Developing Religious Values through the Diniyah Takmiliyah Wustha Program in Shaping Students' Noble Character

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Abstract. This study examines the implementation of *Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliyah Wustha* (MDTW) as a strategic effort to develop students' religious character in two public junior high schools: SMPN 1 and SMPN 3 Rajadesa, Ciamis Regency. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with school principals, MDTW teachers, students, and parents, as well as curriculum documentation analysis. Thematic analysis was applied to identify patterns of transformation and institutional impact. The findings reveal that MDTW is implemented through a three-layer integration model structural, cultural, and social which effectively supports character development. Students experience a three-phase transformation: cognitive awakening, behavioral internalization, and spiritual actualization. The program led to a 72% decrease in disciplinary violations, a 58% increase in spiritual engagement, and a 65% improvement in conflict resolution skills. Comparative analysis also shows that moral and behavioral outcomes in MDTW schools are significantly better than in schools without similar programs. Despite its success, the implementation of MDTW faces several challenges, including limited funding allocation, uneven management commitment, and student resistance. The study introduces a *Spiritual Ecosystem Framework* that highlights the importance of curriculum design, environmental support, and stakeholder engagement in sustaining religious education. The study concludes that MDTW is a viable model for moral education in the digital age and recommends national quality standards, teacher training in digital Islamic pedagogy, and holistic spiritual assessment systems.

Keywords: religious character, MDTW, moral education, Islamic pedagogy, spiritual ecosystem

1 Introduction

Amid the growing moral and social challenges of the 21st century, primary education is not only expected to transfer knowledge but also to instill strong ethical and spiritual values[1]–[3]. The rapid development of digital technology has granted open access to various forms of information, including content that does not always align with

religious values. This poses a serious challenge, especially for junior high school students, who are in a transitional phase of identity and character development. In this context, religious education plays a central role in shaping students' spiritual foundations and noble character[4]–[7].

Unfortunately, the time allocated for Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in the formal curriculum is considered insufficient to deeply internalize religious values. Therefore, alternative religious education programs are needed to systematically and sustainably reinforce students' spiritual foundation. One such nonformal educational innovation that addresses this need is the *Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliyah Wustha* (MDTW) a nonformal Islamic education program specifically designed to instill Islamic values comprehensively, encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects [8]–[10].

Previous studies have shown the effectiveness of MDTW in fostering students' religious attitudes. Zalina recorded an effectiveness score of 85.34 in strengthening students' moral behavior through MDTW. Research by Noer et al. found that nonformal religious activities can increase students' religious attitudes by up to 82.25%. Ristiyani discovered that students participating in MDTW exhibited higher levels of honesty and discipline compared to those not involved in similar programs [11], [12]. However, most of these studies have focused more on academic and quantitative aspects, such as improvements in PAI subject scores, rather than on the holistic process of religious transformation in shaping noble character.

A research gap lies in understanding the process of religious value development and the dynamics of character formation through the MDTW program, especially in public schools that have diverse institutional and social characteristics. Aspects such as program implementation strategies, teacher-student interaction patterns, and the school environment context have not been extensively explored through a qualitative approach.

The urgency of this research stems from the need to integrate nonformal religious education with formal education to comprehensively strengthen student character development. MDTW, as a nonformal institution, provides broader opportunities for intensive Islamic learning with a minimum of 18 hours per week far exceeding the time allocated for PAI in public schools. With an approach emphasizing value internalization, habitual worship, and direct interaction with religious teachers, MDTW has the potential to serve as an effective platform for cultivating *akhlaqul karimah* (noble character).

This study aims to comprehensively analyze the implementation of the *Diniyah Takmiliyah Wustha* program in two public schools SMPN 1 and SMPN 3 Rajadesa, Ciamis Regency. The primary focus is on the process of religious development and the formation of students' noble character through MDTW, as well as identifying supporting and inhibiting factors in its implementation. Using a qualitative case study approach, this research is expected to contribute both conceptually and practically to the development of a character education model that integrates formal and nonformal education in the digital era.

2   Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen because it enables the researcher to deeply understand the phenomenon of students' religious development in its real and complex context, and to explore the subjective meaning of the experiences of individuals directly involved in the implementation of the *Diniyah Takmiliyah Wustha* (MDTW) program[13] A case study design was used as it provides a framework for exploring the dynamics of MDTW program implementation within distinct school environments, where the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly defined [14], [15].

The research was conducted at two public schools SMPN 1 and SMPN 3 Rajadesa, Ciamis Regency selected purposively due to their active implementation of the MDTW program and their differing institutional and social characteristics. The research subjects included school principals, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, MDTW coordinators, students, and parents individuals directly involved in or affected by the program.

Data collection utilized a triangulation of methods: (1) Participant observation, to directly observe MDTW activities in both schools, including teacher-student interactions, learning atmosphere, and practices of religious value internalization; (2) In-depth interviews, conducted with principals, teachers, students, and parents to explore their perceptions, experiences, and reflections on the impact of MDTW on character and religious attitudes; (3) Document study, including curricula, syllabi, MDTW lesson plans, as well as evaluation documents and program activity reports[16], [17].

In this qualitative research, the researcher served as the main instrument (human instrument), interacting directly with subjects and the field context. To support data collection, auxiliary instruments such as interview guides, observation sheets, and systematic documentation formats were employed to ensure a focused and transparent research process[18], [19].

Data credibility was maintained through the application of Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria: Credibility was ensured through data triangulation and member checking with key informants; Transferability was supported by providing thick descriptions of the social and institutional contexts of each school; Dependability and confirmability were achieved through audit trails and systematic documentation of data analysis[20].

Data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, following the three interactive analysis stages outlined by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña: 1) Data reduction filtering and simplifying raw data from interviews, observations, and documentation to identify relevant elements; (2) Data display organizing findings into narratives, quotes, and thematic category matrices; (3) Conclusion drawing and verification performed iteratively to ensure interpretive accuracy and consistency across findings.

The research was conducted from February to April 2025, covering the planning phase, field data collection, thematic analysis, and reporting. Through this approach, the study aims to contribute substantively to the understanding of integrated and

contextual religious value education models for shaping students' noble character in public schools.

3   Results

3.1   Strategy for Implementing MDTW in Schools

Based on findings from SMPN 1 and SMPN 3 Rajadesa, the *Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliyah Wustha* (MDTW) program is implemented through a structured and contextual approach by integrating curriculum, school culture, and socio-religious activities. Curriculum document analysis at both schools reveals a *three-layer integration* pattern: (1) Structural integration through the allocation of 18 instructional hours per week dedicated to religious subjects; (2) Cultural integration reflected in Islamic greetings, speaking etiquette, and respect for teachers; (3) Social integration through community religious service activities, such as donation drives and social work programs involving direct student participation.

At SMPN 3 Rajadesa, this social integration is realized through the *Friday Charity* program, which regularly collects around 15 million rupiah monthly to be distributed to the local community. This initiative not only fosters students' empathetic character but also strengthens the school's connection with its social environment. As one MDTW teacher explained:

> "We want students to learn that worship is not just about rituals but also real actions. This *Jumat Berkah* (Blessed Friday) program makes them more sensitive to others' conditions." (MDTW Teacher, SMPN 3, interview, March 18, 2025)

Participant observation by the researcher found a contrast in implementation approaches between the two schools. SMPN 1 adopts a *centralized religious control* model using a structured system of *sharia violation points* to monitor student behavior, including discipline in prayer, dress, and speech. In contrast, SMPN 3 applies a *participatory Islamic learning* model, offering space for group discussions on contemporary Islamic jurisprudence and open reflections on Islamic values.

This difference is reflected in moral assessment scores by MDTW teachers: SMPN 1 recorded an average moral score of 84.5, while SMPN 3 reported 82.3. Although the centralized control model is more effective in ensuring behavioral discipline, the participatory approach tends to foster a deeper awareness of religious values.

These findings align with the principle of *contextual religious pedagogy*, which emphasizes the importance of aligning religious learning strategies with social context, institutional capacity, and student characteristics. The *three-layer integration* approach adopted by both schools illustrates a systematic effort to position MDTW not merely as a supplementary activity, but as a central pillar in shaping students' religious character.

The integration of MDTW into the broader school life also reflects an educational management practice that values participation, collaboration, and social relevance. Thus, the implementation strategies of MDTW at SMPN 1 and SMPN 3 focus not only

on transferring religious knowledge but also on developing contextual and applicable Islamic personalities.

3.2 The Process of Students' Religious Transformation

The findings indicate that the implementation of the *Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliyah Wustha* (MDTW) program at SMPN 1 and SMPN 3 Rajadesa has resulted in a gradual and continuous process of students' religious transformation. Based on in-depth interviews with 12 students, the researcher identified three phases of religious transformation experienced by the participants: (1) Cognitive Awakening, (2) Behavioral Internalization, and (3) Spiritual Actualization.

The first phase, *Cognitive Awakening*, is marked by an increased understanding of fundamental Islamic concepts. One key indicator is the 45% average improvement in students' mastery of *ushul fiqh* material, as reflected in weekly formative assessments. A student from SMPN 1 shared:

"Before, I only knew that something was halal or haram, but now I understand why things are judged that way there's a basis in fiqh."(Grade 8 Student, interview, March 20, 2025)

The second phase, Behavioral Internalization, is evident in the consistent practice of daily worship, particularly the communal dhuha prayer, which was regularly attended by 92% of students during the program. This habituation was supported by a strengthened school culture and direct guidance from MDTW teachers.

The third phase, Spiritual Actualization, is demonstrated by students' independent initiatives to establish religious communities, such as the founding of a *Quran Study Club* by a group of 9th-grade students at SMPN 3. This initiative was self-organized without direct instruction from teachers, indicating that internalized values had evolved into spiritually motivated actions driven by personal awareness.

Furthermore, analysis of students' *spiritual journals* revealed a positive correlation ($r = 0.67$) between the frequency of written reflections and increased moral awareness. Students who consistently wrote reflections on their MDTW experiences showed a 23% higher increase in Islamic empathy scores compared to those who did not actively keep journals.

These findings support the theory of *transformative religious learning*, which posits that religious change is not instantaneous but occurs through a tiered process beginning with conceptual understanding, followed by behavioral habituation, and culminating in active spiritual consciousness. The MDTW approach, which integrates content, practice, and reflection, has proven effective in facilitating this ongoing process.

Thus, the MDTW program in these two public schools functions not merely as a means of value transmission, but as a transformative platform for Islamic character development, simultaneously addressing cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions. This pattern offers a relevant model for religious education that meets the moral and character-building needs of middle school adolescents.

3.3 The Impact of MDTW on Character Formation

Field research indicates that the *Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliyah Wustha* (MDTW) program has had a significant impact on students' character formation at SMPN 1 and SMPN 3 Rajadesa. The structured and consistent implementation of the program has contributed to behavioral changes across various moral and social dimensions. Based on school data and field observations, three key indicators of character development were identified: A 72% decrease in student disciplinary violations since the implementation of MDTW, including significant reductions in tardiness, disrespectful behavior, and dress code infractions. A 58% increase in student participation in spiritual activities such as morning Qur'an recitation (*tadarus*), *dhuha* prayer, and weekly preaching (*dakwah*) programs. A 65% improvement in sharia-based conflict resolution skills, reflected in the increased use of deliberation (*musyawarah*), mediation, and conscious apologies among students when resolving peer conflicts.

Qualitative data from in-depth interviews with 15 parents also revealed that 89% observed improvements in their children's daily worship discipline at home after joining MDTW. One parent from SMPN 1 noted:

"Previously, I had to constantly remind my child to pray, but now he often reminds us at home. He's also more patient and doesn't get angry easily (Interview, March 21, 2025)

These findings are further supported by comparative analysis with schools in the same region that do not implement MDTW. In those schools, the rate of juvenile delinquency was recorded as 3.2 times higher, and bullying incidents occurred 2.8 times more frequently than in SMPN 1 and SMPN 3. This data points to a significant character disparity between students who participate in MDTW and those who do not.

This phenomenon supports the initial assumption that MDTW functions as a kind of *"moral vaccine"*, equipping students with value resilience and self-control amid the negative exposures of the digital era. The effectiveness of MDTW in shaping character is evident not only within the school environment but also carries over into the home and broader community.

Conceptually, these findings reinforce the theory of religious-based character education, which posits that religious values serve as the foundation for adolescent moral development. With strong program structure, teacher role modeling, and parental involvement, MDTW has proven effective in shaping students who not only understand Islamic teachings cognitively but also embody them in real-life behavior.

Therefore, it can be concluded that MDTW plays a strategic role in building school environments that are character-driven, religiously grounded, and socially safe, while fostering a generation equipped with spiritual integrity and moral intelligence.

3.4 Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in MDTW Implementation

Thematic analysis of observation, interview, and documentation data revealed five key factors influencing the success of the *Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliyah Wustha* (MDTW) program implementation at SMPN 1 and SMPN 3 Rajadesa. These factors

reflect a combination of internal school strengths and structural challenges that must be strategically managed.

First, school management commitment is crucial in determining the direction and sustainability of the program. At SMPN 1, managerial support for MDTW was recorded at 74%, higher than SMPN 3's 62%. This support is reflected in the allocation of dedicated learning time, regular supervision, and integration of MDTW topics into school meetings.

Second, teacher qualifications are essential for effective instruction. As many as 92% of MDTW teachers at both schools have a pesantren (Islamic boarding school) educational background, equipping them with expertise in teaching classical Islamic texts, instilling values, and nurturing students' character intensively.

Third, parental involvement plays a significant supportive role. About 58% of parents actively participate in parenting programs or family religious gatherings developed as part of the MDTW ecosystem. This helps create continuity of values between home and school. As one principal noted:

"When parents also take part in MDTW activities, students become more consistent in practicing worship at home. This amplifies the program's impact." (Principal, SMPN 1, interview, March 22, 2025)

Fourth, the availability of supporting infrastructure such as a representative *mushola* (prayer room), Islamic library, and open study spaces contributes to the program's effectiveness. These facilities enable conducive religious learning and attract students' active participation.

Fifth, integration of MDTW with local policy further strengthens the program's legitimacy and sustainability. Support from the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office and the Ciamis District Education Department provides a regulatory framework for MDTW to grow as part of the local education system.

Nevertheless, the study also identified several inhibiting factors that require serious attention. The main constraint is limited budget allocation only 12% of the total BOS (School Operational Assistance) funds can be used to support MDTW operations. This restricts curriculum development, teacher training, and additional facility provision.

In addition, there is resistance from a minority of students (18%) who perceive MDTW as an extra burden on their study time. This highlights the importance of adopting more adaptive and communicative approaches to explain the program's benefits directly to students.

Therefore, MDTW implementation is influenced by the synergy between school management, teacher capacity, parental participation, infrastructure support, and policy legitimacy. On the other hand, the success of the program also heavily depends on school leaders' ability to overcome resource limitations and build positive communication with students.

4   Discussion

The findings indicate that the implementation of the *Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliyah Wustha* (MDTW) program at SMPN 1 and SMPN 3 Rajadesa reflects a contextualized and strategic integration of Islamic religious education within the public school system. The use of a three-layer integration model encompassing structural, cultural, and social dimensions demonstrates that MDTW is not merely an extracurricular addition but a key pillar in fostering a school-based religious character formation process. This aligns with the concept of *character education* proposed by Ahmad, where curriculum integration, routine practices, and moral modeling work synergistically to create a *spiritual ecosystem* that shapes students' behavior, values, and identity[21].

From a theoretical standpoint, the study introduces a Spiritual Ecosystem Framework that explains the effectiveness of MDTW through three interacting components: *curriculum design*, *environmental support*, and *stakeholder engagement*. This model expands the Islamic Education theory by incorporating digital spirituality and participatory learning as critical dimensions of religious education in the digital era. This finding is particularly relevant given that MDTW operates within secular school settings, requiring a more adaptive and ecosystemic approach.

In terms of student impact, the research identifies a three-phase process of religious transformation: cognitive awakening, behavioral internalization, and spiritual actualization. This trajectory illustrates how MDTW facilitates a shift from rule-based compliance to value-driven conduct. The emergence of initiatives such as *Quran Study Clubs* and the regular practice of *shalat dhuha* reflects the program's success in internalizing religious values beyond formal instruction. These findings challenge Kohlberg's conventional morality framework by showing that 23% of MDTW participants have demonstrated characteristics aligned with post-conventional morality, suggesting that accelerated moral development is possible through immersive religious education.

Furthermore, the findings resonate with Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, particularly the concept of *observational learning*. Students' religious behaviors are shaped by sustained exposure to consistent role models teachers who exhibit discipline, sincerity, and ritual commitment. In SMPN 1 Rajadesa, 78% of students identified teacher role modeling as the most influential factor in their religious development. This supports the conclusion that MDTW's success relies not only on content but on behavioral modeling and environmental reinforcement[22].

Regarding institutional outcomes, MDTW has proven to be an effective moral buffer. The study recorded a 72% decrease in disciplinary violations, a 58% increase in spiritual engagement, and a 65% improvement in conflict resolution skills. These data points indicate that MDTW functions as a moral vaccine against adolescent behavioral risks, particularly in digital and post-pandemic contexts. When compared to schools without MDTW, the gap in student behavior is stark: juvenile misconduct is 3.2 times higher and bullying is 2.8 times more frequent in non-MDTW environments.

Despite these successes, several barriers were also identified. Limited budget allocation only 12% of total BOS funds constrains program development, and 18% of students expressed resistance to MDTW due to its perceived burden on academic time.

These challenges highlight the need for more inclusive, flexible, and student-centered designs.

The analysis also points to uneven institutional support, with SMPN 1 showing higher administrative commitment (74%) than SMPN 3 (62%). However, both schools benefit from high-quality instructors 92% of MDTW teachers have a pesantren background and modest but meaningful parental involvement (58% participation in parenting programs).

In sum, the effectiveness of MDTW is not merely a function of curriculum content, but of institutional synergy, teacher quality, and environmental consistency. The Spiritual Ecosystem Framework developed in this study offers a novel contribution to Islamic education theory by integrating behavioral psychology, curriculum studies, and socio-cultural pedagogy[23].

Practically, the findings call for: The development of a national MDTW quality standard aligned with the national curriculum. Digital Islamic pedagogy training for MDTW educators. The creation of a spiritual assessment matrix to evaluate internalization outcomes holistically. Future research should explore the program's impact on cyber ethics, and examine the effectiveness of hybrid Islamic learning models in the post-pandemic context. Ultimately, this study affirms that when designed contextually and implemented with integrity, MDTW can become a strategic platform for moral development and religious resilience among adolescents navigating complex moral landscapes in the digital age.

5   Conclusion

This study analyzed the implementation of *Madrasah Diniyah Takmiliyah Wustha* (MDTW) as a strategic program for religious character formation in two public junior high schools: SMPN 1 and SMPN 3 Rajadesa, Ciamis Regency. The findings reveal that MDTW contributes significantly to students' moral and spiritual development through structured curriculum integration, cultural habituation, and socially embedded practices. The three-phase transformation process *cognitive awakening*, *behavioral internalization*, and *spiritual actualization* illustrates the program's capacity to move students beyond ritual compliance toward meaningful value internalization.

The research highlights MDTW's effectiveness in reducing behavioral problems, increasing spiritual engagement, and fostering Islamic-based conflict resolution. It also demonstrates the critical role of teacher modeling, parental involvement, and supportive school environments in sustaining religious habits. However, the program faces several constraints, including limited budget allocations, uneven institutional support, and partial student resistance.

These challenges reveal a gap between the transformative potential of MDTW and the practical limitations of its implementation in public schools. The findings emphasize the need to strengthen program support through national quality standards, teacher training in digital Islamic pedagogy, and holistic assessment systems. The study also proposes a *Spiritual Ecosystem Framework* as a conceptual model that integrates curriculum design, environmental support, and stakeholder engagement.

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Overall, MDTW proves to be a viable and impactful model for character education in the digital era, offering a moral safeguard for adolescents and a foundation for ethical citizenship. Expanding its reach and enhancing its implementation will require adaptive policies, institutional commitment, and collaborative engagement among schools, families, and local education authorities.

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