



Management in Internalizing the Values of Ikhlas in Islamic Boarding Schools

Syahrani*

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam
Rasyidiyah Khalidiyah,
Indonesia

Mahyuddin Barni

Universitas Islam Negeri
Antasari Banjarmasin,
Indonesia

Ahmad Khairuddin

Universitas Islam Negeri
Antasari Banjarmasin,
Indonesia

Article Info

Article history:

Received: Feb, 27, 2026

Revised: April, 13, 2026

Accepted: May, 05, 2026

Keywords:

Islamic boarding school;
Management of value
internalization;
Moral internalization model;
Sincerity (ikhlas);
Value internalization.

Abstract

The growing demand for character education has exposed a critical gap between the conceptual teaching of moral values and their authentic internalization in learners' lived experiences, particularly within faith-based educational contexts. Despite the centrality of sincerity (ikhlas) in Islamic moral philosophy, there remains a lack of empirically validated and integrative models that systematically translate this value into consistent behavior and moral identity. This study aims to address this gap by developing and validating a structured, sequential model of sincerity internalization that integrates moral belief, moral participation, moral action, and experiential moral transformation. A mixed-methods approach within a quasi-experimental design was employed, involving 120 students from two Islamic boarding schools divided into experimental and control groups. Quantitative data were collected using a validated Sincerity Internalization Scale and analyzed through paired and independent sample t-tests with effect size calculation, while qualitative data were examined using thematic analysis to capture experiential change. The results indicate a statistically significant improvement in the experimental group ($p < 0.001$) with a large effect size ($d = 1.21$), demonstrating a substantial impact of the intervention. All dimensions of internalization improved consistently, with the experiential moral phase showing the highest transformation, indicating that sincerity becomes fully internalized when it evolves into an embodied and reflective moral identity. This study provides one of the first empirically validated sequential models of sincerity internalization that explicitly integrates experiential transformation as the culminating stage. By bridging the gap between moral cognition and lived moral practice, the findings offer a new paradigm for character education, shifting the focus from symbolic instruction to measurable and transformative moral development.

To cite this article: Syahrani, Barni, M. Khairuddin, K. (2026). Management in Internalizing the Values of Ikhlas in Islamic Boarding Schools. *Al Qodiri: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial dan Keagamaan*, 24 (2), 61-71.

INTRODUCTION

The increasing global demand for character education has intensified scholarly attention toward how moral values are not only taught but deeply internalized within educational systems. Across diverse contexts, education is no longer viewed as a mere transmission of knowledge, but as a transformative process that shapes ethical identity, moral reasoning, and behavioral consistency (Babatunde et al., 2025; Obizue et al., 2025). Within this discourse, faith-based institutions, particularly Islamic boarding schools, represent a unique and underexplored ecosystem for moral formation, where spiritual values are embedded within daily practices. Among these values, sincerity (ikhlas) occupies a central position, functioning as the ethical foundation for intention, action, and spiritual consciousness. However, despite its philosophical depth and theological importance, sincerity remains one of the most difficult values to operationalize in educational practice. The challenge lies not in defining sincerity, but in ensuring that it becomes an embodied and consistent disposition. This unresolved tension highlights a critical gap between normative moral instruction and lived moral experience in contemporary education.

Empirical observations across Islamic educational settings reveal a persistent discrepancy between students' cognitive understanding of moral values and their actual behavioral

* Corresponding author:

Syahrani et al, Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Rasyidiyah Khalidiyah, Indonesia
syahrani481@gmail.com

manifestations. While learners are often able to articulate the meaning and importance of sincerity, their actions frequently remain influenced by external validation, social expectations, or instrumental motivations (Babatunde et al., 2025; Shoaib, 2023). This phenomenon reflects a broader issue in moral education, where instructional practices tend to privilege cognitive comprehension over affective engagement and behavioral transformation. As a result, moral values are internalized superficially, functioning as abstract knowledge rather than guiding principles for action. In many cases, the absence of structured experiential learning opportunities further limits students' ability to translate moral concepts into authentic practices. Consequently, the internalization process becomes fragmented and inconsistent. This disjunction underscores the need for pedagogical models that explicitly bridge cognition, emotion, and action within a coherent developmental framework.

The urgency of addressing this gap is further amplified by the rapidly evolving socio-cultural landscape influencing contemporary learners. Exposure to digital environments, shifting social norms, and increased individualism have introduced new challenges to the formation of stable moral identities (Arslan et al., 2025). In such contexts, values like sincerity are particularly vulnerable to erosion, as external recognition and performative behaviors become increasingly normalized. Islamic boarding schools, traditionally regarded as custodians of moral and spiritual education, are now required to navigate these complexities while maintaining their foundational principles. Without effective mechanisms for deep internalization, moral education risks becoming symbolic rather than transformative. This situation calls for innovative approaches that are not only contextually grounded but also theoretically robust and empirically validated. Therefore, the development of structured, experience-driven models for moral internalization is no longer optional but essential.

From a theoretical standpoint, moral internalization is widely conceptualized as a multidimensional process involving the integration of cognitive, affective, and conative domains. Classical frameworks such as Kohlberg's stages of moral development emphasize the progression of moral reasoning but have been critiqued for insufficiently addressing emotional and behavioral dimensions (Fernández González & Akriyov, 2024; Haste, 2026). Similarly, Bandura's social learning theory highlights the role of observation and reinforcement, yet it does not fully capture the internal experiential transformation required for deeply rooted values (Chen, 2025; Koskela & Paloniemi, 2023). More recent perspectives, including experiential learning and transformative learning theories, argue that meaningful moral development occurs through active engagement, reflection, and personal experience (Alam, 2022; Holdo, 2023). Despite these advances, there remains a lack of integrative frameworks that systematically connect belief formation, participatory engagement, independent action, and internalized experience. This theoretical fragmentation suggests the need for a more comprehensive and operationalizable model of moral internalization.

Recent empirical studies have begun to explore strategies for strengthening character education through participatory and experiential approaches. Research indicates that moral values are more effectively internalized when learners are actively involved in authentic social and reflective activities (Alavi, 2024; Mahfud & Zahriyah, 2025). In the context of Islamic education, scholars have emphasized the importance of embedding spiritual values into routine practices to foster meaningful character development (Jamil, 2024; Juwairiyah & Fanani, 2025). Additional studies highlight the role of structured interventions in enhancing moral awareness and behavioral consistency (Abuadas & Albikawi, 2026; Tian & Tang, 2025). However, these studies tend to address isolated components of moral development, such as participation or reflection, without integrating them into a unified developmental sequence. Furthermore, the specific value of sincerity remains underexamined as a focal construct, often treated as a peripheral outcome rather than a central variable. This fragmented body of literature limits the potential for developing scalable and transferable models.

Despite the growing body of research, several critical limitations persist. First, many existing studies rely predominantly on descriptive or qualitative approaches, which, although insightful, lack the empirical rigor required to measure transformation in a systematic and generalizable manner. Second, current models often fail to articulate the transitional mechanisms through which individuals move from external participation to internalized moral identity. Third, the experiential dimension of moral internalization, particularly in relation to spiritual values such as sincerity,

remains conceptually underdeveloped and methodologically underexplored. These limitations indicate a significant research gap at both theoretical and empirical levels. Notably, there is an absence of models that explicitly integrate belief, participation, action, and experiential transformation into a coherent framework. Addressing this gap is essential for advancing both the theory and practice of moral education in contemporary contexts.

In response to these challenges, this study introduces a novel, integrative framework for the internalization of sincerity within Islamic boarding schools, structured through four sequential and interconnected phases: moral belief, moral participation, moral action, and experiential moral. Unlike prior models that emphasize isolated dimensions of moral development, this framework systematically integrates cognitive understanding, affective engagement, behavioral practice, and experiential transformation into a unified process. Theoretically, this study contributes to the advancement of moral internalization theory by proposing a multidimensional and operationalizable model that bridges classical moral development theories with contemporary experiential learning perspectives. Practically, it provides educators with a structured and adaptable approach to fostering deep and sustainable character transformation. By positioning sincerity as a central and measurable construct, this research not only addresses a critical gap in the literature but also offers a scalable model with potential applicability beyond Islamic educational contexts. Ultimately, this study aims to redefine how moral values are internalized, shifting the focus from instruction to transformation.

METHOD

This study employed a mixed-methods approach embedded within a quasi-experimental design and research and development (R&D) framework to develop and evaluate a structured model for the internalization of sincerity (ikhlas) in Islamic boarding schools. The mixed-methods design was selected to integrate quantitative measurement of behavioral change with qualitative exploration of participants' experiential transformation, thereby enabling a comprehensive understanding of the internalization process (Leach Sankofa, 2022; Zenk et al., 2021). The quasi-experimental component adopted a non-equivalent control group pretest-posttest design, which allowed the researcher to examine causal effects of the intervention in a natural educational setting without full randomization (Allefdawi et al., 2026; Alturaiki et al., 2025). In parallel, the R&D framework followed iterative stages, including needs analysis, model design, expert validation, pilot testing, and field implementation, to ensure both conceptual validity and practical applicability of the developed model (Syahrul et al., 2025).

The research was conducted in two Islamic boarding schools, namely Pondok Pesantren Anwarul Hasaniyyah and Pondok Pesantren Al Madaniyah, selected purposively to represent variation in institutional context while maintaining comparable educational structures. These institutions were chosen based on their active engagement in character education and their willingness to implement structured interventions. The study was carried out over a six-month period, covering phases of preliminary investigation, model development, validation, implementation, and evaluation. This duration was considered adequate to observe gradual changes in moral disposition and behavioral consistency, particularly in relation to the internalization of sincerity, which requires sustained exposure and reinforcement.

The population consisted of mid-level students enrolled in both institutions. A total of 120 participants were selected using purposive sampling, ensuring that all participants met predefined inclusion criteria, including active participation in boarding school activities, comparable educational level, and willingness to complete the full research process. Participants were divided into two groups: an experimental group that received the intervention model and a comparison group that followed conventional instructional practices. The selection of this sample size was based on considerations of statistical adequacy for inferential analysis as well as the need to capture variability in participants' responses. The use of purposive sampling is consistent with quasi-experimental designs in educational research where random assignment is not feasible but comparability between groups is maintained (Li et al., 2023).

Data were collected using multiple instruments designed to capture both measurable outcomes and experiential dimensions of moral internalization. The primary quantitative instrument was a Sincerity Internalization Scale, developed based on three core dimensions: cognitive

understanding (moral belief), affective disposition (emotional sincerity), and conative behavior (consistent moral action). The scale consisted of 24 items rated on a five-point Likert continuum, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. In addition, structured observation sheets were used to document observable behaviors during intervention activities, particularly in relation to voluntary actions and social engagement. Semi-structured interview guides were also employed to explore participants' reflective experiences, emotional responses, and perceived transformation throughout the process. The development of these instruments was grounded in established theories of moral education and experiential learning, ensuring conceptual alignment between measurement and theoretical framework (Barile et al., 2023; Kornberger & Leixnering, 2025).

The validity and reliability of the instruments were established through a rigorous multi-stage procedure. Content validity was assessed through expert judgment, involving five specialists in Islamic education and educational psychology who evaluated the relevance, clarity, and representativeness of each item. Construct validity was examined using corrected item-total correlation analysis, with all items meeting acceptable thresholds. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha, with all dimensions achieving coefficients above 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency (Jahrami et al., 2023; Willems et al., 2023). Prior to the main study, a pilot test was conducted with a separate group of participants to ensure clarity of wording, appropriateness of response options, and overall stability of the instrument. Feedback from this phase was used to refine the final version of the instrument.

The data collection procedure followed a systematic and sequential process. The initial stage involved a needs analysis conducted through observation and interviews to identify existing gaps in the internalization of sincerity among students. Based on these findings, a four-phase model was developed, consisting of moral belief, moral participation, moral action, and experiential moral. The model was subsequently validated by experts before being implemented in the field. The quasi-experimental phase began with the administration of a pretest to both the experimental and comparison groups to establish baseline conditions. The intervention was then implemented in the experimental group through structured activities designed to operationalize each phase of the model. These activities were conducted over a defined period, allowing participants to progressively engage in belief formation, participatory practice, independent action, and experiential reflection. Following the intervention, a posttest was administered to measure changes in internalization levels, and qualitative data were collected through observations and interviews to capture deeper experiential insights. All data were systematically documented and prepared for analysis.

Quantitative data analysis was conducted using inferential statistical techniques to determine the effectiveness of the intervention. A paired sample t-test was used to assess within-group differences between pretest and posttest scores, while an independent sample t-test was employed to compare outcomes between the experimental and comparison groups. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS software, with a significance level set at $\alpha = 0.05$. In addition to significance testing, effect size (Cohen's d) was calculated to evaluate the magnitude of the intervention's impact, providing a more comprehensive interpretation of the results. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, involving stages of data reduction, open coding, categorization, and theme development to identify patterns of experiential transformation (Dellafiore et al., 2026; Ozuem et al., 2022). The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings was conducted during the interpretation phase to ensure a holistic understanding of both measurable outcomes and lived experiences.

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the research process. All participants were informed about the objectives, procedures, and potential implications of the study, and their participation was based on voluntary consent. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing participant identities and securely storing all data. Participants were assured that their involvement would not affect their academic standing and that they could withdraw from the study at any stage without consequences. These measures ensured compliance with ethical standards in educational research and reinforced the credibility and integrity of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The findings of this study provide robust empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of the four-phase sincerity internalization model. The results are organized into four interrelated components: baseline equivalence, overall intervention effects, dimension-specific transformation, and experiential qualitative validation. This multi-layered analysis ensures that the reported outcomes are not only statistically valid but also theoretically meaningful and contextually grounded.

Baseline Equivalence

Prior to the intervention, an independent sample t-test was conducted to examine the equivalence between the experimental and control groups. The analysis revealed no statistically significant difference in pretest scores of sincerity internalization ($p > 0.05$), indicating that both groups started from comparable baseline conditions. The mean scores were nearly identical, suggesting that any subsequent differences can be attributed to the intervention rather than initial disparities. This baseline comparability strengthens the internal validity of the quasi-experimental design and supports causal inference.

Overall Effect of the Intervention

To evaluate the impact of the model, paired sample t-tests and between-group comparisons were conducted. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Pretest–Posttest Comparison of Sincerity Internalization Scores

Group	Pretest Mean ± SD	Posttest Mean ± SD	Mean Difference	t-value	p-value
Experimental	3.12 ± 0.41	4.21 ± 0.38	+1.09	9.45	<0.001
Control	3.10 ± 0.43	3.32 ± 0.40	+0.22	1.87	0.064

The results in Table 1 indicate a substantial and statistically significant improvement in sincerity internalization within the experimental group. The increase from a mean score of 3.12 to 4.21 reflects a strong positive shift, supported by a highly significant p-value (<0.001). In contrast, the control group exhibited only a marginal increase, which was not statistically significant. The relatively low standard deviations in both pretest and posttest scores suggest consistency in participants' responses and reinforce the reliability of the findings. These results demonstrate that the intervention model had a clear and measurable impact on participants' internalization of sincerity.

Effect Size and Practical Significance

To complement the significance testing, effect size was calculated using Cohen's d. The experimental group yielded an effect size of $d = 1.21$, indicating a large practical effect, while the control group showed a negligible effect size. This finding confirms that the observed improvement is not only statistically significant but also meaningful in practical terms. The magnitude of this effect suggests that the model contributes substantially to behavioral and attitudinal transformation.

Dimension-Specific Transformation

To examine how the intervention influenced each phase of the model, further analysis was conducted across the four dimensions of internalization. The results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Mean Scores by Internalization Dimension (Experimental Group)

Dimension	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Change
Moral Belief	3.25	4.30	+1.05
Moral Participation	3.10	4.18	+1.08
Moral Action	3.05	4.15	+1.10
Experiential Moral	3.08	4.22	+1.14

Table 2 reveals that all four dimensions experienced substantial improvement following the intervention. Notably, the highest increase occurred in the experiential moral dimension, indicating that the model was particularly effective in fostering deep emotional and spiritual internalization. The consistent improvement across all dimensions suggests that the model successfully integrates cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of moral development. This pattern of results supports

the theoretical assumption that structured progression through multiple phases enhances the depth of internalization.

Behavioral and Experiential Transformation

Observational data further corroborate the quantitative findings. Participants in the experimental group demonstrated increased frequency of voluntary actions, including helping peers without instruction, engaging in communal responsibilities without expectation of recognition, and maintaining consistency in daily practices. These behaviors emerged progressively throughout the intervention, particularly during the transition from moral participation to moral action.

Qualitative analysis identified three dominant themes reflecting participants' transformation. First, there was a clear shift from externally driven behavior to internally motivated action, where participants reported acting based on personal conviction rather than social expectation. Second, participants exhibited increased behavioral consistency, indicating that sincerity was no longer situational but became a stable pattern across contexts. Third, participants described a deepened emotional and spiritual awareness, suggesting that sincerity had evolved into an internalized experience rather than a consciously regulated behavior. These findings provide strong evidence that the final phase of the model—experiential moral—represents a genuine transformation at the identity level.

Integrated Model of Transformation

To illustrate the transformation process more clearly, Figure 1 presents the conceptual flow of internalization supported by empirical findings.

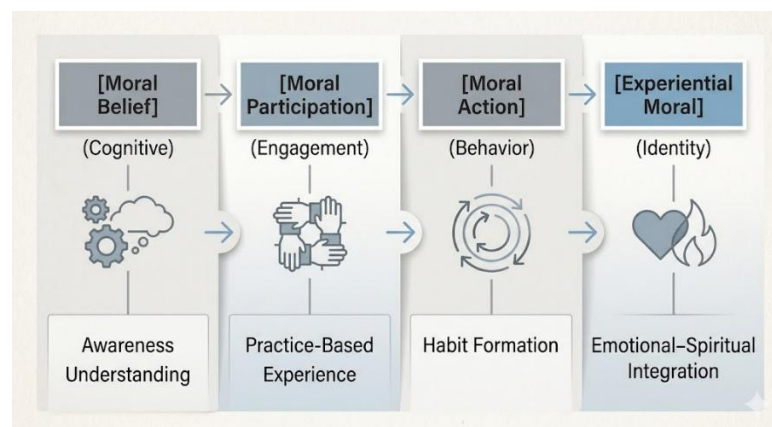


Figure 1. Integrated Process of Sincerity Internalization

Figure 1 demonstrates that the internalization of sincerity is not a static process but a dynamic progression across interconnected stages. The transition from cognitive awareness to experiential integration reflects a deepening of moral engagement, where values move from being understood to being lived. The empirical findings support this progression, as each phase contributes uniquely to the development of sincerity. This model highlights that sustainable moral transformation requires not only knowledge and practice but also emotional and spiritual internalization.

Synthesis of Findings

Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative results converge to demonstrate that the developed model effectively facilitates a comprehensive transformation of sincerity. Statistical analysis confirms significant improvements in measurable outcomes, while qualitative evidence reveals deeper experiential changes that reinforce these findings. The consistency between these two forms of data strengthens the validity of the model and confirms its capacity to bridge the gap between moral knowledge and lived moral practice. This convergence also underscores the importance of integrating structured progression with experiential engagement in moral education.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide compelling empirical evidence that the internalization of sincerity can be systematically cultivated through a structured, sequential model that integrates cognitive, participatory, behavioral, and experiential dimensions. The

significant improvement observed in the experimental group, supported by a large effect size, indicates that sincerity is not merely a metaphysical or abstract construct but a developable moral disposition when operationalized through appropriate pedagogical design. This finding advances the discourse on moral education by challenging the longstanding assumption that values such as sincerity are inherently resistant to empirical measurement and structured intervention. In contrast to traditional approaches that treat moral values as passive outcomes of instruction, this study demonstrates that moral internalization is an active and staged developmental process. This aligns with contemporary perspectives in transformative learning, which emphasize the restructuring of meaning through critical engagement and lived experience (Holdo, 2023; Fernández González & Akrivou, 2024). However, this study extends these frameworks by empirically validating a sequential model that ensures continuity across developmental stages. In doing so, it provides a conceptual bridge between abstract moral philosophy and measurable educational practice, thereby addressing a critical gap in the global literature on character education.

The magnitude of the intervention effect further reinforces the robustness of the proposed model, indicating that the observed transformation is not only statistically significant but also practically meaningful. The large effect size suggests that the intervention induces deep structural change in learners' moral orientation rather than superficial attitudinal shifts. From a theoretical standpoint, this finding partially supports Bandura's social learning theory, particularly in terms of the role of structured interaction and reinforcement in shaping behavior (Chen, 2025; Koskela & Paloniemi, 2023). However, the results also reveal the limitations of purely observational models, as the most substantial transformation occurs beyond the stages of imitation and participation. This indicates that while social learning mechanisms are necessary, they are insufficient for achieving deep internalization. Recent studies have similarly argued that behavioral engagement must be complemented by reflective and affective processes to produce lasting moral change (Mahfud & Zahriyah, 2025; Abuadas & Albikawi, 2026). The present study advances this argument by demonstrating that experiential integration functions as the decisive mechanism that consolidates moral values into stable dispositions. This finding contributes to a growing body of literature advocating for multidimensional models of moral development while offering a more operationalized and empirically grounded framework.

A particularly significant contribution of this study lies in the dimension-specific analysis, which reveals that the experiential moral phase yields the highest level of transformation among all dimensions. This suggests that the deepest level of internalization occurs when individuals move beyond action into reflective and affective integration, where values are no longer enacted but lived. This finding directly engages with longstanding critiques of Kohlberg's cognitive-developmental theory, which has been widely criticized for its limited attention to emotional and experiential dimensions of moral development (Haste, 2026). While recent extensions of moral development theory have acknowledged the role of affect and identity (Arslan et al., 2025; Juwairiyah & Fanani, 2025), empirical validation of these components remains limited. The present study addresses this gap by positioning experiential integration as the culminating stage of moral internalization and demonstrating its measurable impact. Moreover, this finding suggests a necessary theoretical shift from linear cognitive progression toward a more integrative model that incorporates emotional, spiritual, and experiential dimensions. In this sense, the study not only supports but also extends existing theoretical frameworks by redefining the endpoint of moral development as experiential embodiment rather than cognitive reasoning alone.

Another critical finding is the observed transition from externally regulated behavior to internally driven moral action, indicating that sincerity evolves into an intrinsic

motivational force. This transformation aligns with self-determination theory, which conceptualizes moral development as a progression from external regulation to autonomous motivation (Shoaib, 2023; Babatunde et al., 2025). However, the present study provides a more granular explanation of how this transition occurs by identifying the mediating role of structured participation and independent action. Unlike previous studies that report intrinsic motivation as an outcome without specifying its developmental pathway, this research demonstrates that intrinsic sincerity emerges through repeated cycles of engagement, reflection, and autonomous enactment. This finding also challenges the effectiveness of conventional moral instruction that relies heavily on external reinforcement, suggesting that such approaches may inhibit rather than facilitate internalization. Recent empirical work has highlighted similar tensions between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation in educational settings (Tian & Tang, 2025; Alavi, 2024), yet few studies have proposed concrete mechanisms for resolving this tension. By offering a structured pathway toward intrinsic motivation, this study contributes a significant conceptual advancement to the literature on moral psychology and education.

The consistency of behavioral transformation observed in this study further indicates that sincerity has been internalized at the level of moral identity, rather than remaining a situational or context-dependent behavior. This finding supports contemporary theories of moral identity, which argue that deeply internalized values become integral to one's self-concept and guide behavior across diverse contexts (Fernández González & Akrivou, 2024; Chen, 2025). However, the present study extends this perspective by demonstrating that moral identity formation is not an isolated outcome but the result of a structured developmental sequence. In contrast to previous research that treats identity formation as an emergent or spontaneous process, this study provides empirical evidence that identity-level internalization can be systematically cultivated through intentional educational design. Furthermore, the findings suggest that behavioral consistency is closely linked to experiential integration, reinforcing the argument that identity formation requires more than repeated practice. This insight has important implications for both theory and practice, as it highlights the necessity of integrating reflective and affective components into moral education programs. It also positions the proposed model as a viable framework for fostering durable moral identity in educational settings.

The effectiveness of the model is also closely linked to the contextual environment in which it is implemented, particularly the holistic ecosystem of Islamic boarding schools. The integration of daily routines, communal living, and spiritual practices creates a conducive environment for reinforcing moral values and facilitating continuous engagement. This finding aligns with ecological theories of learning, which emphasize the role of environment in shaping behavior and identity (Jamil, 2024; Koskela & Paloniemi, 2023). However, this study moves beyond descriptive accounts of contextual influence by empirically demonstrating how structured interventions interact with environmental factors to produce measurable outcomes. This suggests that the success of moral internalization models is contingent not only on their design but also on their alignment with institutional culture. At the same time, this raises important questions regarding the transferability of the model to non-faith-based or less structured environments. While the core principles of the model may remain applicable, adaptation may be required to account for differences in contextual support systems. This highlights the need for future research to explore the scalability and adaptability of the model across diverse educational settings.

Despite its contributions, this study acknowledges several limitations that warrant critical reflection. The quasi-experimental design, while methodologically robust, does not fully eliminate potential confounding variables, particularly those related to individual differences and institutional dynamics. Additionally, the duration of the intervention may

not be sufficient to capture long-term sustainability of moral internalization, which is inherently a gradual and ongoing process. The reliance on self-reported measures, although complemented by observational and qualitative data, also introduces the possibility of response bias. These limitations are consistent with challenges identified in recent educational research (Li et al., 2023; Willems et al., 2023), suggesting that further studies should employ longitudinal designs and multi-site sampling to enhance generalizability. Nevertheless, the convergence of quantitative and qualitative findings in this study provides strong evidence of the model's effectiveness. Importantly, these limitations do not undermine the validity of the findings but rather indicate directions for future refinement and expansion of the research.

In the broader landscape of global educational research, this study positions itself as a significant advancement in the theory and practice of moral internalization by offering a novel, integrative, and empirically validated model. Unlike previous studies that address isolated aspects of moral development, this research introduces a coherent framework that systematically connects belief formation, participatory engagement, independent action, and experiential integration. Theoretically, it contributes a new paradigm that redefines moral internalization as a dynamic and sequential process culminating in experiential embodiment. Practically, it provides educators with a scalable and adaptable model for fostering deep and sustainable character transformation. By explicitly demonstrating how sincerity can be operationalized, measured, and cultivated, this study challenges the prevailing dichotomy between moral abstraction and empirical rigor. In doing so, it not only fills a critical gap in the literature but also opens new pathways for interdisciplinary research at the intersection of moral psychology, education, and spirituality. Ultimately, the study advances the field by shifting the focus of moral education from transmission to transformation, thereby offering a more holistic and impactful approach to character development.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the internalization of sincerity can be systematically cultivated through a structured and sequential model that integrates cognitive understanding, participatory engagement, independent action, and experiential transformation. The significant improvements observed across all dimensions, reinforced by a large effect size, confirm that sincerity is not merely an abstract moral ideal but a measurable and developable construct when embedded within a coherent and experience-driven pedagogical framework. Crucially, the findings reveal that the deepest level of internalization occurs at the experiential stage, where sincerity transitions from externally regulated behavior into an intrinsic and enduring moral identity. This study provides one of the first empirically validated sequential models of sincerity internalization that explicitly integrates experiential transformation as the culminating phase, thereby addressing a longstanding gap between theoretical conceptualization and practical implementation in moral education. By establishing a clear developmental pathway from belief to lived experience, the study advances the understanding of how moral values evolve from cognitive awareness into stable and self-sustaining dispositions.

From a broader scholarly perspective, this research contributes a new paradigm to the global discourse on character education by redefining moral internalization as a dynamic, integrative, and experience-driven process rather than a static outcome of instruction. The proposed model not only extends existing theories of moral development but also offers a scalable and adaptable framework for educational practice, particularly in contexts where ethical and spiritual values play a central role. While the findings confirm the effectiveness of structured interventions within supportive institutional environments, they also underscore the importance of contextual alignment and sustained engagement in achieving long-term transformation. Future research should explore longitudinal applications and cross-contextual validation to strengthen the generalizability of the model. Ultimately, this study shifts the paradigm of moral education from symbolic instruction

toward measurable and transformative practice, positioning education as a process that not only transmits values but fundamentally reshapes moral identity and lived experience.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

Syahrani conceived and designed the study, developed the research framework, conducted data collection and analysis, and drafted the original manuscript. Mahyuddin Barni contributed to the conceptual refinement of the study, provided critical revisions on theoretical and methodological aspects, and supervised the overall research process. Ahmad Khairuddin participated in data validation, supported the interpretation of findings, and contributed to manuscript editing and final approval. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

REFERENCES

- Abuadas, M., & Albikawi, Z. (2026). AI ethical awareness and academic integrity in higher education: Development and validation of a new scale. *Ethics & Behavior*, 36(2), 125–142. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10508422.2025.2511336>
- Alam, A. (2022). Mapping a sustainable future through conceptualization of transformative learning framework, education for sustainable development, critical reflection, and responsible citizenship: An exploration of pedagogies for twenty-first century learning. *ECS Transactions*, 107(1), 9827. <https://doi.org/10.1149/10701.9827ecst>
- Alavi, S. B. (2024). The making of an authentic leader's internalized moral perspective: The role of internalized ethical philosophies in the development of authentic leaders' moral identity. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 190(1), 77–92. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-023-05442-9>
- Allefdawi, N. A., Ali, N. A., & Alharrasi, S. (2026). Educators' competence in managing type 1 diabetes in schools: A quasi-experimental intervention study. *SAGE Open Nursing*, 12, 23779608261419908. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23779608261419908>
- Alturaiki, S. M., Gaballah, M. K., & Arab, R. A. E. (2025). Enhancing nursing students' engagement and critical thinking in anatomy and physiology through gamified teaching: A non-equivalent quasi-experimental study. *Nursing Reports*, 15(9). <https://doi.org/10.3390/nursrep15090333>
- Arslan, A., Yener, S., & Akturan, A. (2025). Moral identity and the ethics of digital piracy: A self-regulatory model of contextual reasoning and religious norms. *Journal of Information, Communication and Ethics in Society*, 24(1), 145–174. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JICES-05-2025-0097>
- Babatunde, T. B., Akinlade, B. K., & Ajayi, M. D. (2025). Teachers as moral exemplars: Analyzing the role of educators in shaping ethical behavior among students. *International Journal of Education, Management Sciences and Professional Studies*, 1(2), 368–384.
- Barile, S., Ciasullo, M. V., Testa, M., & La Sala, A. (2023). An integrated learning framework of corporate training system: A grounded theory approach. *The TQM Journal*, 35(5), 1106–1134. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TQM-03-2022-0090>
- Chen, C. (2025). Cultivating motivation in informal learning via YouTube: Effects of reinforcement learning-based and social learning-based approaches. *Learning and Motivation*, 90, 102122. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lmot.2025.102122>
- Dellafore, F., Saba, A., Collaro, C., & Artioli, G. (2026). Artificial intelligence in qualitative research: Insights from experts via reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 36(2–3), 145–165. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10497323251389800>
- Fernández González, M. J., & Akrivou, K. (2024). The 'person of moral growth': A model of moral development based on personalist virtue ethics. *Cogent Education*, 11(1), 2418785. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2418785>
- Haste, H. (2026). Morality stories: How narratives define explanations of ethics. *Culture & Psychology*, 32(1), 3–21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X251315736>
- Holdo, M. (2023). Critical reflection: John Dewey's relational view of transformative learning. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 21(1), 9–25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15413446221086727>

- Jahrami, H., Saif, Z., Trabelsi, K., Bragazzi, N. L., & Vitiello, M. V. (2023). Internal consistency and structural validity of the nomophobia questionnaire (NMP-Q) and its translations: A systematic review with meta-analysis. *Heliyon*, 9(4). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e15464>
- Jamil, M. W. (2024). Exploring moral development in Islamic education: A case study. *Jahan-e-Tahqeeq*, 7(2), 737–749.
- Juwairiyah, J., & Fanani, Z. (2025). Integration of Islamic values in learning methods: Building character and spirituality in the digital era. *Al-Wijdān: Journal of Islamic Education Studies*, 10(1), 113–130. <https://doi.org/10.58788/alwijdn.v10i1.6215>
- Kornberger, M., & Leixnering, S. (2025). Moral learning in organizations: An integrative framework for organizational ethics. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 201(2), 253–264. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-025-05984-0>
- Koskela, I.-M., & Paloniemi, R. (2023). Learning and agency for sustainability transformations: Building on Bandura's theory of human agency. *Environmental Education Research*, 29(1), 164–178. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2022.2102153>
- Leach Sankofa, N. (2022). Transformativist measurement development methodology: A mixed methods approach to scale construction. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 16(3), 307–327. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15586898211033698>
- Li, Y. R., Zhang, Z. H., Li, W., Wang, P., Li, S. W., Su, D., & Zhang, T. (2023). Effectiveness and learning experience from undergraduate nursing students in surgical nursing skills course: A quasi-experimental study about blended learning. *BMC Nursing*, 22(1), 396. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-023-01537-w>
- Mahfud, M., & Zahriyah, S. (2025). Internalizing Islamic values in students: The role of character education in building morals and ethics. *Ma'alim: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 6(1), 93–105. <https://doi.org/10.21154/maalim.v6i1.10150>
- Obizue, M. N., Olaobaju, S. S., & Oragwu, D. C. (2025). Moral education and the role of families in shaping values for sustainable national development. *International Journal of Humanities, Economic Development and Contemporary Studies*, 1(2), 380–393.
- Ozuem, W., Willis, M., & Howell, K. (2022). Thematic analysis without paradox: Sensemaking and context. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 25(1), 143–157. <https://doi.org/10.1108/QMR-07-2021-0092>
- Shoaib, A. (2023). Student perceptions of teacher immediacy, credibility, and love of pedagogy in enhancing learner engagement and motivation in higher EFL education. *Journal of Language Teaching*, 3(10), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.54475/jlt.2023.024>
- Syahrul, A., Mustami, K., & Ondeng, S. (2025). Research and development (R&D) and evaluation research: A comparative analysis of methodologies and applications in educational and technological innovation. *Agency Journal of Management and Business*, 5(1), 105–111. <https://doi.org/10.54065/agency.5.1.2025.469>
- Tian, X., & Tang, Y. (2025). From awareness to behavior: The empirical effects of real problem-oriented learning in civic and moral education. *SAGE Open*, 15(2), 21582440251338948. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440251338948>
- Willems, I., Verbestel, V., Calders, P., Lapauw, B., & De Craemer, M. (2023). Test-retest reliability and internal consistency of a newly developed questionnaire to assess explanatory variables of 24-h movement behaviors in adults. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(5). <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20054407>
- Zenk, L., Hynek, N., Edelmann, N., Virkar, S., Parycek, P., & Steiner, G. (2021). Exploring motivation to engage in intraorganizational knowledge sharing: A mixed-methods approach. *Kybernetes*, 51(13), 18–32. <https://doi.org/10.1108/K-12-2020-0868>