

Integration of Islamic values in Civic Education learning: A framework for character development in Islamic boarding schools

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Abstract

Globalisation's pervasive influence has significantly transformed societal norms, particularly affecting students who are vulnerable to value erosion. Quality civic education that integrates religious values is imperative in Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*) contexts to preserve positive character development. This qualitative case study examines the integration of Islamic values in Civic Education at MTs Azzainiyah, Sukabumi, Indonesia, and proposes a five-dimensional conceptual framework that moves beyond descriptive accounts to reveal operational mechanisms of integration. Through six-month fieldwork involving semi-structured interviews with 24 participants, 24 classroom observations, and analysis of 42 documents, the study identifies five synergistic dimensions: (1) curriculum alignment embedding values in lesson plans and syllabi, (2) pedagogical enactment through differentiated and cooperative learning strategies, (3) textual linking connecting Pancasila principles with Qur'anic verses and hadith, (4) school culture habituation via daily Islamic-civic rituals, and (5) civic virtue projects enabling practical value application through community service. Findings show that systematic integration strengthens students' civic understanding and fosters Islamic character, with 80% of students reporting frequent, conscious connections between faith and citizenship responsibilities. However, significant challenges persist: gaps in teacher professional development, limited infrastructure and resources, variability in student knowledge, curriculum time pressures, and assessment difficulties. The study contributes an empirically derived, mechanism-based model addressing the knowledge gap in understanding how religious and civic education synthesis operates in practice. Implications include targeted teacher training programmes, integrated curriculum resource development, and policy frameworks supporting values-based education in pluralistic societies.

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Introduction

Education serves as the cornerstone of character formation, a role that is increasingly critical iexpands access to knowledge and cross-cultural understanding (Basri & Abdullah,



2024), it also threatens the erosion of values and cultural homogenization (Benazir & Murdiono, 2019), particularly affecting adolescents, who are vulnerable to external influences that conflict with adolescents who are vulnerable to external influences that are inconsistent with traditional ethical frameworks (Yusoff, 2025). In response, education must transcend mere knowledge transmission to function as comprehensive character development (Siddik et al., 2025), as articulated by Ki Hajar Dewantara's philosophy of *tri pusat pendidikan*, which coordinates efforts among family, school, and society (Aulia et al., 2025; Lestari et al., 2025).

Contemporary education confronts complex challenges that require exceptional human resources across all life domains (Rijal & Pranajaya, 2025), including moral character and ethical competence. Indonesia's Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System enshrines this commitment, mandating education to develop students' potential as faithful believers, individuals of noble character, and democratic, responsible citizens (Madkan et al., 2025). This holistic philosophy refuses to separate intellectual development from character formation or civic competence from spiritual commitment, a distinctive approach to navigating religious identity (T. Hidayatulloh et al., 2024) and national belonging in a pluralistic society (Alfarisi et al., 2023).

Among Indonesia's most significant educational institutions are *pesantren* (Malizal, 2025), Islamic boarding schools that have served as centres of Islamic learning and character formation for centuries (Al Qarni & Miswar, 2025). These institutions represent comprehensive living environments where all activities are grounded in values derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah (Haiurs et al., 2022). Modern *pesantren* have evolved significantly (Yudhyarta & May, 2025), establishing formal schools that follow national curriculum standards (Siraj et al., 2022) while maintaining their Islamic educational character (Khoiriyah et al., 2022). Students pursue both religious and general education simultaneously (Ismail et al., 2019), studying standard subjects within environments saturated with Islamic values and practices (Umar et al., 2025).

This dual-track approach reflects *pesantren's* adaptation to contemporary needs while preserving their core mission (Kurniasih et al., 2024; Soeupudin et al., 2025). Communities increasingly view *pesantren* as ideal settings for children requiring both academic competence and deep religious understanding, recognising that education must address the whole person intellectual, spiritual, moral, and social dimensions rather than focusing narrowly on academic achievement (Maidugu & Isah, 2024).

Within formal curricula, Civic Education (Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan/PPKn, hereinafter referred to as PPKn) serves as the primary vehicle for citizenship formation and character development (Acsal & Habib, 2025). PPKn aims to prepare students as citizens with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values to solve problems, make informed decisions, and participate actively in community activities (Halimi, 2020).

The curriculum emphasises civic knowledge (democratic institutions, rights and responsibilities), civic skills (critical thinking, communication, participation), and civic dispositions (commitment to democratic values, respect for diversity, responsibility) (Maulana et al., 2024). However, PPKn's effectiveness in instilling values among youth has been questioned, with developments in Indonesian national life casting doubt on civic education's success in cultivating strong civic identity and democratic participation (Yuniarto, 2019). Current implementation requires enhanced quality, particularly in values education approaches (Rahmat, 2018). In *pesantren* contexts, this becomes especially critical as PPKn learning must integrate Islamic values, recognising that Islamic teachings provide extensive guidance on forming good human character and responsible citizenship (Sianala et al., 2024).

Integrating Islamic values into civic education presents both opportunities and challenges (Peters & Besley, 2014). Islamic teachings contain rich resources for civic virtue, emphasising justice (*adl*), social welfare (*maslahah*), consultation (*musyawarah*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), compassion (*rahmah*), and respect for human dignity (Masripah & Mohammad,

2025). These values align substantially with democratic citizenship principles, suggesting natural complementarity between Islamic ethics and civic education goals (Bahri et al., 2025).

However, practical integration requires thoughtful pedagogical approaches that authentically connect religious and civic domains without superficiality or contradiction (D. S. Hidayatulloh et al., 2025). Teachers must possess both a deep understanding of Islamic values and sophisticated pedagogical skills (Latifah et al., 2024). Curriculum materials must explicitly connect religious and civic education rather than treating them as separate subjects. Assessment must evaluate genuine value internalisation and behavioural change, while institutional culture must reinforce values taught in formal instruction (Qadri et al., 2024).

Despite widespread recognition of the importance of character education and increasing attention to values integration in religious schools, prior research primarily documents existing integration practices without explaining how integration operates as a systematic process. Indonesian research (Sismanto et al., 2022) describes religious value teaching in *pesantren* contexts but lacks conceptual frameworks that reveal the architectural dimensions that make integration coherent, effective, and replicable. Closer to the present focus, Kurniasih et al. (2024) document Islamic value integration in civic education at *pesantren*-based universities, and Benaziria and Murdiono (2019) examine civic teachers' strategies for integrating nationalism and tolerance in *pesantren*-based schools; both confirm that integration occurs in practice but stop short of specifying the operational architecture through which it is achieved across curriculum, pedagogy, culture, and assessment simultaneously. International literature on values education (Moslimany et al., 2024) provides theoretical foundations but offers few empirical models of how religious and civic education can mutually reinforce each other in Islamic educational contexts. This leaves a gap between recognising that integration happens and understanding the mechanisms that make it coherent, replicable, and resistant to superficiality.

This knowledge gap has significant practical consequences. Teachers in Islamic schools often lack clear guidance on integration pedagogy, leading to inconsistent implementation quality and reliance on individual teacher initiative. Policymakers struggle to establish quality standards without understanding the underlying processes that enable successful integration. Researchers cannot advance theoretical understanding without systematic, empirically grounded frameworks.

This study addresses this gap by examining the integration of Islamic values in PPKn at MTs Azzainiyah, Sukabumi, through a systematic qualitative investigation. The research develops a conceptual framework that explicates the dimensions and mechanisms of value integration and documents practices across curriculum planning, classroom pedagogy, institutional culture, and assessment. Its novelty lies in moving beyond documenting isolated practices to reveal how five dimensions—curriculum alignment, pedagogical enactment, textual-linking, school-culture habituation, and civic virtue projects—function as an interdependent architectural system. While general character-education scholarship has long recognised curriculum, pedagogy, school culture, and service learning as interacting components of values formation, the study's most distinctive contribution is textual-linking: the systematic, empirically documented mapping between Pancasila principles and Qur'anic verses and hadith, a mechanism specific to Islamic-civic integration that has not been structurally documented in prior research.

Grounded in triangulated, six-month fieldwork at a single case, the resulting framework is offered as a mechanism-based proposition rather than a statistically generalisable claim, providing a basis for testing across other institutional contexts. Findings contribute both theoretical understanding through this multi-dimensional framework and practical application through evidence-based models for designing integrative civic education programmes in Islamic educational contexts.

Method

Research Design and Context

This study employs a qualitative case study design to explore the integration of Islamic values in Civic Education (PPKn) at MTs Azzainiyah. Case study methodology is appropriate for investigating contemporary phenomena in real-life contexts, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clear (Yin, 2014). The single-case design enables an in-depth, holistic examination of value integration processes, capturing the complexity and contextual factors that shape implementation.

MTs Azzainiyah was purposefully selected as an information-rich case representing typical *pesantren*-based junior secondary schools implementing integrated Islamic-civic education. Located in Sukabumi Regency, West Java, the school enrolls approximately 300 students across grades 7-9 with 15 teaching staff. Operating under a *pesantren* organisational structure, students receive both formal education following the national curriculum and informal Islamic education through *pesantren* programmes. The institution's vision emphasises creating "*insan kamil*" (complete human beings) with noble character grounded in Islamic values.

Participants and Data Collection

Twenty-four participants were selected through purposive sampling: one *pesantren* director, one school principal, two PPKn teachers (with 5-8 years' experience), and twenty students across grades 7-9, representing diverse academic levels and engagement patterns. This composition ensured multiple perspectives from institutional leadership, instructional practitioners, and student beneficiaries.

Table 1.
Participant Demographics and Selection Criteria

Participant Category	Number	Selection Criteria	Data Contribution
<i>Pesantren</i> Director	1	Institutional leadership, vision-setting authority	Policy perspective, institutional mission
School Principal	1	Educational administration, curriculum oversight	Implementation oversight, resource allocation
PPKn Teachers	2	Direct teaching experience (5-8 years), curriculum implementation	Pedagogical practices, classroom strategies
Students - Grade 7	7	Diverse academic levels, varied engagement	Learning experiences, value perception
Students - Grade 8	7	Diverse academic levels, varied engagement	Integration impact, daily application
Students - Grade 9	6	Diverse academic levels, varied engagement	Longitudinal perspective, outcomes
Total	24	Purposive sampling	Multiple perspectives

Sources: Research Data, 2026.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Data analysis followed Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's (2014) iterative procedures across four phases: initial familiarisation, open coding, focused coding, and pattern analysis. NVivo 14 software facilitated systematic coding. Two researchers independently coded 20% of the data, achieving strong inter-coder reliability (Cohen's kappa = 0.84). Multiple strategies ensured trustworthiness: triangulation across data sources, methods, and investigators;

member checking; peer debriefing; external audit by an experienced qualitative researcher; and thick description enabling readers to assess transferability.

Results and Discussion

Overview of Islamic Value Integration Framework

Analysis of six months of fieldwork data reveals a systematic, multidimensional approach to integrating Islamic values into the Civic Education (PPKn) curriculum at MTs Azzainiyah. By triangulating 28 interviews (847 coded segments), 24 classroom observations (312 field note entries), and 42 documents (186 content units), five distinct yet interconnected dimensions emerged as the operational framework for value integration. This framework represents more than isolated teaching practices; it is a coherent architectural system in which each dimension reinforces and amplifies the others.

Empirical evidence shows that the integration of Islamic values at MTs Azzainiyah is neither incidental nor superficial. Rather, it is deliberately embedded throughout the educational process from curriculum planning documents to daily classroom interactions, from formal assessment procedures to informal cultural practices. This systematic approach aligns with the pesantren's institutional mission of developing "insan kamil" (complete human beings) who embody both strong Islamic character and competent democratic citizenship.

The Five-Dimensional Integration Model

Analysis reveals five synergistic dimensions through which Islamic values become systematically embedded in civic education at MTs Azzainiyah. These dimensions function as an interconnected architectural system where each component reinforces the others.

Dimension 1: Curriculum Alignment systematically embeds Islamic values into official curriculum documents and lesson-planning processes. Analysis of 18 lesson plans demonstrates that 100% explicitly incorporate spiritual attitudes (KI-1) and social attitudes (KI-2) alongside knowledge (KI-3) and skills (KI-4) competencies. When teaching Pancasila's first principle (Belief in One God), lesson objectives specify that students should "demonstrate gratitude for God's blessings through recognition of tawhid as both Islamic foundation and national principle." A distinctive finding is the application of differentiated instruction that accommodates student diversity while maintaining consistent value integration teachers provide multiple learning pathways, yet core Islamic and civic values remain constant across all pathways, challenging assumptions that differentiation dilutes value consistency

Dimension 2: Pedagogical Enactment encompasses teaching strategies and classroom practices that actively deliver integrated content. Observation data reveal that 83% of lessons employed cooperative learning, 75% featured substantive discussion, and 67% included direct instruction that connected Islamic teachings to civic concepts. Teachers create inclusive environments where Islamic ethics of compassion, dignity, and respect are lived, not merely discussed. Classrooms begin with Islamic greetings and Qur'anic recitation, establishing spiritual frames for civic learning. The pedagogical approach emphasises active engagement—through case analysis of ethical dilemmas, students grapple with how Islamic principles and civic responsibilities intersect in real situations, seeing integrity as both civic duty and religious obligation.

Dimension 3: Textual-Linking represents the most distinctive dimension—systematic connections between Pancasila principles and Islamic scriptural sources. This appeared in 79% of observed lessons through Qur'an-Pancasila mapping and hadith as behavioural exemplars. Teachers pair each Pancasila principle with relevant Qur'anic verses: the first connects to Surah Al-Ikhlâs, emphasising tawhid; the second links to verses on human dignity; the third references Muslim unity; the fourth connects to musyawarah in Surah Ash-Shura; the fifth aligns with mandates for equitable treatment. Analysis identified 34 distinct hadith references across 24 lessons, most frequently addressing honesty (12 instances), justice (8 instances),

social responsibility (7 instances), and tolerance (7 instances), serving as concrete behavioural exemplars translating abstract civic virtues into daily practice.

Dimension 4: School Culture and Habituation extends integration beyond formal instruction, permeating the entire school culture through daily routines and institutional practices. Morning assemblies combine congregational Dhuha prayer with Pancasila recitation and the national anthem, physically and symbolically joining Islamic worship with national identity. Classroom rituals include starting with the basmallah and ending with the hamdalah. Behavioural expectations are explicitly grounded in Islamic ethics school regulations frame these expectations as expressions of Qur'anic guidance and citizenship responsibilities. Student self-report data indicates significant awareness: 80% reported frequently or very often consciously connecting Islamic values with citizenship responsibilities in daily life, suggesting systematic cultural habituation contributes meaningfully to value internalisation beyond formal instruction alone.

Dimension 5: Civic Virtue Projects encompasses service-learning and community engagement, enabling practical application of values. Three project types were documented: social service initiatives (food distribution connecting zakat with social welfare; environmental cleanup linking khalifah stewardship with environmental citizenship); civic problem-solving activities (student council musyawarah practising democratic deliberation); and interfaith initiatives (collaborative community service embodying tolerance and unity). Student reflections reveal meaningful outcomes one Grade 9 student wrote: "This project showed me that my faith and citizenship duties align protecting the environment serves both khalifah responsibility and the social justice principle." Survey data indicate high perceived learning value: 90% of students rated the impact of social service initiatives as 4 or 5 (on a 5-point scale), 85% rated civic problem-solving activities highly, and 80% rated interfaith projects highly, suggesting that action-based learning effectively reinforces the integration achieved through other dimensions.

Table 2.

Coding Structure and Key Findings by Dimension

Dimension	Coded Segments	Key Evidence
Curriculum Alignment	189	100% of lesson plans embed KI-1 and KI-2 competencies
Pedagogical Enactment	267	83% cooperative learning; 75% substantive discussion
Textual-Linking	178	34 hadith references; Qur'an-Pancasila mapping in 79% of lessons
School Culture	156	80% students frequently connect Islamic values with citizenship
Civic Virtue Projects	134	90% high-impact rating for social service initiatives
Challenges	223	79% rate infrastructure as major barrier; 67% teacher readiness
Facilitating Factors	198	Leadership support, teacher collaboration, student receptivity

Sources: Research Data, 2026.

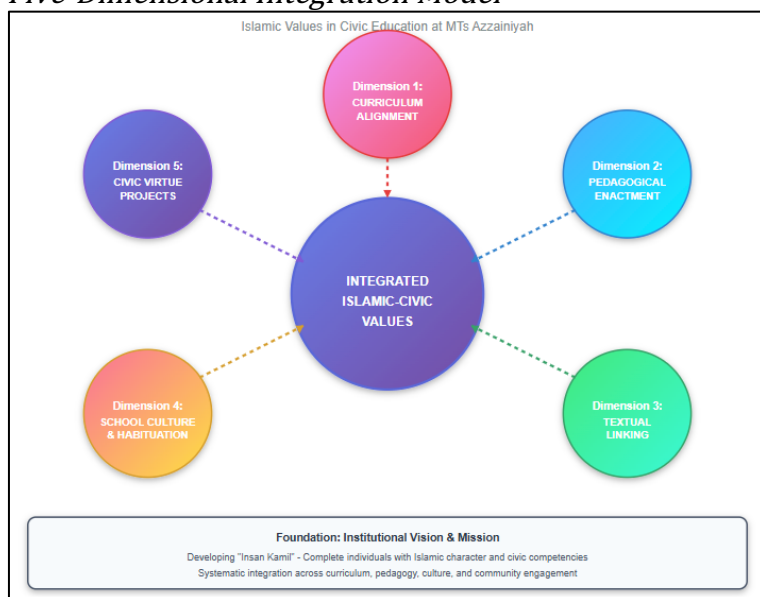
Integration Challenges and Barriers

Despite systematic integration efforts, six significant challenges emerged. First, gaps in teacher professional development are the most frequently cited barrier. Both PPKn teachers acknowledged receiving no specific training in integrative curriculum design during their degree programmes, expressed uncertainty about the appropriate depth of Islamic textual interpretation, and struggled to design valid assessment rubrics for value internalisation. Second, limited infrastructure constrains integration quality: only one projector serves six classrooms, internet access is unreliable, and library resources on Islamic-civic integration

topics are minimal. Participants rated this barrier as the most severe (79% considered it a major challenge). Third, student variability in prior Islamic knowledge complicates differentiation; in 21% of observed lessons, teachers spent considerable time explaining foundational Islamic concepts, reducing time for deeper value analysis. Fourth, curriculum pressure forces choices between covering more topics superficially and covering fewer topics more deeply, with meaningful value exploration. Fifth, assessment limitations persist: an analysis of 12 rubrics reveals that 75% focus primarily on knowledge outcomes, only 25% include explicit value criteria, and no standardised tools exist to track value development longitudinally. Sixth, external sociocultural factors media, peer groups, and popular culture—sometimes contradict taught values, creating occasional confusion among students navigating multiple worlds.

Figure 1.

Five-Dimensional Integration Model



Sources: Research Data, 2026.

Theoretical Contributions and Practical Implications

This study advances values education scholarship by proposing and empirically validating a five-dimensional framework that moves beyond descriptive accounts to reveal underlying structural dimensions and operational mechanisms of Islamic-civic value integration. Previous Indonesian research (Muhammad & Lawal, 2025; Nursalim et al., 2024; Safitri et al., 2025) documented the teaching of religious values in *pesantren* contexts but did not explain the architectural systems that enable systematic integration. International literature (Cuga, 2018; Ibrahim et al., 2024; Yusoff, 2025) provides theoretical foundations but offers limited empirical models for how religious and civic education become mutually reinforcing in Islamic contexts.

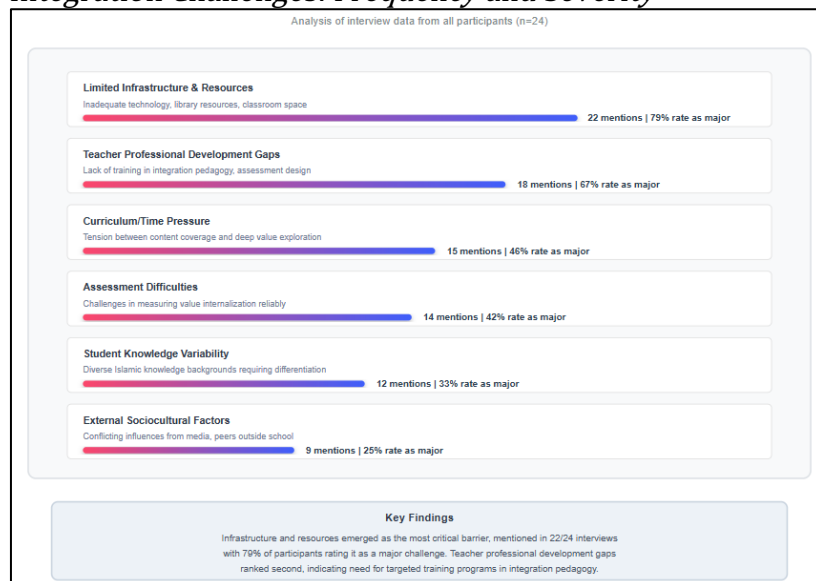
The framework's theoretical contribution is to reveal integration as a coherent architectural system in which dimensions function synergistically. Curriculum documents provide the blueprint (Dimension 1), enacted through classroom strategies (Dimension 2), including explicit textual connections (Dimension 3), reinforced by institutional culture (Dimension 4), and applied through service projects (Dimension 5). This systemic view explains why partial integration attempts fail—success requires coordinated attention across multiple dimensions simultaneously.

A second contribution addresses the relationship between differentiated instruction and value consistency. Critics worry that pedagogical flexibility might dilute consistent messaging about values (Hasbiyallah et al., 2024). However, the findings demonstrate that differentiation can operate at both the process and product levels while maintaining consistent value content

at the curricular level. By varying how students engage with values and demonstrate learning while keeping core values constant, differentiation improves integration by making values accessible to diverse learners—an important finding for inclusive values education.

Figure 2.

Integration Challenges: Frequency and Severity



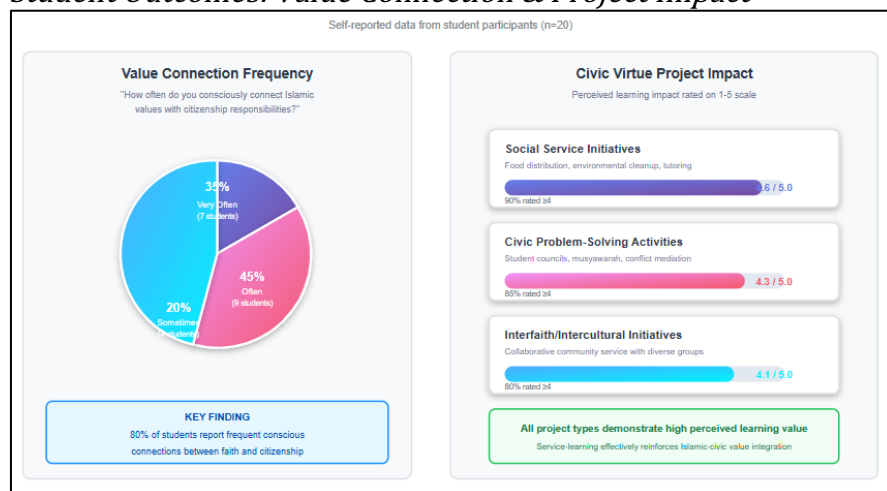
Sources: Research Data, 2026.

Curriculum and Resource Development

The textual-linking dimension emerges as a distinctive mechanism in Islamic educational contexts with significant implications for understanding religion-civic integration in faith-based schools. While general values education emphasises modelling and habituation (Jamilah, 2021), Islamic contexts add scriptural grounding as a legitimation and motivation strategy. Students learn that civic virtues have deep roots in divine revelation, making them religiously obligatory and civically beneficial. This dual grounding strengthens both religious commitment and civic engagement simultaneously, suggesting that effective religion-civic integration models must account for tradition-specific epistemic sources; what counts as authoritative knowledge varies across religious contexts.

Figure 3.

Student Outcomes: Value Connection & Project Impact



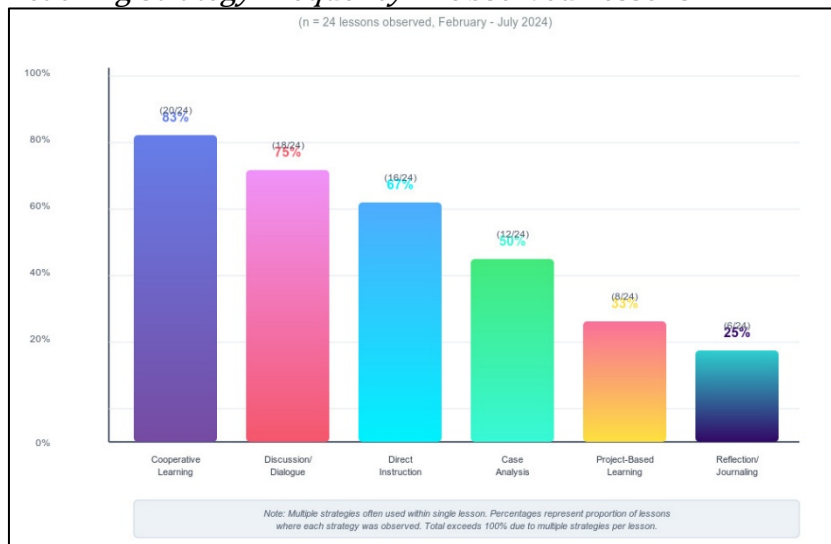
Sources: Research Data, 2026.

Teacher Professional Development Design

Practically, findings yield actionable implications for educators and policymakers. The identified teacher professional development gaps point to specific needs: theological-

pedagogical integration training focused on appropriate Islamic textual interpretation for adolescents; differentiated values education that designs varied activities while maintaining value consistency; and assessment of value learning, including the development of valid rubrics. Professional development should be ongoing, practice-based, and collaborative through learning communities where teachers share integration strategies and refine practices.

Figure 4.
Teaching Strategy Frequency in Observed Lessons



Sources: Research Data, 2026.

Institutional Support Structures

Infrastructure and resource limitations rated as major challenges by 79% of participants require systematic curriculum resource development, including integrated textbooks that incorporate Qur'anic references, lesson plan banks that demonstrate integration across topics, multimedia resources that connect civic issues with Islamic perspectives, and validated assessment tools. Government agencies and Islamic educational organisations should collaborate to develop such resources, reducing the burden on individual teachers while ensuring consistent integration quality.

Broader Significance: Religion and Citizenship in Pluralistic Democracies

Beyond immediate *pesantren* contexts, this research addresses fundamental questions relevant to pluralistic societies: Can religious identity and democratic citizenship be mutually reinforcing? The integrated approach at MTs Azzainiyah demonstrates a promising model in which students view civic engagement as a religious obligation and faith as a civic asset. Rather than treating religion and citizenship as competing spheres, the school cultivates students who understand that justice, compassion, honesty, and service are simultaneously Islamic virtues and democratic citizenship values. This challenges both religious fundamentalism, which rejects democratic participation, and secular exclusivism, which views religious commitment as incompatible with citizenship, offering a third path through thoughtful educational design that builds bridges between religious and civic domains.

Conclusion

This qualitative case study examined the integration of Islamic values in PPKn at MTs Azzainiyah, an Islamic boarding school in Sukabumi, Indonesia. Through a comprehensive analysis of 28 interviews, 24 classroom observations, and 42 documents collected over six months, the research reveals a systematic, multidimensional approach to values integration that advances both theoretical understanding and practical application in religious-civic education.

The study's primary contribution is a five-dimensional framework explicating how Islamic values become embedded in civic education. First, curriculum alignment systematically incorporates spiritual and social competencies into lesson planning. Second, pedagogical enactment employs active learning strategies, including cooperative methods and differentiated instruction. Third, textual linking creates explicit bridges between Pancasila principles and Qur'anic verses. Fourth, school culture habituation reinforces values through daily Islamic-civic rituals. Fifth, civic virtue projects enable practical application through community service activities. These five dimensions function synergistically, revealing that values integration constitutes a coherent architectural system rather than a collection of isolated practices operating independently of one another.

Empirical evidence demonstrates meaningful outcomes across multiple indicators. Notably, 80% of students report frequently making conscious connections between faith and citizenship responsibilities, while civic virtue projects consistently receive high impact ratings ranging from 4.1 to 4.6 on a five-point scale. However, significant challenges persist. Infrastructure limitations are a major obstacle for 79% of participants, while gaps in teacher professional development are a serious concern for 67% of respondents. These findings inform targeted recommendations, including comprehensive teacher training programmes in integration pedagogy, systematic curriculum resource development, strengthened institutional support structures, and policy frameworks that meaningfully support values-based education at both school and national levels.

Theoretically, this study moves beyond purely descriptive accounts to provide a mechanism-based model for understanding the synthesis of religious and civic education. It demonstrates that differentiated instruction and value consistency are not only compatible but mutually reinforcing, while simultaneously challenging longstanding assumptions that religious and civic education inherently compete. Furthermore, it reveals tradition-specific mechanisms, such as textual linking, as distinctive and replicable integration strategies. As a single-case study, the resulting framework offers analytic rather than statistical generalisation: it provides a conceptual lens and a set of testable mechanisms—curriculum alignment, pedagogical enactment, textual linking, school-culture habituation, and civic virtue projects—that other religious educational contexts facing similar tensions between faith traditions and universal citizenship competencies may adapt and empirically test, rather than a claim of direct, ready-made transferability. Ultimately, this research offers valuable insights for pluralistic societies seeking to honour religious identity while effectively preparing students to become engaged, informed, and democratic citizens in an increasingly interconnected world.

Competing interests

The authors declare no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper. The author(s) do not have any potential conflict of interest to disclose.

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Ethics Approval

No ethics approval was needed because this study involved routine educational observation and interviews with minimal risk to participants, and institutional permission was obtained directly from the school (MTs Azzainiyah, Sukabumi) before data collection.

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