

Maintaining Islamic Values in the Modern World: The Role of Informal Education and Socio-Cultural Dynamics in Rural East Java

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Informal Education;
Islamic Values;
Socio-Cultural

Article history:

Received 2024-12-18

Revised 2025-01-06

Accepted 2025-03-19

ABSTRACT

This study examines the internalization of Islamic values in religious-based communities and the factors influencing this process. The objective is to understand how informal education in families and communities shapes children's Islamic character and to identify related challenges and opportunities. A qualitative approach with a case study method was employed, utilizing participant observation, in-depth interviews with religious figures, parents, and children, and document analysis of community religious activities. Findings suggest that the internalization of Islamic values is most effective through practice-based approaches, such as congregational prayer, reading books, and participating in socio-religious activities. Socio-cultural factors, particularly the culture of collectivism, play a significant role in reinforcing these values, while challenges arise from the influence of digitalization and modernization, which reduce children's involvement in religious practices. The study emphasizes the need for collaboration among families, communities, and educational institutions to adapt Islamic learning methods to technological changes. It also calls for policies that support community-based informal education to ensure the continued transmission of Islamic values.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education has a crucial role in shaping students' character, morals and spirituality (Guna & Yuwantiningrum, 2024; Komariah & Nihayah, 2023; Muzakki & Nurdin, 2022). This process does not only take place in formal educational institutions but also through informal channels in everyday life. The family environment, religious communities, and society serve as learning spaces rich in Islamic values, such as honesty, responsibility, tolerance, and justice. Informal education based on direct social interaction supports the concept of lifelong learning, where the learning process takes place continuously through everyday experiences (Dabbagh & Castaneda, 2020; López, 2020; Sh et al., 2020). However, the challenges of globalization, modernization, and digital technology often weaken the process of internalizing Islamic values, especially among the younger generation. Changes in interaction patterns in

families and communities are crucial factors that influence the effectiveness of informal education of Islamic values.

Several previous studies have tried to understand this phenomenon. Nurdin found that family and community environments make a significant contribution to shaping children's religious character, but these studies paid less attention to socio-cultural aspects in depth (Gawo & Tafesse, 2024; Kaya & Erisen, 2024; Shah & Alam, 2024). Meanwhile, Rahman and Ali stated that globalization, technology, and shifts in cultural values are serious challenges in the informal education of Islamic values, although this research has not offered concrete strategies for facing these challenges (Muhajir, 2022; Neliwati et al., 2023; Osman et al., 2020). Another study by Azizah et al. showed that digital media can be an alternative in learning Islamic values but focuses more on the use of technology than exploring direct social interactions in everyday life (Adiyono & Anshor, 2024; Diana et al., 2024; Martono et al., 2020).

Although previous studies have provided valuable insights, this study offers a more comprehensive approach by incorporating a socio-cultural perspective in the informal education of Islamic values. This study highlights the role of family and community and explores how direct social interaction can serve as an effective learning strategy. Unlike previous studies that focus more on the influence of technology or the challenges of globalization, this study seeks to understand how social mechanisms in informal environments can strengthen the internalization of Islamic values sustainably. Thus, this study not only confirms previous findings but also develops a deeper analysis of the sociocultural factors that support or hinder the informal education of Islamic values.

This study aims to analyze the process of learning Islamic values in everyday life through informal education and to identify socio-cultural factors that play a role in the internalization of these values. In addition, this study evaluates the impact of informal education on the lives of individuals and communities and offers practical recommendations to strengthen the effectiveness of informal education amidst the challenges of modernization and globalization.

The main contribution of this study lies in its in-depth exploration of how social interactions within the family, community, and societal environments can be an effective means of learning Islamic values. By highlighting the direct role of social interactions in informal education, this study fills a gap that has not been widely addressed by previous studies. In addition, this study offers concrete strategies, such as the development of community programs that involve families and communities in religious activities and training for parents and community leaders on how to internalize Islamic values in everyday interactions. With this approach, this study provides not only theoretical analysis but also practical solutions to address the challenges in the informal education of Islamic values in the modern era.

2. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach to understand the process of learning Islamic values in everyday life through social interaction and informal education in Kembang Jeruk Village, Sampang Regency, East Java. This village has an agrarian cultural background with strong religious traditions, making it an ideal location for this study. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of meanings, dynamics, and social realities in this community based on the lived experiences of individuals and groups involved in the learning process (Faizah et al., 2024; Holili et al., 2024; Munkar & Walid, 2023). This descriptive-analytical research focuses on the phenomenon of learning Islamic values in the family environment, religious communities, and society more broadly.

The research participants consisted of 30 respondents selected through purposive sampling techniques to ensure a representative variety of experiences and perspectives. Respondents included 10 parents who were active in their children's religious education, 10 children and adolescents who experienced informal education of Islamic values in their daily lives, and 10 religious figures and community elders who had a role in teaching and maintaining Islamic values in the community. The selection of respondents was carried out by considering their active involvement in learning Islamic values as well as recommendations from local community leaders.

The data collection methods used consisted of participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Participatory observation was conducted in the family environment, religious communities, and informal institutions such as majlis taklim and pesantren kilat. This method allows researchers to understand directly how Islamic values are taught and practiced in everyday life. Researchers are actively involved in family activities, such as daily interactions between parents and children, as well as community religious activities such as readings and social events. These observations record behaviors, habits, and practices that reflect the learning of Islamic values, including examples given by key figures such as parents and religious leaders.

In-depth interviews were conducted with various key informants, including children, adolescents, parents, religious leaders, and community elders who play a role in informal education. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, allowing participants to speak more freely about their experiences, challenges, and views. The interview process was conducted in a comfortable atmosphere to obtain more in-depth and authentic data. Interview guidelines were designed to capture data related to Islamic values, learning methods, socio-cultural dynamics that occur, and challenges faced in the local context.

In addition, document analysis was conducted on religious programs in the community, such as study materials, activities in Majlis Taklim, and informal education guidelines in Islamic boarding schools. Local cultural documents, such as the traditions of kenduri, gotong royong, and musyawarah, were also analyzed to understand how these practices function as media for learning Islamic values.

Kembang Jeruk Village, the research location, provides a unique context due to its agrarian background and the strong influence of religious traditions and practices. This setting enriches the data obtained, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the learning processes that occur across different age groups and social strata. The research participants consisted of children, adolescents, and adults with diverse socio-economic backgrounds, so the perspectives obtained were more representative.

Regarding ethical research standards, the researcher followed a participatory approach by engaging in religious activities in the village. This included participating in the *Tekel* council, attending public readings, and interacting with community members in their daily activities. The researcher applied a persuasive and respectful approach, ensuring that the involvement of informants, including children, religious leaders, and village elders, was voluntary and mutually consensual.

The analysis was conducted using a socio-cultural lens, considering theoretical and conceptual frameworks to better understand the data. The socio-cultural analysis approach provides insight into how local culture, religious practices, and social interactions contribute to the internalization of Islamic values in everyday life. The use of this theoretical lens ensures transparency in the interpretation of findings and strengthens the validity of the study.

Although the research design is robust, several potential limitations need to be acknowledged. Methodological challenges such as bias in participant selection, the influence of the researcher's presence on participant behavior, and limited access to certain community segments may arise. These challenges will be addressed through careful selection of participants, ensuring diversity and representativeness, and maintaining a reflective approach during data collection and analysis. In addition, the triangulation of data sources, including observations, interviews, and documents, will enhance the credibility and reliability of the research findings.

This study produces a holistic understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics in the internalization of Islamic values through informal education in Kembang Jeruk Village. This study provides an in-depth picture of how Islamic values are learned, practiced, and internalized in various levels of society and identifies the potential for strengthening informal education amidst the challenges of modernization.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 *The Process of Learning Islamic Values in Daily Life*

This study found that learning Islamic values in daily life in the research community uses more practice-based approaches. Activities such as congregational prayer, reading together, and cooperation in social and religious events are the main means of internalizing Islamic values (Diana et al., 2024; Rifat et al., 2020; Rusli, 2020). One of the interview participants emphasized the importance of the direct application of Islamic values:

We are not only taught theory but also practice directly in everyday life. For example, children are invited to help neighbors in need and are explained that this is part of Islamic teachings (Hadi, 2024).

This process is reinforced by the guidance of local religious figures who act as moral role models. They often deliver short sermons after congregational prayers or in regular community meetings. The following data shows the frequency of religious activities that serve as a medium for learning Islamic values:

Table 1. Weekly Frequency and Participant Demographics of Community Religious Activities

Type of Activity	Frequency (Per Week)	Key Participants
Congregational prayer	35	All community members
Regular reading	3	Children and adults
Cooperation	1	Teenagers and adults
Short lecture	2	All community members

Based on the data, congregational prayer emerges as the most frequently conducted activity and serves as a primary mechanism for the internalization of Islamic values. However, the study also highlights challenges in the learning process, particularly those arising from the influence of digitalization and globalization. The increasing consumption of digital media among children frequently diverts their attention from religious practices. As one mother interviewed in the study remarked:

My son prefers watching videos on his mobile phone rather than attending religious lectures. This is a big challenge for us (Lia, 2024).

To address these challenges, some communities have adapted by using digital technology wisely. Several local clerics now upload Islamic teachings through platforms such as YouTube and Instagram, creating educational content that appeals to children and teens. This approach allows children to continue to gain religious understanding in a format that is more suited to their digital habits.

3.2 *Socio-Cultural Factors that Influence the Learning of Islamic Values*

Sociocultural factors have a significant role in learning Islamic values. The culture of collectivism in the research community facilitates the internalization of values such as cooperation and social concern (Agung et al., 2024; Husin et al., 2020; Sobaya et al., 2023). A research participant emphasized the importance of collective culture:

Here, we are always taught to help each other. If someone is sick, all the neighbours will come to help (Qomaryh, 2024).

In addition, local traditions such as the reading of the Qur'an and the commemoration of the Prophet's Birthday play a role in strengthening Islamic values. This tradition contains not only religious aspects but also local culture, such as the use of regional languages in preaching and serving typical foods. This creates continuity between Islamic values and local culture so that learning is more easily accepted.

However, socio-cultural factors also face challenges in terms of economic aspects and government policies. Modernization and urbanization often reduce social ties within communities. Some families

have difficulty balancing economic life with religious activities. The government, through education and social policies, can play a role in strengthening informal religious education by providing support for community-based activities, such as assistance for Islamic boarding schools or school-based religious programs.

3.3 *The Impact of Informal Education on the Internalization of Islamic Values*

Informal education in the family and community plays an important role in shaping the Islamic character of children. Parents, as the first educators, teach basic Islamic values from an early age. An interviewee said:

We always teach our children to read prayers before eating, say hello, and speak politely to their elders (Ustaz Fauzan, 2024).

The community also becomes a place for informal education through religious activities. Observations show that 80% of children who are active in these activities have more polite and religious behavior than those who are less involved.

However, the influence of digitalization has also begun to replace the role of traditional informal education. Parents need to have a strategy in utilizing technology, such as using Islamic-based applications that present learning materials in a way that is interesting for children. In addition, government programs that support community-based religious education can strengthen the role of this informal education.

3.4 *Challenges and Opportunities in the Process of Learning Islamic Values*

The main challenge in learning Islamic values is the increasing influence of foreign cultures that often obscure local and Islamic values. One community leader stated:

Today's young generation is more familiar with foreign cultures than Islamic traditions. This requires a more creative approach to learning (Kiyai Zain, 2024).

However, opportunities also arise with digital technology. Some communities have utilized social media and Islamic-based applications to convey religious teachings. One participant stated:

Kids nowadays prefer to learn through videos. We try to adapt to this trend (Anggun, 2024).

Thus, learning Islamic values in daily life is influenced by various factors, both internal and external. The success of this learning is highly dependent on the synergy between family, community, government policy, and the use of appropriate digital technology. With an adaptive strategy that combines traditional and digital approaches, Islamic values can continue to be passed on to future generations in a more relevant and effective way.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that learning Islamic values in daily life in the research community relies more on a practice-based approach. Activities such as congregational prayer, regular reading, and cooperation are the main instruments in internalizing Islamic values. This finding is in line with previous studies, which state that experience-based education is more effective in instilling religious values compared to purely theoretical approaches (Diana et al., 2024; Rifat et al., 2020). Active involvement in religious practices and socio-religious activities enables individuals, especially children and adolescents, to understand and practice Islamic values more deeply.

In addition to religious practices, this study also found that the role of local religious figures is very significant in shaping the understanding of Islamic values among the community. Religious figures not only function as lecturers but also as moral role models who guide the community through daily interactions. This strengthens previous findings that show that authoritative figures in the community act as catalysts in the process of internalizing religious values (Rusli, 2020). The presence

of religious figures who are active in providing advice after congregational prayers or in routine community meetings strengthens the process of learning Islamic values continuously.

However, this study also noted challenges in the process of learning Islamic values, especially due to the influence of digitalization and globalization. High consumption of digital media among children and adolescents often reduces their involvement in religious activities. This is in line with research by Husin et al. (2020), which highlights that the presence of digital technology, although providing benefits in accessing information, also has the potential to divert attention from traditional religious practices. One real form of this challenge is the shift in children's interest from attending religious lectures to watching digital content on their mobile phones.

To face these challenges, communities have begun to adapt by utilizing digital technology as a means of preaching and learning Islamic values. Ustaz and local religious figures have now begun to upload Islamic materials through platforms such as YouTube and Instagram to attract the attention of the younger generation. This shows that although digitalization can be a challenge, if managed well, it can also be an opportunity to spread Islamic values. The results of this study support the views of Sobaya et al., who emphasize the importance of integrating technology in religious education to remain relevant to the evolving social dynamics (Sobaya et al., 2023).

In addition to the digitalization factor, this study also revealed that socio-cultural factors have a major influence on learning Islamic values. The collectivist culture in the research community, which emphasizes the spirit of cooperation and social concern, is a major factor in facilitating the process of internalizing Islamic values. In this context, learning religious values does not only occur through formal worship but also in daily social interactions, such as helping neighbors in need or participating in religious events. These results strengthen the findings of Agung et al., who stated that Islamic values are more easily internalized when they are in line with the local culture embraced by the community (Agung et al., 2024).

Although collective culture facilitates the learning of Islamic values, this study also shows that modernization and urbanization have begun to reduce social cohesion within communities. Some families face difficulties in balancing economic demands with involvement in religious activities. This finding is in line with Qomaryh's study, which shows that economic factors can be a barrier to active community participation in religious activities (Qomaryh 2024). In this regard, government policies can play a role in strengthening informal religious education by providing support for community-based activities, such as assistance programs for Islamic boarding schools or school-based religious initiatives.

In addition, this study also found that informal education in families and communities has a significant impact on the internalization of Islamic values in children. Parents, as the first educators, have a major role in forming children's religious habits from an early age, such as reading prayers before eating, saying hello, and speaking politely to elders. This is by the findings of Ustaz Fauzan (2024), which state that the habituation of Islamic behavior in everyday life contributes to the development of children's character. Research data also shows that children who are active in religious activities tend to have more polite and religious attitudes than those who are less involved.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that learning Islamic values in the research community is influenced by various factors, both internal and external. This learning process is strengthened through religious practices, the role of religious figures, collectivist culture, and informal education in the family. However, the challenges faced, such as the influence of digitalization and social changes due to modernization, require an adaptive strategy in learning Islamic values. By utilizing digital technology wisely and strengthening the synergy between families, communities, and government policies, Islamic values education can remain relevant and effective in facing ever-evolving social dynamics.

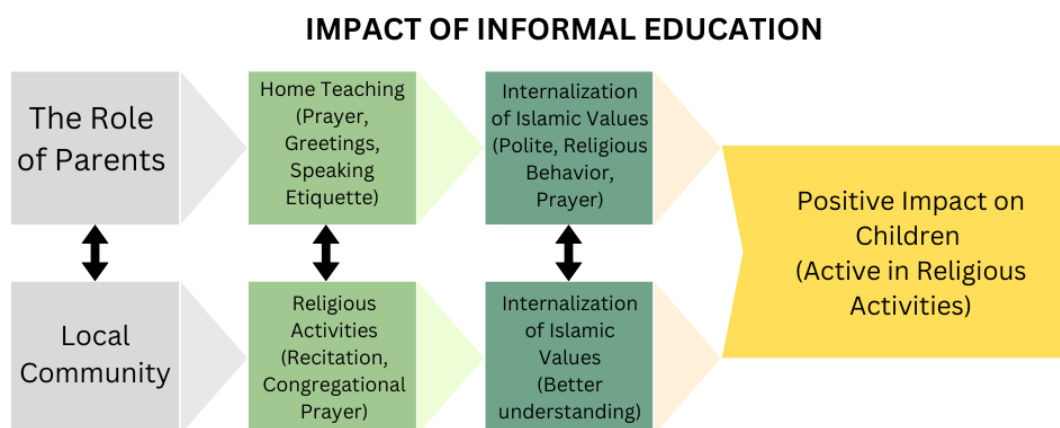


Figure 1. Impact of Informal Education

The data presented in the chart underscores the significant role of informal education in shaping children's character and religious identity. In this context, both parents and the local community serve as key agents in supporting educational processes that occur outside formal institutional settings.

Parents contribute primarily through religious instruction at home, including the teaching of prayer practices, greetings, and etiquette in communication. Simultaneously, the local community reinforces these efforts by organizing and facilitating communal religious activities, such as group prayers and congregational worship.

These two dimensions of informal education promote the internalization of Islamic values in complementary ways. First, home-based learning fosters personal religiosity, politeness, and habitual worship among children. Second, participation in community-based religious events enhances their understanding of collective religious practices and values.

The combined influence of these informal educational efforts yields observable outcomes: children become more engaged in religious activities and demonstrate stronger religious character. These findings affirm the pivotal role of informal education—both familial and communal—in cultivating children's religiosity and moral development.

4. CONCLUSION

Learning Islamic values in the research community is more effective when carried out through a practice-based approach in everyday life. Activities such as congregational prayer, regular reading, and cooperation are the main means of internalizing Islamic values, reinforced by the role of religious figures as moral role models. Sociocultural factors, especially the culture of collectivism, also contribute to forming a conducive environment for learning Islamic values. However, the main challenge in this process is the influence of digitalization and modernization, which tend to reduce the involvement of children and adolescents in religious activities. Therefore, adaptation efforts by utilizing digital technology for Islamic education are one of the solutions that have been implemented by the research community.

Based on the results of this study, it is specifically recommended that families and communities continue to optimize their roles in informal education by integrating more creative and technology-based Islamic learning methods. In general, the government and educational institutions are expected to provide policy support that strengthens community-based Islamic education, such as digital training programs for religious educators or assistance for non-formal educational institutions. For further research, it is recommended that a more in-depth study be conducted regarding the effectiveness of

using digital media in learning Islamic values and its impact on children's involvement in religious practices. In addition, further research can explore collaborative strategies between families, communities, and formal educational institutions in overcoming the challenges of modernization on Islamic education.

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