

RELIGIOUS HABITUS FORMATION THROUGH MADRASAH-PESANTREN COLLABORATION: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This study addresses the limited integration between formal Islamic education (madrasah) and pesantren in shaping students' religious character, which remains insufficiently explored in the sociology of Islamic education. Existing studies tend to examine these institutions separately, with little attention to how their collaboration contributes to the formation of religious habitus through sustained social processes. This research aims to analyze how madrasah-pesantren collaboration facilitates the formation of students' religious habitus. A qualitative case study was conducted at MTs Al-Ma'arif Rakit, involving its partnership with two Islamic boarding schools. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The findings indicate that collaboration between madrasah and pesantren creates an integrated social education system in which religious values are internalized through habituation, role modeling, and continuous social interaction. The formation of religious character operates across three interconnected dimensions: collective moral consciousness (Durkheim), habitus formation and reproduction (Bourdieu), and social self-construction (Mead). Notably, the study finds that religious habitus is reproduced not only among boarding students but also among non-residential students through shared social environments. This study contributes theoretically by extending the concept of religious habitus within a collaborative educational context, and practically by proposing a madrasah-pesantren model for integrative Islamic character education.

Keywords: Religious Habitus; Madrasah-Pesantren Collaboration; Islamic Character Education; Sociology Of Education; Qualitative Case Study

A. Introduction

The development of students' religious character remains a persistent challenge in contemporary education, particularly within the context of Islamic education. While formal education systems have increasingly emphasized cognitive achievement and academic performance, the integration of moral and spiritual dimensions into everyday educational practices remains limited (Firmansyah et al., 2023; Unser, 2022). This imbalance indicates that the formation of religious values is not yet fully embedded as a lived social process within educational institutions.

From a sociological perspective, education functions not only as a site of knowledge transmission but also as a mechanism of moral socialization and value reproduction (Durkheim, 1956). In this regard, Islamic educational institutions such as madrasahs and pesantren play a strategic role in shaping students' religious identity and dispositions. However, these institutions often operate within different structural and pedagogical

frameworks, which may limit their effectiveness in fostering a coherent and sustained process of religious habitus formation.

Islamic boarding schools, as traditional Islamic educational institutions, are known for their ability to maintain a balance between spiritual, moral, and social dimensions. The boarding school education system not only teaches religious knowledge but also instills religious habits through worship, discipline, and role modeling (Mustain & Bakar, 2025; Nursobah et al., 2025). The formation of religious character must go through six stages of gradual internalization of values, starting from instillation to acculturation, all of which are realized through an intensive social process (Mauludin et al., 2025; Nursobah et al., 2025). In line with this, explain that the integration between dormitories and learning spaces in Islamic boarding schools serves as a means of transforming classical educational culture, which not only strengthens the mastery of classical Islamic texts but also shapes the spiritual and social habits of students.

Meanwhile, madrasahs as formal educational institutions face different challenges. Firmansyah et al. (2025) and Syarifah et al. (2025) show that madrasahs have great potential in developing religious values, but are often limited by the national curriculum structure that emphasizes academic aspects. On the other hand, Nursobah et al. (2025) emphasize the importance of integrating religious values into formal learning so that Islamic education does not lose its spiritual meaning. Collaboration between madrasahs and Islamic boarding schools is a strategic solution to overcome these limitations, combining the academic strengths of madrasahs and the moral strengths of Islamic boarding schools in a single character building system (Subairi et al., 2025).

One interesting collaboration model is that carried out by MTs Al-Ma'arif Rakit Banjarnegara with two partner Islamic boarding schools, namely Pondok Pesantren Darul Falah and Pondok Pesantren Minhidu At-Taqwa. This madrasah does not have its own dormitory, but 70% of its students participate in boarding programs at partner Islamic boarding schools. Pesantren Darul Falah, led by KH. Mundzir Al-Ghozali, focuses on teaching classical Islamic texts and memorizing the Qur'an, while Pesantren Minhidu At-Taqwa, led by KH. Khamid Ma'mun, emphasizes the study of tafsir, classical texts, and Nahdliyyin practices. This collaboration reflects the synergy between formal and non-formal education in shaping students' religious habits. However, preliminary studies show that there are still obstacles, such as differences in curriculum, overlapping schedules, and difficulties in integrated character evaluation.

Within the framework of educational sociology, the relationship between madrasahs and Islamic boarding schools can be understood as a complex social and cultural process. Durkheim (1956) refers to education as a mechanism of moral socialization that maintains social solidarity. Bourdieu & Passeron (1990) emphasize that education is an arena of social reproduction that produces habitus, namely dispositions of values, perceptions, and actions that are formed through social experience. In the context of pesantren, religious habitus is formed through collective habits such as congregational prayers, tadarus, and halaqah kitab kuning (Firmansyah et al., 2025; Mustain & Bakar, 2025). Ivemark & Ambrose (2021) and Çelik (2021) explain that habitus also plays an adaptive role in new social environments, so

that students who interact in two education systems (madrasah and pesantren) experience the formation of a dynamic dual identity.

Another study by Mousavi & Vidal (2025) found contradictory organizational habitus in elite Islamic schools in Iran, namely a clash between conservative religious orientation and modern professionalism. This phenomenon is relevant to the context of MTs Al-Ma'arif Rakit, where the integration of academic and spiritual values still faces paradigmatic tensions. Ratnasih et al. (2025) in their study of zuhud practices in modern Islamic boarding schools, show that female students negotiate with modern consumerist culture without losing their spirituality and a form of habitus adaptation that reflects the socio-religious resilience of Islamic education.

On the other hand, Unser (2022) and Tohet et al. (2025) emphasize that social inequality and students' religious backgrounds also influence the effectiveness of religious education. This finding is reinforced by the research of Pattinasarany et al. (2022) which explains that the social environment of schools plays a major role in shaping students' religious values and tolerance. In the same context, Taufiq et al. (2024) show that the integration of Islamic values in the educational environment requires the active role of the school community as a reinforcer of the religious social structure. Thus, the collaboration between madrasahs and Islamic boarding schools not only shapes individual religiosity but also strengthens social networks based on religious values.

Furthermore, research by Yaqin & Jazilurrahman (2025) reveals that integrating boarding schools into the classical Islamic text learning system increases the effectiveness of value transfer and spiritual understanding. Research by Ratnasih et al. (2025) shows the importance of social interaction in maintaining a balance between traditional Islamic values and the challenges of modernity. ASSRORI et al. (2025) highlight that collaboration between Islamic educational institutions is also an institutional adaptation strategy to respond to contemporary socio-religious dynamics, while Hadi et al. (2025) and Katni et al. (2025) emphasize the social role of teachers and kyai as mediators of values in the moral formation of students.

Based on the results of these studies, it can be concluded that Islamic education plays a dual role: as a means of shaping religious values and as an arena for social negotiation between modernity and tradition. However, most studies still highlight Islamic education from a pedagogical or managerial perspective, with few conducting an in-depth study of the collaboration between madrasahs and Islamic boarding schools from the perspective of educational sociology. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap by analyzing how the collaboration between MTs Al-Ma'arif Rakit and its partner pesantren shapes the religious habitus of students, as seen from social interactions, the process of value internalization, and the reproduction of religious culture.

Building on this gap, this study aims to analyze how collaboration between madrasah and pesantren contributes to the formation of students' religious habitus as a social and cultural process. Specifically, this research focuses on examining the dynamics of value internalization, social interaction, and the reproduction of religious practices within a collaborative educational setting.

To achieve this objective, a qualitative case study approach was employed at MTs Al-Ma'arif Rakit and its partner pesantren. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles et al. (2014). This approach enables an in-depth understanding of how religious habitus is constructed through the interplay between formal and non-formal Islamic educational institutions.

B. Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a single case study design to examine the formation of students' religious habitus within the collaborative framework between madrasah and pesantren. This approach was selected to capture the complexity of social interactions, institutional practices, and processes of value internalization that occur in a natural educational setting. Qualitative inquiry enables an in-depth understanding of participants' perspectives and lived experiences Creswell (2021), while a case study design is particularly appropriate for exploring contemporary social phenomena in which the boundaries between context and practice are intertwined (Yin, 2018). In this study, the case is understood as a socially embedded process through which religious values are constructed, reproduced, and negotiated through institutional collaboration.

The research was conducted at MTs Al-Ma'arif Rakit, Banjarnegara, along with its two partner Islamic boarding schools, namely Pondok Pesantren Darul Falah and Pondok Pesantren Minhidu At-Taqwa. The site was selected purposively based on the existence of an established collaboration integrating formal (madrasah) and non-formal (pesantren) educational systems. This integrative context provides a relevant setting to examine how religious habitus is formed through sustained interaction between institutional structures and everyday practices.

The participants in this study consisted of 18 informants, selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in collaborative educational activities. The participants included the head of the madrasah, vice principal for curriculum, Islamic Education teachers, pesantren caregivers (ustadz), assistant teachers, and students, both boarding (santri) and non-boarding. The selection criteria included: (1) active involvement in the madrasah-pesantren collaboration, (2) a minimum of one year of experience within the institution, and (3) willingness to participate in the study. The inclusion of diverse participant categories was intended to capture multiple perspectives on institutional integration, value internalization, and social interaction processes. Data collection was continued until thematic saturation was reached, indicated by the recurrence of similar patterns and the absence of new analytical categories (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To enhance transparency regarding participant characteristics, the distribution and roles of informants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Characteristics of Research Participants

No	Participant Category	Number	Selection Criteria	Role in Collaboration
1	Head of Madrasah	1	≥1 year experience	Institutional policy and leadership
2	Vice Principal (Curriculum)	1	Curriculum responsibility	Coordination of integration
3	Islamic Education Teachers	3	Active teaching role	Value integration in learning
4	Pesantren Caregivers (Ustadz)	3	Direct student guidance	Religious habituation
5	Assistant Teachers	2	Supporting role	Activity facilitation
6	Boarding Students	5	Active santri	Intensive habitus formation
7	Non-boarding Students	3	Non-resident	Indirect value internalization
Total		18		

Data were collected over a period of approximately three months (March-May 2025) through three main techniques: participant observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Participant observation was conducted to examine daily religious practices and social interactions within both madrasah and pesantren environments, including congregational prayers, Qur'an recitation, classroom learning, and discipline routines. In-depth interviews were conducted with all participant categories, with each session lasting between 30 and 60 minutes, focusing on participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of collaboration and its role in shaping students' religious character. Document analysis included institutional records such as memoranda of understanding (MoU), curriculum documents, activity schedules, and student character assessment reports. These techniques were applied triangulatively to enhance the credibility of the data. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information across participant groups, while technique triangulation compared findings from observation, interviews, and documentation. In addition, member checking was carried out to ensure that the researcher's interpretations accurately reflected participants' perspectives. The overall timeline of the research process is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2 Data Collection Timeline

Phase	Time Period	Activity
Preparation	March 2025	Initial access and preliminary observation
Observation	March-May 2025	Daily religious and social activities
Interviews	May 7-16, 2025	In-depth interviews with informants
Documentation	March-May 2025	Collection of institutional documents
Validation	May 2025	Member checking and data verification

Data analysis was conducted using a thematic analysis approach integrated with the interactive model of Miles et al. (2014). The analysis proceeded systematically through several stages. First, data familiarization was carried out by transcribing interview data and reviewing field notes and documents. Second, an open coding process was conducted to identify meaningful units related to collaboration practices, religious activities, and student

behavior. Third, these codes were organized through axial coding into broader analytical categories, including institutional integration, religious habituation, and social interaction. Fourth, selective coding was employed to synthesize these categories into core themes that explain the formation of religious habitus, namely: (1) integration as a social education system, (2) the development of religious habitus through habituation and role modeling, and (3) the formation of the social self through social interaction. Finally, the themes were interpreted using the theoretical perspectives of Durkheim, Bourdieu, and Mead to explain how moral values, social practices, and symbolic interactions contribute to the construction of students' religious identity. In this study, the researcher acted as the primary instrument in data collection and analysis. Therefore, researcher reflexivity was maintained throughout the research process to minimize potential bias. Given the researcher's background in Islamic education, continuous self-reflection was conducted through field notes and critical evaluation of interpretations. The researcher also compared data across multiple sources and verified findings with participants to ensure that the analysis remained grounded in empirical evidence.

Through this methodological framework, the study provides a systematic and credible account of how collaboration between madrasah and pesantren shapes students' religious habitus as a socially constructed and contextually embedded process.

C. Finding and Discussion

Finding

Institutional Collaboration as an Integrated Educational System

The findings indicate that the collaboration between MTs Al-Ma'arif Rakit and its partner pesantren (Darul Falah and Minhidu At-Taqwa) has developed into an integrated educational system that combines formal and non-formal learning structures. This collaboration is formally regulated through a memorandum of understanding (MoU) covering tahfidz, tahsin, kitab studies, and character-building programs. More than 70% of students are actively involved in pesantren education, indicating a strong institutional linkage.

From an organizational perspective, this collaboration is not merely administrative but reflects a shared educational vision oriented toward the integration of knowledge and moral formation. As expressed by the head of the madrasah:

"Students learn not only to understand religion, but also to practice it." (Ning Hidayanti, May 7, 2025)

This statement suggests that collaboration functions as a strategy to extend religious learning beyond the limitations of classroom instruction, positioning pesantren as a complementary space for value internalization. However, the integration process is not without challenges. Curriculum coordination, particularly in scheduling, remains an issue:

"Pesantren activities... often conflict with school schedules." (Agus Sulaiman, May 8, 2025)

Despite these constraints, both institutions maintain a commitment to integrating religious values across subjects, indicating that collaboration operates simultaneously at structural and pedagogical levels.

Religious Habituation and the Formation of Habitus

The data show that students' religious character is primarily formed through habitual practices embedded in daily routines, rather than formal instruction alone. Observations reveal structured religious activities such as morning recitation, congregational prayers, and regular Qur'an memorization, which are consistently practiced in both madrasah and pesantren environments.

These practices are reinforced through role modeling by teachers and ustadz, as highlighted by one pesantren caregiver:

"Santri cannot be shaped by lectures alone... they must be accustomed." (Musyafa, May 10, 2025)

This finding indicates that habituation and exemplification function as central mechanisms in shaping students' behavioral dispositions. Students themselves confirmed this experiential transformation:

"After boarding school, I became more disciplined and learned how to value time." (Fikri, May 11, 2025)

Importantly, the internalization of values extends beyond cognitive understanding into embodied practices, such as discipline in worship, respectful communication, and adherence to social norms. This suggests that religious character formation occurs through repetitive, socially reinforced actions that gradually become part of students' everyday conduct.

Social Interaction and the Formation of Religious Identity

Another significant finding is that students' religious identity is shaped through intensive social interaction within the collaborative environment. The relationship between teachers, ustadz, and students creates a shared moral framework that guides behavior and reinforces value consistency across institutional settings.

Teachers and pesantren caregivers maintain continuous communication, particularly in monitoring student character:

"We have a communication system... to monitor student behavior." (Maftuqul Aqli, May 9, 2025)

This interactional network ensures that value transmission is not fragmented but sustained across contexts. Students learn not only through formal instruction but also through observation, participation, and ongoing social engagement. Interestingly, the influence of pesantren values extends beyond boarding students. Non-resident students also demonstrate similar behavioral patterns:

"Our madrasah is like a small pesantren." (Nur Laila Salsabila, May 15, 2025)

This indicates that religious values are socially reproduced within the broader educational environment, allowing patterns of behavior to spread horizontally through peer interaction and institutional culture.

Supporting Structures and Daily Religious Practices

The integration of madrasah and pesantren is further reinforced by structured institutional practices that sustain the process of value internalization. Routine activities such as morning recitation, congregational prayer, and weekly religious lectures create a consistent framework for the cultivation of religious discipline.

Table 3 presents the pattern of collaborative daily activities that support this process

No	Time	Activities	Person in Charge
1.	06.30-06.45	Morning Recitation & Prayer	Islamic Education Teacher
2.	09.15	Rotating Dhuha Prayer	Student Council & Vice Principal for Student Affairs
3.	11.45	Noon Prayer in Congregation	Religious Education & Guidance Counselor
4.	Jumat 09.00	Student Religious Lecture	Islamic Education Teacher
5.	Jumat 13.30	Character Building & Tahsin	Islamic boarding school teacher

In addition to formal programs, informal practices also play a crucial role. Students are accustomed to greeting teachers respectfully, maintaining polite language, and engaging in Qur'an reading during breaks. Observations in pesantren environments further reveal disciplined routines, including early waking, structured study sessions, and collective worship. These findings indicate that the formation of religious character is supported not only by formal structures but also by everyday social practices that reinforce values in a continuous and lived manner.

Summary of Findings

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the collaboration between madrasah and pesantren creates a multi-layered educational environment characterized by the integration of institutional structures, habitual practices, and social interactions. This environment enables the continuous internalization and reproduction of religious values in students' daily lives. More specifically, the findings highlight: institutional integration through formal collaboration, religious habituation through structured daily practices, social interaction that sustains value transmission, the diffusion of religious values beyond boarding contexts. These elements collectively contribute to the formation of students' religious habitus as a socially embedded and continuously reproduced process.

Discussion

This study demonstrates that the collaboration between MTs Al-Ma'arif Rakit and its partner pesantren constitutes a complex social process that cannot be reduced to institutional cooperation alone. Rather, it reflects a multi-layered educational system in which values, practices, and interactions operate simultaneously in shaping students' religious character. To understand this process, the findings are interpreted through the perspectives of Durkheim, Bourdieu, and Mead, which together provide a comprehensive sociological framework.

From a structural perspective, the collaboration between madrasah and pesantren can be understood as a form of moral integration within the educational system. Durkheim (1956) emphasizes that education functions to transmit collective values and maintain social cohesion. In this study, routine religious practices, such as congregational prayers, recitations, and collective rituals, function as mechanisms for strengthening what Durkheim refers to as the collective conscience. These practices are not merely pedagogical activities, but represent moral structures that regulate behavior and create a shared sense of belonging among students. In this

sense, the madrasah operates as a “moral community” in which religious norms are continuously reproduced through institutional arrangements. However, the findings also indicate that this structural integration is not entirely seamless. The presence of scheduling conflicts and curriculum misalignment suggests that institutional collaboration involves ongoing negotiation rather than stable equilibrium. This reveals a critical dimension often overlooked in previous studies, namely that value integration in Islamic education is shaped not only by shared ideals but also by practical constraints and organizational tensions. Therefore, the collaboration model should be understood as a dynamic process rather than a fully consolidated system.

At the cultural level, the formation of students’ religious character can be more precisely explained through Bourdieu’s concept of habitus. The findings show that students’ behaviors—such as discipline in worship, respectful interaction, and adherence to social norms—emerge not primarily from formal instruction, but from repeated social practices embedded in everyday routines. In Bourdieu’s terms, these practices gradually form a religious habitus, that is, a system of durable dispositions that guide perception and action.

Importantly, this study extends Bourdieu’s framework by showing that habitus formation occurs across institutional boundaries. The integration of madrasah and pesantren creates overlapping social fields in which values are continuously reinforced. As a result, religious dispositions are not confined to the pesantren environment but are reproduced within the madrasah context. This explains why non-resident students also exhibit similar behavioral patterns, indicating that habitus can spread horizontally through social interaction and shared institutional culture. Nevertheless, this process also raises critical questions regarding the uniformity of value internalization. The extent to which all students internalize religious dispositions in the same way remains uncertain, particularly given differences in background, motivation, and level of engagement. This suggests that habitus formation, while powerful, is not entirely deterministic and may vary across individuals.

From an interactional perspective, the formation of students’ religious identity can be interpreted through Mead’s theory of the social self. The findings indicate that identity formation occurs through continuous interaction between students, teachers, and pesantren caregivers. Through processes of observation, imitation, and role-taking, students gradually construct a sense of self that aligns with the moral expectations of their environment. In this context, teachers and ustadz function as “significant others” whose behaviors provide reference points for students’ self-construction. Repeated interaction within a structured religious environment enables students to internalize what Mead describes as the generalized other, namely the internal representation of collective norms and values. This process explains how students develop not only behavioral conformity but also a sense of moral responsibility.

However, the interactional process is also shaped by power relations and institutional authority. The strong emphasis on discipline and conformity may limit the space for critical reflection or individual interpretation of religious values. This indicates that while the collaborative model is effective in producing behavioral consistency, it may also require further development to accommodate more dialogical and reflective forms of learning.

Taken together, the perspectives of Durkheim, Bourdieu, and Mead reveal that the success of the madrasah-pesantren collaboration lies in the synergy between structure, culture,

and interaction. Structural arrangements provide the framework for value transmission, habitual practices ensure the reproduction of dispositions, and social interactions enable the internalization of identity. These three dimensions are mutually reinforcing and form an integrated system of religious character formation. In relation to previous studies, this research confirms that the integration of Islamic educational institutions contributes significantly to character development (Hadi et al., 2025; Mustain & Bakar, 2025). However, this study offers an important extension by highlighting the role of non-resident students and the diffusion of pesantren values beyond physical boarding contexts. This finding suggests that the influence of pesantren should not be understood solely in spatial terms, but as part of a broader social network of value transmission.

Furthermore, this study introduces the conceptual notion of the madrasah as a “social pesantren,” namely an educational space that reproduces pesantren values through institutional culture and social interaction. This concept provides a new perspective in the sociology of Islamic education by bridging the dichotomy between formal and traditional educational systems. In practical terms, the findings imply that effective character education requires not only curriculum integration but also the creation of a supportive social environment. Strengthening communication between teachers and pesantren caregivers, as well as developing inclusive programs for non-resident students, are essential to ensure the continuity of value internalization. At the same time, attention should be given to addressing structural challenges, such as curriculum synchronization and time management, to enhance the sustainability of the collaboration model.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The focus on a single madrasah and two partner pesantren limits the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the study does not fully explore the perspectives of parents or the broader community, which may also play a significant role in the process of value formation. Future research could adopt a more extensive ethnographic approach to capture the complexity of social interactions and explore variations in students’ experiences across different contexts. Overall, this study confirms that the collaboration between madrasah and pesantren represents a dynamic model of Islamic education that integrates knowledge, values, and social practices. The formation of religious character emerges from a layered process involving moral structures, habitual practices, and symbolic interactions. This model not only strengthens students’ religiosity but also demonstrates the potential of integrated educational systems in responding to the challenges of contemporary society.

D. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the collaboration between MTs Al-Ma’arif Rakit and its partner pesantren (Darul Falah and Minhidu At-Taqwa) constitutes an integrated Islamic educational system that combines formal and non-formal learning structures. The findings show that students’ religious character is formed through the interplay of institutional integration, habitual religious practices, and continuous social interaction. These processes enable the internalization and reproduction of religious values in a sustained and socially embedded manner.

This study contributes to the sociology of Islamic education by demonstrating that the formation of religious character can be understood as a multi-layered social process involving

structural, cultural, and interactional dimensions. Durkheim's perspective explains the role of educational institutions in maintaining moral cohesion, Bourdieu's concept of habitus elucidates the process of value internalization through daily practices, and Mead's theory highlights the role of social interaction in shaping religious identity. In addition, this study introduces the notion of the madrasah as a "social pesantren," extending existing discussions on the integration of formal and traditional Islamic education.

Practically, the findings suggest that effective character education in Islamic institutions requires not only curriculum integration but also strong inter-institutional collaboration and a supportive social environment. Strengthening coordination between madrasah and pesantren, particularly in curriculum alignment and scheduling, is essential to ensure the sustainability of the collaboration model. Furthermore, the inclusion of non-resident students in religious habituation programs is important to extend the impact of pesantren values beyond the boarding context.

This study is limited to a single madrasah and two partner pesantren, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the study does not explore the perspectives of parents and the wider community, which may influence the process of value internalization. Future research is recommended to adopt a broader comparative or ethnographic approach, involving multiple institutions and social actors, in order to capture the complexity of religious character formation in diverse educational contexts.

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