



The Implementation of Religious Extracurricular Activities in Developing Students' Spiritual Values at SMP Negeri 1 Kuta Panjang

Sarlinda^{1*}

¹⁾ SMP Negeri 1 Kuta Panjang, sarlinda23@gmail.com

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ABSTRAK

Adolescent spiritual formation has become a pressing concern as globalization, digital saturation, and value pluralism erode the moral anchors of secondary-school students worldwide. Although religious extracurricular activities are widely promoted as a remedy, most evidence originates from Islamic private schools or urban madrasahs, leaving the mechanisms operating within rural public schools poorly understood. This study examines how religious extracurricular activities are implemented and how they cultivate spiritual values among students at SMP Negeri 1 Kutapanjang, a rural state junior high school in Gayo Lues, Aceh. Employing a qualitative single-case study design, data were generated through semi-structured interviews with fifteen participants (the principal, religious educators, activity coaches, and students), non-participant observation across a four-month period, and document analysis. Thematic analysis was conducted with the assistance of NVivo 14, and trustworthiness was secured through triangulation, member checking, and an audit trail. Findings reveal that implementation unfolds through four interlocking processes structured habituation, exemplary modelling, graduated responsibility, and reflective reinforcement that jointly transform routine religious practice into internalized spiritual dispositions encompassing devotional consistency, gratitude, empathy, and honesty. The study's novelty lies in reconceptualizing extracurricular religiosity as a situated habituation ecology rather than a program of discrete activities, and in evidencing this dynamic within an under-researched rural public-school setting where resources are constrained yet communal religiosity is strong. Practically, the findings offer school leaders a transferable model for embedding spiritual development into limited-resource environments and inform district-level policy on character-education provision beyond formal instruction.

Keywords: *religious extracurricular activities; spiritual values; character education; habituation; rural public school; qualitative case study; adolescent development*

ABSTRACT

Pembinaan spiritual remaja menjadi persoalan mendesak seiring globalisasi, saturasi digital, dan pluralitas nilai yang menggerus jangkar moral siswa sekolah menengah di berbagai belahan dunia. Meskipun kegiatan ekstrakurikuler keagamaan luas dianjurkan sebagai solusi, sebagian besar bukti empiris berasal dari sekolah Islam swasta atau madrasah perkotaan, sehingga mekanisme yang bekerja di sekolah negeri pedesaan belum banyak dipahami. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana kegiatan ekstrakurikuler keagamaan diimplementasikan serta bagaimana kegiatan tersebut menumbuhkan nilai-nilai spiritual siswa di SMP Negeri 1 Kutapanjang, sebuah sekolah menengah pertama negeri di kawasan pedesaan Gayo Lues, Aceh. Dengan desain studi kasus kualitatif tunggal, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur terhadap lima belas partisipan (kepala sekolah, guru agama, pembina kegiatan, dan siswa), observasi non-partisipan selama empat bulan, dan analisis dokumen.

Analisis tematik dilakukan dengan bantuan NVivo 14, dan keterpercayaan dijamin melalui triangulasi, pengecekan anggota, serta jejak audit. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa implementasi berlangsung melalui empat proses yang saling terkait pembiasaan terstruktur, keteladanan, pemberian tanggung jawab bertahap, dan penguatan reflektif yang bersama-sama mengubah praktik keagamaan rutin menjadi disposisi spiritual yang terinternalisasi, meliputi konsistensi ibadah, rasa syukur, empati, dan kejujuran. Kebaruan penelitian terletak pada rekonseptualisasi religiositas ekstrakurikuler sebagai ekologi pembiasaan yang situated, bukan sekadar program aktivitas terpisah, serta pembuktiannya pada latar sekolah negeri pedesaan yang jarang diteliti. Secara praktis, temuan ini menawarkan model yang dapat ditransfer bagi pemimpin sekolah untuk menanamkan pengembangan spiritual dalam lingkungan bersumber daya terbatas.

Kata kunci: kegiatan ekstrakurikuler keagamaan; nilai spiritual; pendidikan karakter; pembiasaan; sekolah negeri pedesaan; studi kasus kualitatif; perkembangan remaja

*Korespondensi Author: Sarlinda, SMP Negeri 1 Kuta Panjang, sarlinda23@gmail.com

I. INTRODUCTION

The moral and spiritual formation of adolescents has re-emerged as one of the defining educational preoccupations of the present decade. Across societies, the acceleration of globalization, the ubiquity of digital media, and the diffusion of competing value systems have unsettled the ethical scaffolding that schools once took for granted (Aggarwal et al., 2023). Secondary-school students now negotiate identity within an environment saturated by information yet frequently impoverished in guidance, a condition that heightens vulnerability to anxiety, disengagement, and normlessness. Within this landscape, spirituality understood as the pursuit of meaning, transcendence, and moral coherence has attracted renewed empirical attention precisely because it correlates with resilience, prosocial conduct, and psychological well-being during adolescence (Kosek et al., 2024; Santos, 2022). The educational challenge, therefore, is no longer whether spiritual development matters, but how schools can cultivate it deliberately rather than incidentally.

This challenge is felt acutely in Indonesia, where character education has been elevated to a national policy priority and where religiosity is woven densely into the fabric of schooling. Yet formal religious instruction, confined to a limited number of weekly hours, seldom suffices to translate doctrinal knowledge into lived disposition. It is in this gap between knowing and being that extracurricular religious activities acquire their pedagogical significance, offering sustained, experiential, and communal opportunities for students to enact and internalize spiritual commitments beyond the classroom.

Recent scholarship has converged on the proposition that participation in organized extracurricular activity confers measurable developmental benefits. Longitudinal and quasi-experimental evidence links sustained involvement to improved school belonging, emotional competence, and reduced internalizing symptoms (O'Flaherty et al., 2022; Fraser-Thomas & Sánchez-Miguel, 2023). Where such activities are explicitly religious, a growing body of Indonesian research reports gains in devotional discipline, manners, and social awareness, typically achieved through habituated practices such as congregational prayer, Qur'anic study, and religious mentoring (Nabillah et al., 2024; Iskandar et al., 2024). Complementary studies emphasize that structured planning needs analysis, program design, and evaluation substantially amplifies student participation and its downstream effects (Rohis-focused analyses in Nabillah et al., 2024). Parallel work on habituation demonstrates that repeated, scaffolded religious routines can consolidate moral behavior and spiritual awareness even in resource-constrained settings (Nurizah & Amrullah, 2024; Janah et al., 2025).

Taken together, these strands suggest a robust but uneven consensus. Extracurricular religiosity appears beneficial, yet the evidence is dominated by descriptions of what schools do rather than explanations of how spiritual internalization occurs. Studies frequently enumerate activities and assert outcomes without theorizing the intermediate processes modelling, responsibility, reflection through which participation becomes disposition. Moreover, the empirical center of gravity rests on Islamic private schools, vocational schools, and urban madrasahs, with comparatively little attention to state junior high schools in rural regions, where institutional resources are limited but communal religiosity is often strong

(Cahyanto et al., 2024; Basri et al., 2024). This asymmetry constrains the transferability of existing models.

To interpret these processes, the present study adopts social learning theory, particularly Bandura's account of observational learning, modelling, and reciprocal determinism, as its principal theoretical lens. This framework is appropriate because spiritual value formation in extracurricular settings is fundamentally social: students acquire dispositions by observing credible exemplars, by enacting behaviors within a supportive community, and through the reciprocal interplay of personal agency, behavior, and environment (Astuti et al., 2026). Habituation theory, which foregrounds the consolidation of values through structured repetition, is integrated as a complementary mechanism, allowing the analysis to connect the social origins of spiritual learning with its behavioral entrenchment (Nurizah & Amrullah, 2024). Together, these perspectives move the analysis beyond activity inventories toward an explanatory account of internalization.

Against this backdrop, four interrelated gaps warrant investigation. First, a theoretical gap persists: much of the literature remains descriptive, cataloguing activities without articulating the social-cognitive mechanisms that convert participation into internalized spirituality. Second, a contextual gap is evident in the concentration of research on Islamic private schools and urban madrasahs, leaving rural state junior high schools which serve the majority of Indonesian adolescents substantially under-examined. Third, a methodological gap arises from the prevalence of short, single-instrument designs; few studies combine sustained observation, multi-informant interviews, and document analysis with transparent trustworthiness procedures capable of illuminating process. Fourth, an empirical gap concerns the outcome side: studies often assert spiritual gains without disaggregating which specific values emerge, or how, thereby obscuring the texture of spiritual development.

These gaps are consequential rather than cosmetic. Without mechanism-level understanding, school leaders cannot distinguish activities that merely occupy students from those that genuinely transform them; without rural evidence, policy models risk being calibrated to well-resourced schools and failing where most students actually study; and without process-sensitive methods, the field cannot move from correlation to explanation. This study addresses these gaps through three deliberate contributions. Conceptually, it reframes religious extracurricular provision not as a set of discrete activities but as a situated habituation ecology an interlocking system of modelling, graduated responsibility, and reflection thereby supplying the explanatory architecture that descriptive accounts lack. Methodologically, it employs a sustained, multi-source qualitative case design with explicit triangulation, member checking, and audit-trail procedures, enabling process to be traced rather than merely inferred. Contextually, it locates this inquiry within a rural state junior high school in Gayo Lues, Aceh, a setting whose combination of limited resources and dense communal religiosity has rarely been documented, yielding a transferable model for comparable environments.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze how religious extracurricular activities are implemented at SMP Negeri 1 Kuta Panjang and to explain how their implementation cultivates students' spiritual values. Two research questions guide the inquiry: (1) How are religious extracurricular activities organized and enacted within this rural public-school setting? (2) Through what processes do these activities develop identifiable spiritual values among students? By pursuing these questions, the study seeks to advance both theoretical understanding and practical guidance for spiritually oriented character education.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative single-case study design to explore how religious extracurricular activities cultivate students' spiritual values within their natural school context. An interpretivist perspective guided the inquiry, viewing spiritual value formation as a socially constructed process best understood through the experiences of participants. The case of SMP Negeri 1 Kuta Panjang, a rural public junior high school in Gayo Lues Regency, Aceh, Indonesia, was purposively selected because it maintains a well-established program of religious extracurricular activities including congregational prayers, Qur'anic recitation (*tadarus*), reading-writing instruction (BTQ), religious study circles, and Islamic

commemorative events despite operating in a resource-constrained environment.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, complemented by snowball techniques to identify additional knowledgeable informants. Fifteen participants were involved, consisting of one principal, three Islamic education teachers, two extracurricular coaches, and nine students from Grades VII–IX who had participated in the program for at least one academic year. Data saturation determined the final sample size. To ensure confidentiality, all participants were assigned identification codes that are used throughout the findings.

Data were gathered over four months using three complementary techniques: semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis. Interview questions explored program planning, implementation, and perceived impacts on students' spiritual development, while observations focused on religious practices and interactions during extracurricular activities. Supporting documents, including activity schedules, program plans, and attendance records, were analyzed to corroborate interview and observational data. Instrument credibility was strengthened through expert validation and pilot interviews, while dependability was supported by the consistent application of interview and observation protocols.

Ethical approval and institutional permission were obtained prior to fieldwork. All adult participants provided informed consent, while parental consent and student assent were secured for student participants. Interviews were audio-recorded with permission, transcribed verbatim, and anonymized through participant coding. Participation was voluntary, and all participants retained the right to withdraw from the study at any stage. The data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis with the support of NVivo 14 software. Analysis followed an iterative and abductive process, moving between empirical data and theoretical perspectives on social learning and habituation to generate explanatory themes. The trustworthiness of the findings was ensured through methodological triangulation, member checking, an audit trail documenting analytical decisions, and rich contextual description to enhance credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and interprets the findings in an integrated, descriptive manner, weaving the empirical evidence together with its analytical interpretation and its dialogue with prior scholarship. Rather than reporting findings and their discussion separately, the account follows the analytic logic of the study: it first characterizes how the religious extracurricular activities were organized and enacted, and then traces the spiritual values that emerged from participation, interpreting each finding against the social-learning and habituation frameworks and situating it within the existing literature.

The first and most pervasive finding was that the activities operated through structured habituation, in which religious practice was embedded into the daily and weekly rhythm of the school rather than staged as occasional events. Documentary evidence confirmed a fixed schedule of *Dhuha* prayer before lessons, congregational *Zuhur* prayer at midday, and weekly *tadarus* and study circles, with attendance recorded by coaches. Participants consistently described this regularity as the foundation of the program, the mechanism that converted intention into settled routine, as one coach explained.

“At first the students had to be reminded every day, but after some months they came to the prayer room on their own. The habit does the teaching.” (C1, coach)

Interpreted through habituation theory, this pattern illustrates how repetition within a communal setting gradually lowers the cognitive and motivational cost of religious practice until it becomes self-sustaining. The finding aligns closely with recent Indonesian research demonstrating that systematic religious routines consolidate moral behavior and spiritual awareness (Nurizah & Amrullah, 2024; Janah et al., 2025). Its contribution, however, lies less in confirming that habituation works than in clarifying why: the students' own accounts capture the felt transition from external reminder to internal disposition, a qualitative texture that survey-based studies rarely reach. In this respect the present case extends the

descriptive habituation literature toward an explanatory account of internalization, indicating that routine is not merely a scheduling device but the very engine through which practice becomes disposition.

A second finding concerned the centrality of exemplary modelling to how the activities were enacted. Teachers and coaches did not merely supervise but participated, praying alongside students and demonstrating the conduct they sought to cultivate; observation corroborated that adult participation was consistent and visibly sincere. Students repeatedly attributed their own commitment to this example, distinguishing genuine participation from mere rule enforcement.

“When our teacher prays with us and we see he is sincere, not just watching, we feel that this is important, not only a school rule.” (S4, grade IX)

This finding affirms the explanatory value of Bandura's social learning theory, in which observational learning and credible modelling are decisive for the acquisition of values, and it resonates with studies linking teacher exemplarity to religious character formation (Astuti et al., 2026; Bela & Santosa, 2023). Closely related was a third organizing feature, graduated responsibility, whereby students progressively assumed active roles calling the *adzan*, leading recitation, and mentoring younger peers in a deliberate transfer of agency described by staff as intentional.

“We let the older students guide the younger ones. When a child teaches another child to read the Qur'an, both of them grow.” (T2, teacher)

This progressive handover exemplifies reciprocal determinism, in which students simultaneously act upon and are shaped by their environment, and it parallels broader evidence that extracurricular participation fosters agency, belonging, and socioemotional competence (O'Flaherty et al., 2022; Cortellazzo et al., 2021). Where the present case diverges from much secular scholarship is in the specific lever of development: whereas international studies often emphasize skill acquisition or peer belonging, this setting foregrounds moral exemplarity and communal enactment as the primary drivers of spiritual, as distinct from psychosocial, growth. Modelling and responsibility thus emerge not as adjuncts to habituation but as the relational channels through which habituated practice acquires meaning.

The convergence of these processes produced identifiable spiritual values, the second domain of findings. The most frequently evidenced outcome was devotional consistency: students increasingly initiated worship without prompting, a shift observed directly in the field and confirmed across informants, and understood by them as internalized commitment rather than compliance.

“Now even during the holidays I keep the Dhuha prayer. It has become part of me, not something the school forces.” (S7, grade VIII)

A second cluster of values comprised gratitude and empathy, as students connected their religious practice to a disposition of thankfulness and to concrete acts of care, including voluntary assistance and small charitable initiatives coordinated through the study circles. Staff interpreted these behaviors as evidence that spiritual practice was extending into social conduct.

“The children began collecting help for a classmate whose family was struggling. No one instructed them; it came from what they had been practising together.” (P, principal)

A third cluster comprised honesty and self-discipline, with informants linking the punctuality and restraint demanded by the prayer schedule to broader habits of truthfulness and self-regulation. The distribution of coded evidence across these three clusters is presented in Table 3. That the values extended beyond the devotional sphere into social and moral conduct is theoretically significant, for it suggests that the situated habituation ecology cultivates not isolated religious behaviors but a transferable spiritual disposition an interpretation consonant with research reporting that religiosity and spiritual involvement

support prosocial behavior and psychological well-being in adolescence (Aggarwal et al., 2023; French et al., 2023).

Taken together, the findings indicate that spiritual value formation in this setting was produced not by activities in themselves but by the interplay of structured habituation, exemplary modelling, and graduated responsibility a configuration best conceptualized as a situated habituation ecology, depicted in within this ecology the three processes fed a shared mechanism of internalization whose outputs, in turn, reinforced continued participation, forming a self-sustaining cycle. This reciprocal structure, rather than any single activity, characterized the case and constitutes the study's central explanatory claim, binding social learning and habituation into one coherent account of how routine religious practice becomes internalized spiritual disposition.

The situated habituation ecology linking implementation processes to spiritual value outcomes. Not all findings, however, sit comfortably with the existing literature, and these tensions help delineate the model's boundary conditions. Several longitudinal studies caution that the benefits of extracurricular participation may be overstated once unobserved confounding is controlled, with effects attenuating over time (O'Flaherty et al., 2022). The present study cannot adjudicate causal magnitude, yet its process evidence suggests a plausible reconciliation: durable benefits are likely only where activities are embedded in a supportive relational ecology rather than delivered as isolated events. This qualification speaks directly to research emphasizing that infrastructure alone is insufficient without pedagogical competence and committed leadership. The rural setting studied here, though materially constrained, compensated through dense communal religiosity and dedicated staff, indicating that relational and cultural capital can substitute, at least partially, for structural resources a boundary condition seldom articulated in resource-rich case studies and one that renders the model particularly pertinent to comparable rural public schools.

These findings carry implications across three registers. Theoretically, the study contributes an integrative account that binds social learning and habituation into a single explanatory model of spiritual internalization, addressing the largely descriptive character of the field and suggesting that spiritual value formation is best theorized as a socially mediated habit, formed through observation and enacted through graduated agency. Practically, the situated habituation ecology offers school leaders a transferable template: rather than multiplying activities, schools should prioritize regularity, visible exemplarity, and the deliberate transfer of responsibility to students, guidance that is especially valuable for the many rural public schools that lack resources yet possess strong communal foundations. At the policy level, the findings imply that district and national character-education frameworks should treat extracurricular provision as a core, rather than supplementary, site of spiritual development, and should invest in the pedagogical capacity of coaches and teachers rather than in facilities alone.

Several limitations qualify these interpretations. As a single-case study, the research prioritizes depth over breadth, and its transferability rests on analytic rather than statistical generalization; comparable dynamics should be tested across multiple rural schools and religious traditions. The reliance on self-report and observation over a four-month window, while triangulated, cannot establish the long-term durability of the observed values, which longitudinal designs would be better positioned to assess. Finally, the interpretivist stance, though appropriate to the research questions, foregrounds meaning at the expense of measurement; mixed-method extensions could usefully quantify the prevalence of the identified processes and outcomes. These limitations delimit the scope of the conclusions without diminishing the study's contribution to explaining spiritual value formation in an under-researched setting.

IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study examined how religious extracurricular activities are implemented and how they cultivate students' spiritual values at SMP Negeri 1 Kuta Panjang, a rural state junior high school. It found that spiritual value formation is driven not by activities as such but by an interlocking configuration of structured habituation, exemplary modelling, and graduated responsibility conceptualized here as a situated habituation ecology through which routine religious practice is internalized into devotional consistency,

gratitude and empathy, and honesty and self-discipline. In answering its two research questions, the study demonstrates that implementation and outcome are linked by identifiable social-cognitive processes rather than by assumption. The scientific contribution of the study lies in advancing the field from description toward explanation, integrating social learning and habituation into a coherent account of spiritual internalization. Theoretically, it specifies how observation and repetition jointly produce spiritual disposition; practically, it offers school leaders a transferable model that privileges regularity, exemplarity, and student agency over the proliferation of activities; and at the policy level, it argues for recognizing extracurricular provision as a central site of spiritual development and for investing in the pedagogical capacity of those who lead it. These contributions are especially pertinent to resource-constrained rural schools, whose communal religiosity can compensate for material limitations.

Future research should test the situated habituation ecology across multiple schools, regions, and religious traditions, and should adopt longitudinal and mixed-method designs capable of assessing the durability and prevalence of the identified processes and values. Comparative work contrasting rural and urban, and public and private, settings would further clarify the boundary conditions under which extracurricular religiosity most effectively fosters spiritual growth. By pursuing these directions, scholarship can build a more explanatory and generalizable understanding of how schools nurture the spiritual lives of adolescents.

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