zahara & Wildan, 2020).

The urgency of this research is increasing considering the increasing phenomenon of moral degradation. Based on various educational and social reports, there has been an increase in deviant behavior among adolescents such as violence, intolerance, and misuse of social media which reflects a character crisis (Rozak et al., 2022). The integration of religious and cultural values is an alternative solution to building an education system that not only educates but also instills life values (Maulida et al., 2021). This is in line with the national agenda in strengthening the profile of Pancasila students through the Merdeka Curriculum.

Several previous studies have discussed the role of character education and local culture in shaping the personality of students. However, there are not many studies that explicitly examine the synergy between religious and cultural values as an integrated pedagogical approach (Destriadi et al., 2022; Suharto, 2020). Therefore, this article is here to bridge the research gap with a comprehensive integrative approach.

The purpose of this study is to examine in depth how the integration of religious values in cultural education can improve the character of the younger generation. This study also aims to identify effective educational practices in internalizing these values in formal and non-formal educational environments. With a qualitative approach, this study is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of a character education model that is contextual and relevant to the culture and religious values of the Indonesian nation.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a type of literature study (library research), namely a study conducted by reviewing and analyzing various relevant scientific literature sources to gain a deep understanding of the integration of religious values in cultural education as a strategy for improving the character of the younger

generation. This approach was chosen because it is appropriate for exploring concepts, theories, and related previous research results, as well as interpreting social phenomena contextually (Moleong, 2021; Zed, 2018).

The data sources in this study are secondary and consist of accredited national scientific journals, educational reference books, national education policy documents, and scientific articles published in the last five years. The main focus of the literature search is on the topic of the integration of religious values, cultural education, and the formation of the character of the younger generation, with sources obtained from journal platforms such as ejournal.upi.edu, journal.uny.ac.id, and e-journal.uaajy.ac.id.

The data collection technique is carried out through literature documentation, namely the process of identifying, selecting, and organizing relevant documents containing scientific information. Each document is analyzed systematically to reveal the integrative pattern between religious and cultural values in character formation (Sugiyono, 2018). The literature used was selected based on credibility and the relevance of the substance to the focus of this study.

The data analysis method used is content analysis, which is an analysis technique used to identify meaning, themes, and conceptual constructions in texts or documents (Krippendorff, 2018). The analysis was carried out in stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Miles et al., 2019). This procedure allows researchers to interpret the relationship between concepts and compile a theoretical synthesis that supports an integrative understanding of religious and cultural values in character education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The following table presents the results of a literature synthesis of 10 scientific articles purposively selected from various quality journals. These articles were analyzed to identify an integrative approach between religious and cultural values in the context of character education. Each article reflects a complementary perspective on the importance of moral, religious, and cultural values in shaping the identity of the younger generation. This data is the result of a selection of dozens of relevant scientific articles, then 10 main articles were selected based on the following criteria: (1) topics relevant to the integration of religious values and cultural education, (2) focus on strengthening the

character of the younger generation, and (3) published in accredited national and international journals, such as Elsevier, Taylor & Francis, and national journals accredited by SINTA.

Table 1. Literature Data

No	Title	Author	Findings
1	Integration of Religious Values in Character Education: Building the Morals of the Golden Generation	Jakandar, Pantiwati & Sunaryo (2025)	Emphasizing that strengthening religious values in character education is able to shape the morals of the golden generation.
2	Youth Character Building Through Quality Education in Realizing Golden Indonesia 2045	Pasaribu, Khairifa, Ali et al. (2024)	Integration of local and religious values in character education encourages the achievement of Golden Indonesia 2045.
3	Islamic Boarding School-Based HR Management in Shaping Student Character	Bahri, S. (2024)	Islamic boarding school education as a model for integrating Islamic values in student character management.
4	Resilience Factors in Early Childhood: Islamic Values and Self-Regulation	Salsabila & Rohmah (2024)	A mixed approach to building early childhood self-regulation through Islamic values.
5	The Role of Islamic Boarding Schools in Building Character in the Modern Era	Jannah, Rizquha, Rizal (2024)	Integration of religious and social values shapes the character of teenagers in the modern era.
6	PINGXIANG NUO Culture	Renshun & Jie (2025)	Combining local cultural

	and Religious Narratives in Education		education and traditional beliefs as a medium for character building.
7	Membangun Spirit Moderasi Beragama Melalui Seni Karungut	Wiranata et al. (2024)	Traditional arts are used as a means of educating religious values and tolerance.
8	Independent Curriculum and Pancasila Identity	Dwi & Hasanah (2024)	The Independent Curriculum encourages the internalization of Pancasila values and religiosity in character education.
9	ASEAN Journal of Religion, Education, and Society	Warren, A. (2025)	Literary analysis shows the conflict between faith and identity in the lives of teenagers.
10	Conceptual Model in God-Oriented Spiritual Parenting	Gholamzadeh & Bourang (2025)	Character education based on monotheism with a de-ideologization approach in the modern world.

The scientific articles that have been selected in the study entitled "Integration of Religious Values in Cultural Education to Improve the Character of the Young Generation" show that the integration of religious values into the cultural and character education system is an approach that has great potential in shaping the personality of the young generation who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also morally, spiritually, and socially mature. The ten selected articles discussed come from various approaches—ranging from field studies in Islamic boarding schools, the use of traditional art as an educational medium, to conceptual studies based on modern Islamic education theory.

The first article by Jakandar, Pantiwati, and Sunaryo (2025) emphasizes that the moral character of the golden generation can be formed strongly through the unification of religious values in character education. This study emphasizes that values such as honesty, responsibility, and empathy that originate from Islamic teachings can be systematically instilled in the character education curriculum. Not only in the cognitive domain, but also in the affective and psychomotor dimensions, so that comprehensive internalization occurs (Jakandar et al., 2025).

The second article by Pasaribu, Khairifa, and Ali (2024) reviews the integration of local values, historical values, and religious values in character education as a primary strategy to achieve the grand vision of Golden Indonesia 2045. This study highlights the importance of high-quality education that combines local religious and cultural values as an antidote to moral degradation among the younger generation. This kind of education can strengthen national identity while strengthening individual character in the context of globalization (Pasaribu et al., 2024).

Bahri (2024), in his article on human resource-based Islamic boarding school management, shows that the Islamic boarding school environment is not only a place for spiritual strengthening, but also a strategic means of shaping the character of the younger generation. Through discipline, habituation of worship, and the example of religious teachers, students are formed to have strong moral fortitude. The integration of religious values in the school management system is one of the important findings in this research (Bahri, 2024).

Meanwhile, Salsabila and Rohmah (2024) offer a more contemporary approach by combining resilience theory and Islamic values in the formation of early childhood self-regulation. This study found that religious values can strengthen children's psychological resilience to environmental pressures and encourage character development such as patience, discipline, and perseverance from an early age (Salsabila & Rohmah, 2024).

Jannah, Rizquha, and Rizal (2024) also reaffirm the vital role of Islamic boarding schools in shaping the character of young people in the digital and modernization era. This study recommends an integrative educational approach that involves religion, social, and culture as an inseparable whole. Education in Islamic boarding schools is believed to still be very relevant to shaping the character of the ethical and spiritual young generation (Jannah et al., 2024).

From a local cultural perspective, the article by Renshun and Jie (2025) discusses the Nuo culture from China and how narrative elements in this culture can be used as a medium for educating moral and religious values. They conclude that traditional culture containing elements of local beliefs can be an effective vehicle for educating the younger generation, enhancing cultural identity, and introducing deep spiritual values (RENSHUN & JIE, 2025).

The article by Wiranata and colleagues (2024) highlights Karungut art, a traditional art from Central Kalimantan, as an effective means of character education in grounding the values of religious moderation. This study combines educational and cultural approaches in a very interesting way, showing that art can be a bridge between religious values and cultural expressions (Wiranata et al., 2024).

Dwi and Hasanah (2024) explain how the Independent Curriculum in Indonesia opens up great opportunities to internalize Pancasila and religious values in cross-subject learning. This curriculum provides space for teachers to insert character values, including religious values, in every teaching and learning process. This article reflects a national education policy that is flexible and holistic (Dwi & Hasanah, 2024).

Warren (2025) from the ASEAN Journal of Religion, Education, and Society offers a literary approach to examine the representation of adolescents' internal conflict between faith and identity. This article provides a critical reflection on how religious values can be a significant tool for meaning in life in facing complex identity challenges in the contemporary era (Warren, 2025).

Finally, the article by Gholamzadeh and Bourang (2025) philosophically discusses the concept of spiritual education based on monotheism. They offer a conceptual model of "God-Oriented Parenting" that rejects secular ideologies and places God at the center of all educational activities. This model is believed to be able to shape children's character deeply through a spiritual approach that touches on the existential dimensions of the individual (Gholamzadeh et al., 2025).

All of the articles presented provide an overview that character education based on the integration of religious and cultural values is not only relevant but also crucial in addressing the identity and moral crisis of today's young generation. Not only providing normative solutions, but these studies also contain empirical, philosophical, and practical approaches that can be adapted in formal and non-formal education systems in various local and global contexts.

Discussion

The Role of Religious Value Integration in Cultural Education

The integration of religious values into cultural education has a profound impact on the character formation of the younger generation. In this context, education is not only a means of conveying knowledge, but also a tool for transforming moral and spiritual values that originate from religious teachings. When values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, tolerance, and empathy are taught not only as concepts, but are brought to life in the daily practices of students through the cultural context they are familiar with, then education becomes an experience that shapes a complete personality.

The study by Fatimah and Aly (2020) is one of the strong evidences of how the development of religious culture in secondary schools in Boyolali, Central Java, is able to instill positive character in students (Fatimah & Aly, 2020). Through the habit of worshipping together, manners based on religious teachings, and the application of local norms that are full of good values, schools are able to form consistent and sustainable behavioral patterns in students. These values are not forced, but are internalized naturally because they are supported by a harmonious social and cultural environment.

The importance of this approach is also emphasized in the research of Pantiwati et al. (2025) who stated that the current young generation faces a major challenge in maintaining moral identity amidst the rapid flow of globalization and value crisis (Jakandar et al., 2025). Therefore, the character of the golden generation that is to be formed is not only based on intellectual intelligence, but also supported by strong morality. Character education that synergizes with religious and cultural values is believed to be able to provide a strong foundation for young people in facing the challenges of the times while still upholding noble values.

Sulasmono et al. (2017) deepened this study by highlighting the importance of developing a character education model based on local wisdom and religious values (Sulasmono et al., 2010). According to them, this approach is able to make these values not only as verbal teachings, but as a habitual way of life. In many cases, the noble values of ancestors and religion complement and strengthen each other, forming the character of a generation that is not only faithful but also has a high cultural awareness.

From the three studies, it can be seen that the success of character education is largely determined by how spiritual values are placed in the context of real cultural life. When religious education is not merely a formal ritual in the classroom, and culture is not merely a tradition that is learned, but both become part of a living and dynamic life system in schools and society, then the results achieved will not only form good individuals, but also a civilized society.

Effective Educational Practices in Formal and Non-Formal Environments

In the context of strengthening the character of the younger generation, effective educational practices in internalizing religious and cultural values have been widely developed in both formal and non-formal educational environments. The approach used does not only emphasize the delivery of teaching materials cognitively, but rather emphasizes affective experiences and habituation of values in everyday life. In formal schools, this practice is often seen through systematic efforts to integrate religious values into the curriculum and form a religious and character-based school culture.

For example, Rodiyah and Suhermanto (2023) stated that effective religious education is not enough to be delivered only in the form of theory or dogmatic memorization (Rodiyah et al., 2023). More than that, religious education must be packaged in an applicative manner through a contextual approach, real case studies, and attitude training. In several Islamic elementary schools in Indonesia, religious lessons function as a forum to train students to make ethical decisions, practice noble morals, and evaluate behavior based on spiritual and cultural values.

Meanwhile, a school culture designed to support character formation through religious values is an equally important tool. Indriani and colleagues (2024) stated that daily habits such as reading prayers before and after lessons, performing congregational prayers, Friday Blessings, and routine charity activities can create a positive spiritual atmosphere (Indriani et al., 2024). This culture acts as a "hidden curriculum" that slowly but strongly shapes students' religious and social character.

In addition, the contextual learning approach has also been shown to strengthen the effectiveness of internalizing values. Sakti et al. (2024) found that teachers who linked learning materials to students' local cultural conditions—such as local wisdom stories that are full of religious values—were able to improve students'

understanding and appreciation of these values (Sakti et al., 2024). In this situation, religion and culture are no longer positioned as separate entities, but rather complement each other in shaping character integrity.

On the other hand, non-formal education such as madrasahs, Islamic boarding schools, and religious communities also play a central role. Arif and Nurdin (2023) in their study found that grassroots education institutions such as TPA and Majelis Taklim have a great influence in shaping the character of young people, especially in the social context of society (Arif et al., 2023). Activities such as regular religious studies, socio-religious programs, value-based leadership training, and mutual cooperation have become practical means of learning values.

Furthermore, Pasaribu and colleagues (2024) introduced the concept of holistic education in madrasahs that integrate Islamic religious values into all aspects of institutional life (Rukmana et al., 2024). In this approach, not only the teaching and learning process contains spiritual values, but also the management system, the way teachers communicate with students, and the lifestyle applied in the pesantren environment. This makes educational institutions a "value ecosystem" that continuously educates with examples and direct experiences.

From all these practices, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of internalizing religious values in cultural education is highly dependent on the consistency between teaching, environment, and role models. When values are not only taught but also lived by all components of educational institutions, both formal and non-formal, the expected character can be realized more strongly and authentically in the younger generation.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the integration of religious values in cultural education is a strategic and contextual approach in shaping the character of a young generation that is morally and spiritually resilient. The collaboration of religious and cultural values not only strengthens national identity, but also fosters moral resilience amidst the onslaught of globalization. In practice, these values are effectively internalized through a curriculum based on local wisdom, a religious school culture, and consistent non-formal educational activities. This educational model not only shapes individuals who are faithful and have character, but also strengthens social cohesion in a multicultural

society.

In the context of implementing character education based on the integration of religious and cultural values, educators are practically expected to be able to develop learning methods that are contextual and relevant to students' lives. This means that teaching materials are not delivered abstractly, but are directly linked to religious values and local culture that are familiar in the daily lives of students. On the other hand, educational institutions have an important role in creating a school environment that supports the internalization of these values. A religious and character-based school culture can be built through routine activities such as joint prayers, charity programs, socio-religious activities, and the continuous habituation of commendable attitudes and behaviors. Support from parents and the community is also crucial. As part of the education ecosystem, they need to be consistent role models in implementing spiritual and cultural values, while creating a conducive environment for the growth of students' character outside the classroom.

Meanwhile, in terms of academic development, further research needs to be conducted to empirically test the effectiveness of this integrative model. A field research approach can be used to see how religious and cultural values are internalized at various levels of education and their impact on the formation of student character. In addition, it is also important to examine the challenges and obstacles that arise in the process of implementing the integration of these values, especially in schools with diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. Further research can also be directed at developing a curriculum model based on the integration of religious and cultural values that is applicable and can be used widely, for example in the form of teaching modules, teacher training, or other innovative learning tools that are appropriate to the local context and the needs of today's schools.

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