

Internalization of Imam Zarkasyi's Educational Values in the Spiritual Program: Character Strengthening Strategies at SMAN 1 Makarti Jaya

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ABSTRACT

Strengthening students' character has become a major priority in modern education, requiring relevant and applicable value internalization models. This study is motivated by the limitations of previous research that tends to address character education in a general manner and the lack of studies integrating Imam Zarkasyi's educational values within public senior high school contexts. This research aims to describe the forms of value internalization, analyze the implementation of spiritual programs, and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies applied at SMAN 1 Makarti Jaya. The study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design. Research informants include the principal, spiritual program supervisors, Islamic education teachers, and students. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis, and were analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing techniques based on the Miles and Huberman model. The findings reveal that the internalization of Imam Zarkasyi's values is realized through structured religious habituation, teachers' exemplary behavior as role models, and the strengthening of a school culture grounded in discipline and responsibility. These strategies have proven effective in enhancing students' religiosity, integrity, and discipline, while also reinforcing a value-based and character-oriented school ecosystem.

Keywords: *Imam Zarkasyi, Value Internalization, Character, Spirituality, Education*

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INTRODUCTION

Research on the internalization of Islamic educational values in the formation of students' character has developed quite widely. Syamsuddin (2021) found that religious exemplification and habituation have a significant impact on improving the discipline and morals of secondary school students. Furthermore, Rahmawati and Lestari (2023) emphasized that spiritual activities such as *tahfiz*, *muroja'ah*, and Qur'ani literacy are able to increase the integrity and spiritual awareness of students in public schools.

Internalization of values in education is a systematic process that instills values until they become part of the personality of students, including cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. Lickona emphasized that effective character education must involve three main components, namely *moral knowing*, *moral feeling*, and *moral action*, so that values do not stop at normative understanding, but are manifested in continuous real actions (Lickona 1991). In line with this view, the Strengthening Character Education (PPK) policy launched by the Ministry of Education and Culture emphasizes the importance of integrating character values through classroom learning, school culture, and extracurricular activities as a complete educational ecosystem (Ministry of Education and Culture 2017). Thus, the internalization of values requires a process of habituation, strengthening the environment, and the involvement of all school components so that character values are truly internalized in the lives of students.

From the perspective of Islamic education, the internalization of values is very closely related to exemplary-based education (*uswah hasanah*), where educators play a central role in character formation. Al-Ghazali emphasized that morality is not enough to be taught through

lectures or advice, but must be instilled through real examples and consistent habituation, because students tend to imitate the behavior of their educators (Al-Ghazali t.t.). This view is in line with Imam Zarkasyi's concept of education which places example, discipline, and habituation as the core of the character education process. According to Zarkasyi, education is not only oriented to the mastery of science, but also to the formation of a personality with integrity, responsibility, and religion through a living and valuable education system (Zarkasyi 2011). Therefore, exemplary-based character education becomes a bridge between ideal values and real practices in school life.

In the context of Islamic-based character education, Dewi Nurjanah, Abdurrahmansyah, and Fauzi (2024) show that the implementation of Islamic values-based character education in secondary schools is able to significantly increase student discipline, integrity, and religiosity. This result is in line with the results of Fauzi's (2001, 2021) research which emphasizes the importance of internalizing Islamic values through teacher example, habituation of worship, and strengthening school culture as a character formation strategy. In addition, Yusuf, Idi, Mansur, and Zaini (2020) emphasized that character education based on Islamic spiritual values plays an important role in shaping students' morals and ethics in a sustainable manner.

In the context of Islamic boarding schools, Ma'arif (2020) shows that Imam Zarkasyi's educational model has proven to be effective in fostering student independence, simplicity, and discipline through *an integrated curriculum* approach and value habituation. This result is strengthened by Hidayat (2023) who reveals that Gontor's educational values remain relevant to modern formal educational institutions because of their universal nature. Meanwhile, Hamidah's research (2022) confirms that the internalization of Islamic-based character values is more successful when combined with a conducive school culture and teacher examples. However, most of the research focuses on educational institutions based on pesantren or madrasahs. There are few studies that specifically analyze the application of Imam Zarkasyi's educational values in the context of public high schools that have different cultures. In addition, Firdaus' (2021) research shows that public schools face challenges in the consistency of spiritual programs due to weak long-term program design. Thus, the foundation of previous research provides an important direction, but it still leaves the need for more contextual studies in public schools such as SMAN 1 Makarti Jaya.

Although there are a number of studies that discuss the internalization of character values in Islamic education, there are some research gaps that remain unanswered. First, studies that explicitly examine the application of Imam Zarkasyi's educational values in public secondary schools are almost non-existent. Zarkasyi (2021) emphasized that the values of discipline, exemplarity, and simplicity developed in Gontor are universal, but the research of Fitriani & Zulkarnaen (2024) shows that the adaptation of pesantren values to public schools requires a different implementation model because the culture and structure of public schools are not the same as pesantren. Second, previous research has not much associated the internalization of Zarkasyi values with the context of modern curriculum, especially its integration with the dimension of the Pancasila Student Profile. Putri (2022) emphasized that public schools need a holistic and student agency-based spiritual approach, while most research on Zarkasyi values still relies on the traditional model of pesantren. Third, there has been no research that assesses the effectiveness of Zarkasyi values-based spiritual programs through in-depth qualitative studies in public schools. Nurdin's study (2023) shows that the effectiveness of spiritual programs has often not been measured systematically, so its implementation is sporadic. It is this research gap that drives the importance of this study.

This research can be seen from the increasing need for public schools in strengthening the character of students in the midst of rapid social, cultural, and technological changes. Lestari (2021) stated that the moral degradation of the young generation requires more targeted and systematic character education interventions. Imam Zarkasyi's educational values such as discipline, sincerity, responsibility, and simplicity have been proven to form a strong character in students (Hidayat, 2023), but until now they have not been widely applied

in a structured manner in public schools. By integrating it into the school's spiritual program, this research offers a practical contribution in the form of an internalized model of values that is not only based on the tradition of pesantren, but also in harmony with the demands of modern education.

Theoretically, this study enriches the study of the internalization of Islamic educational values because it brings the classical values of Zarkasyi into the context of public schools, which are relatively rarely analyzed in the literature (Ma'arif, 2020). In terms of education policy, this research supports the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile, especially in the dimensions of noble character, discipline, and responsibility. In addition, this research contributes in the form of mapping strategies for religious habituation that can be adapted by other schools. The results from Rahmawati & Lestari (2023) also confirm that schools need a spiritual program model that is consistent and has a strong value direction. This research answers these needs through a more systematic and measurable approach based on Imam Zarkasyi's values.

This research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the internalization of Imam Zarkasyi's educational values in the spiritual program at SMAN 1 Makarti Jaya. First, this study aims to identify the core values of Imam Zarkasyi's education such as discipline, exemplary (*uswah*), simplicity, independence, and habituation of worship as developed in the tradition of Pondok Modern Gontor (Zarkasyi, 2021). Second, this study analyzes how schools implement these values through religious habituation strategies, teacher examples, and school culture that supports character formation. Third, this study assesses the effectiveness of spiritual programs in improving the character of students, focusing on the dimensions of religiosity, discipline, responsibility, and integrity as emphasized by Fitriani & Zulkarnaen (2024).

In addition, this study aims to identify supporting and inhibiting factors for program implementation in order to provide applicable recommendations. This study also refers to the results of Syamsuddin (2021) and Rahmawati & Lestari (2023) as a reference in analyzing the dynamics of value internalization. Through a qualitative approach, this research is expected to produce an in-depth picture of best practices, challenges, and innovations in the implementation of Imam Zarkasyi's educational values in public schools. Thus, this research not only fills the literature gap, but also makes a real contribution to the development of value-based spirituality programs in the modern formal education environment.

METHOD

This study uses a type of qualitative research with a *case study* approach to deeply understand the process of internalizing Imam Zarkasyi's educational values in the spiritual program at SMAN 1 Makarti Jaya through direct interaction in the field (Yin, 2018). The qualitative approach was chosen because it gives researchers the flexibility to capture complex empirical realities, while the case study design allows for an in-depth study of the school context in a specific and holistic manner (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The focus of the study is directed at the values of example, discipline, worship habits, and character strengthening built through school spiritual activities, in line with the principles of Islamic-based character education put forward by Fauzi (2001) and Dewi Nurjanah, Abdurrahmansyah, & Fauzi (2024). This approach also allows for an exploration of the practices, strategies, and dynamics that schools carry out authentically.

Data collection techniques were carried out using in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation (Fauzi, 2021; Yusuf, Idi, Mansur, & Zaini, 2020). Interviews were conducted with principals, teachers, and students to explore perceptions, experiences, and internalized practices of Zarkasyi values in a spiritual context. Observations are carried out to record behaviors, interactions, and real activities such as worship habits, spiritual coaching, and the role model of teachers as *role models*. Documentation is obtained through activity archives, spiritual manuals, habituation schedules, and activity photos. These three

techniques are used simultaneously to obtain rich, deep, and naturalistic information (Dewi Nurjanah et al., 2024).

The research informants were determined by purposive sampling, taking into account direct involvement and deep understanding of the implementation of spiritual programs and the process of internalizing Imam Zarkasyi's educational values at SMAN 1 Makarti Jaya. The informant criteria are set to ensure that the data obtained is relevant, credible, and in accordance with the qualitative research focus of the case study (Yin, 2018; Miles et al., 2014).

The principal is selected as a key informant with the following criteria: (1) having authority in the formulation and decision-making of school policies, (2) actively involved in strengthening the school culture based on values and character, and (3) understanding the vision, mission, and direction of the development of spiritual programs. Islamic Religious Education teachers and spiritual coaches are selected based on the following criteria: (1) directly involved in the planning and implementation of spiritual activities, (2) acting as role models in fostering students' character, and (3) having experience teaching and fostering students on an ongoing basis. Meanwhile, students were selected as informants with the following criteria: (1) actively participating in the school's spiritual program, (2) coming from different grade levels to obtain a variety of perspectives, and (3) being able to express experiences, changes in attitudes, and the meaning of values obtained while participating in spiritual activities.

The determination of this informant criteria aims to comprehensively capture the dynamics of value internalization from various perspectives, both from the level of policy, implementation, and direct experience of students. Thus, the resulting data not only describe the normative aspects of the program, but also reflect the real practice and impact of internalizing values in daily school life, in line with the principles of qualitative research that emphasizes the depth, wholeness, and social context of the research (Fauzi, 2021; Dewi Nurjanah et al., 2024).

Data analysis was carried out using the Miles & Huberman model through data reduction, *data display*, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). Interview data was transcribed, selected, and categorized based on themes such as example, discipline, responsibility, and school culture, as recommended by Fauzi (2001) and Dewi Nurjanah et al. (2024). The results of observation and documentation were compared to find patterns of consistency between spiritual activities. The analysis process is carried out cyclically and repeatedly to produce an in-depth interpretation related to the practice of internalizing the educational value of Imam Zarkasyi. The validity of the data is maintained by triangulating sources (teachers, principals, students), triangulating techniques (interviews, observations, documentation), and *member checking* to reconfirm findings to informants. In addition, consistency checks are carried out between primary data and school documents to ensure the accuracy of results, strengthened by field records and *trail audits* so that findings can be scientifically accounted for (Fauzi, 2021; Yusuf et al., 2020).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of this study present the main results regarding the process of internalizing Imam Zarkasyi's educational values in the spiritual program at SMAN 1 Makarti Jaya. The results were obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation studies that were analyzed qualitatively. The results were focused on the form of internalization of values, the implementation of spiritual programs, its effectiveness in strengthening character, as well as supporting and inhibiting factors. A summary of the results is presented in the following table. Table 1. Results of Research on the Internalization of Imam Zarkasyi's Values at SMAN 1 Makarti Jaya

Yes	Research Aspects	Results
1	Forms of Internalization of Imam Zarkasyi's Values	1) Habituation of structured worship: dhuha prayer, morning tadarus, joint dhikr, periodic cults. 2) Teacher's example in discipline, moderation, and manners.

2	Implementation of Spiritual Programs	<p>3) Strengthening school culture: discipline of attendance, neatness of dress, cleanliness responsibility, respect for teachers.</p> <p>1) Daily activities: tadarus, dhuha prayer</p> <p>2) Weekly activities: spiritual formation, Islamic studies, peer mentoring.</p> <p>3) Incidental activities: Islamic Holiday Commemoration, <i>religious leadership camp</i>.</p> <p>4) Role of teacher & principal: PAI teachers facilitate activities; The principal is responsible for the school's religious policies and culture.</p>
3	Program Effectiveness in Character Strengthening	<p>Effective programs promote religiosity, discipline, integrity, and responsibility. Changes can be seen from more orderly student behavior, increased manners, and concern for cleanliness. Teachers' examples have a significant effect on student behavior.</p>
4	Supporting and Inhibiting Factors	<p>Supporting Factors: Principal's commitment, teacher collaboration, student enthusiasm. Obstacles: Limited worship facilities, uneven student motivation, and inconsistent supervision due to teachers' workload. But the barriers do not reduce the overall effectiveness of the program.</p>

The results of the study show that;

Forms of Internalization of Imam Zarkasyi's Values

The results of the study show that the internalization of Imam Zarkasyi's educational values at SMAN 1 Makarti Jaya is carried out through three main forms: (1) the habituation of structured worship, including dhuha prayers, morning tadarus, joint dhikr, and periodic cults guided by teachers and students; (2) exemplary teachers as *role models*, especially in terms of discipline, simplicity, and manners; and (3) strengthening school culture, such as attendance discipline, neatness of dress, classroom cleanliness responsibility, and respect for teachers. These three forms complement each other in creating a conducive religious environment.

Implementation of Spiritual Programs

The implementation of the spiritual program is carried out through daily, weekly, and incidental routine activities. The daily includes morning tadarus and dhuha prayers; weekly in the form of spiritual guidance, Islamic studies, and *peer mentoring*; while incidental activities in the form of commemoration of Islamic holidays and *religious leadership camps*. PAI teachers and spiritual coaches play a role in facilitating activities, while school principals are responsible for institutional policies and culture.

Program Effectiveness in Character Strengthening

Observation and interview data show that Imam Zarkasyi's value-based spirituality program is effective in improving the religiosity, discipline, integrity, and responsibility of students. Students are more orderly in participating in activities, show changes in religious behavior, and have a higher concern for the cleanliness and order of the school. In addition, the example of teachers has a significant effect on student behavior, especially in the aspects of manners and independence.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

Supporting factors include the principal's commitment, collaborative work culture, and students' enthusiasm in participating in spiritual activities. Meanwhile, the main obstacles are the limited facilities of worship rooms, uneven motivation of students, and sometimes inconsistent supervision due to teachers' workloads. However, these barriers do not reduce the overall effectiveness of the program.

Discussion

Forms of Internalization of Imam Zarkasyi's Values

The results of the study show that the internalization of Imam Zarkasyi's educational values at SMAN 1 Makarti Jaya takes place through three main elements, namely habituation of structured worship, teacher example, and strengthening school culture. The habit of worship such as dhuha prayers, morning tadarus, joint dhikr, and periodic cults is not only a routine, but serves as a mechanism for forming a consistent religious character. According to Dewi Nurjanah, Abdurrahmansyah, and Fauzi (2024), habituating religious values in secondary school can increase students' discipline, responsibility, and social concern. From the perspective of character education, this habituation process is a form of *moral training* that allows moral values to be gradually embedded through repetitive activities.

Meanwhile, the example of teachers is the second element that strengthens the internalization of values, because character is not enough to be taught but must be displayed through daily behavior. Teachers who are disciplined, simple, and polite are able to become real models for students to imitate and internalize these values. Strengthening school culture through discipline of attendance, neatness of dress, and cleanliness responsibilities forms an environment that supports moral development, where positive norms become the standard of behavior of school residents. The example of the teacher is the second element that strengthens the internalization of values, because character is not enough to be taught but must be displayed through daily behavior.

Fauzi (2021) emphasized that the internalization of Islamic values is effective if teachers become role models who consistently show discipline, simplicity, and noble morals. Strengthening school culture through discipline of attendance, neatness of dress, and cleanliness responsibilities forms an environment that supports moral development. Yusuf et al. (2020) emphasized that the integration of spiritual values in school culture helps students internalize Islamic ethics in daily life. This shows that the internalization process at SMAN 1 Makarti Jaya is in line with the pesantren education approach developed by Imam Zarkasyi, which is to combine *teaching, training, and conditioning* as a character education strategy. Thus, these three elements do not stand alone, but reinforce each other so as to create a consistent religious atmosphere and have a significant impact on the formation of students' character.

Implementation of Spiritual Programs

The implementation of the spiritual program at SMAN 1 Makarti Jaya runs through systematic planning, including daily, weekly, and incidental activities. Daily activities such as morning tadarus and dhuha prayers form a consistent religious routine, while weekly activities in the form of spiritual coaching, Islamic studies, and *peer mentoring* provide a more in-depth and dialogical coaching space. Incidental activities such as commemoration of Islamic holidays and *religious leadership camps* are a means of spiritual and social strengthening that is enriching. According to Dewi Nurjanah et al. (2024), the integration of daily activities, weekly coaching, and special activities allows the internalization of character values to run holistically. Fauzi (2001) emphasized that a systematic and consistent program will be more effective in shaping students' religious and ethical behavior. In addition, Yusuf et al. (2020) added that the role of teachers and principals in facilitating spiritual activities is important to ensure the sustainability of the program and instill spiritual and moral values.

This pattern reflects a holistic approach to spiritual education, where students not only acquire religious material, but also experience the process of mental and character formation firsthand. The role of PAI teachers in facilitating all activities demonstrates strong pedagogical leadership, while the principal's involvement in the school's religious policies and culture underscores the structural commitment to character building. Implementation like this is in line with the principles of Islamic education management that emphasize collaboration, exemplarity, and program consistency. In addition, the neatly scheduled pattern of activities shows that the school has succeeded in creating a conducive learning environment, while integrating the values of the pesantren into the context of public schools. This application shows that the internalization of Imam Zarkasyi's values is not only relevant in the pesantren environment, but can also be effectively adapted in modern school management based on a general curriculum.

Program Effectiveness in Character Strengthening

The effectiveness of the spiritual program at SMAN 1 Makarti Jaya is reflected in the increase in religiosity, discipline, integrity, and a sense of responsibility of students. This change in behavior can be seen from students' compliance with spiritual activities, increased manners for teachers, and higher concern for the cleanliness and order of the school environment. Auzi (2021) emphasized that the internalization of Islamic values through the habituation and example of teachers plays an important role in the formation of holistic character. These findings are in line with Dewi Nurjanah et al. (2024) who show that Islamic-based character education in secondary schools is effective in improving students' morale,

discipline, and integrity. Yusuf et al. (2020) added that Islamic spiritual values play a significant role in shaping students' social ethics and proactive behavior in the school environment.

This shows that Imam Zarkasyi's value-based internalization approach has a significant impact on character formation. Imam Zarkasyi's educational model that integrates worship, example, and disciplined culture has proven to be effective in creating changes that are *behavioral transformation* and not just knowledge changes. Teacher role models are a dominant factor in the effectiveness of the program, as students are more likely to imitate the behavior they see firsthand rather than simply receiving verbal instruction. Consistent worship habits also strengthen the spirituality dimension of students, which in turn influences their social behavior. This result is in line with the theory of character education which emphasizes the combination of *moral knowing*, *moral feeling*, and *moral acting* as a condition for the formation of intact morals. The effectiveness of the program also shows that the values of pesantren education can be applied adaptively in public schools, even in environments that are not entirely religious. Thus, the success of this program makes an important contribution to the development of Islamic values-based character education models in public schools, especially in the context of a society that is undergoing social and moral changes.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

The results of the research on supporting and inhibiting factors provide a complete picture of the dynamics of the implementation of Imam Zarkasyi's value-based spiritual program. Supporting factors include the principal's commitment, the teacher's collaborative culture, and student enthusiasm. The main obstacles are the limited facilities of worship, uneven student motivation, and supervision that is sometimes inconsistent due to the workload of teachers. Dewi Nurjanah et al. (2024) emphasized that the success of Islamic-based character education is greatly influenced by the example of teachers and the structural commitment of the school, while the limitations of facilities can be minimized through the creativity of program implementation. Fauzi (2001) added that human factors, especially teachers and students, are the main determinants of the effectiveness of value internalization.

The leadership of the principal is an important foundation because the policy, supervision, and provision of space for spiritual programs greatly determine its sustainability. Teacher collaboration strengthens the effective implementation of activities, especially when teachers play the role of consistent role models. The enthusiasm of students shows that there is acceptance of the program at the main actor level, so that the goal of character formation can be achieved effectively. On the other hand, obstacles that arise such as limited worship facilities, uneven student motivation, and inconsistent supervision due to teachers' workloads, indicate structural and technical challenges in program implementation. However, these obstacles do not reduce the effectiveness of the program as a whole, but rather show the flexibility of Imam Zarkasyi's value internalization model that can run despite limited resources. From the aspect of scientific contribution, these results strengthen the understanding that the success of character education does not only depend on the completeness of facilities, but especially on the quality of leadership, example, and school culture. Practically, these results can be the basis for schools to improve aspects of facilities and supervision management so that spiritual programs run more optimally and sustainably.

CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that the internalization of Imam Zarkasyi's educational values in the context of public high schools can take place effectively if supported by a consistent coaching system oriented towards the formation of school culture. The spiritual program not only functions as a routine religious activity, but develops into a strategic medium in instilling the values of religiosity, discipline, integrity, and responsibility of students through a continuous process of habituation and example. The success of value internalization is highly determined by the synergy of school leadership, the strategic role of teachers, and the active involvement of students in the valuable educational ecosystem. Although still faced with limited means

and variations in student motivation, Imam Zarkasyi's values-based spiritual program proved adaptive and relevant to be applied in public schools. Thus, this research makes a conceptual contribution to the development of character education based on Islamic values while offering a practical model that can be replicated and developed by other educational institutions in order to build the character of students in a holistic and sustainable manner.

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