

Internalization of Islamic Educational Values Regarding Faith, Worship, and Morality at Sultan Muhammad Syafiuddin Sambas University

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Abstract

This study analyzes the internalization of Islamic education values in faith (aqidah), worship (ibadah), and morality (akhlak) through the Character Education Program (PENDIKAR) at Sultan Muhammad Syafiuddin Sambas University (UNISSAS). It employs a descriptive qualitative design informed by pedagogical and psychological perspectives. Data include interviews with program managers, lecturers, students, and parents, observations of activities, and institutional documents. The findings indicate that faith serves as the normative foundation for strengthening tawhid, understanding worship, and developing accountability to God, although direct evidence of individual changes in belief remains limited. Worship is more concretely internalized through congregational prayer, Qur'anic recitation, and regular study sessions, which some informants reported continuing at home. Moral development is fostered through lecturer role modelling, student organizations, leadership simulations, and community service. Reported changes include discipline, honesty, empathy, trustworthiness, and deliberation. The analysis proposes a layered internalization framework connecting value orientation, religious experience, social practice, and reinforcement across environments. The study recommends more explicit faith-reflection instruments, systematic learning materials, and longitudinal tracking of behavioral change

Keywords

Aqidah; Character Education; Islamic Education; Internalization; Morality; Worship



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INTRODUCTION

Islamic higher education faces a dual responsibility: producing graduates with strong academic knowledge and forming individuals who use religious values to guide their decisions. Academic competence alone does not always ensure honesty, discipline, social concern, or integrity in public life. Character education should therefore connect knowledge of what is good, the willingness to choose what is good, and the habit of doing good. In Islamic education, this process is grounded in aqidah as the orientation of belief, ibadah as the enactment of devotion, and akhlak as the quality of conduct. These dimensions are interrelated but distinct and cannot be evaluated solely through attendance at religious activities.

Islamic education places tawhid (the oneness of God) at the center of awareness of

responsibility to Allah. Qur'an 31:13–14 links the prohibition of associating partners with God to gratitude to Allah and kindness to parents, connecting belief formation with family conduct. Qur'an 29:45 relates prayer to the prevention of indecency and wrongdoing, while Qur'an 68:4 identifies the Prophet Muhammad's exemplary character as a model of moral excellence. The success of Islamic education should therefore be assessed through both understanding and the expression of values in conduct, rather than ritual performance alone.

Previous studies support this integrative approach. Amirudin and Basri (2020) describe internalization through the Baitul Arqam program in higher education. Aditya and Zuhdi (2023) argue that campus teaching may remain at the level of value transfer unless it develops into transinternalization in behavior. Lukman et al. (2024) emphasize combining learning, religious activities, lecturer role modelling, and habit reinforcement, while Izza et al. (2026) highlight consistent institutional arrangements in developing a religious campus culture. Institutionalizing a program is supportive, but does not automatically demonstrate character change among individual participants.

Sultan Muhammad Syafiuddin Sambas University (UNISSAS) developed the Character Education Program (PENDIKAR) to guide new students. According to Nilawati's (2026) dissertation, Rectoral Decree No. 067 of 2023 provides the basis for a compulsory two-semester program. It combines religious learning, worship practices, social activities, and leadership exercises, partly centered around the campus mosque. Scheduled activities take place on Friday mornings from 8:00 a.m. until shortly before Friday prayer, while worship habits and academic interactions also occur outside the formal schedule.

This study's novelty lies in integrating three dimensions while distinguishing institutional evidence, religious experience, and evidence of behavioral change. Rather than simply listing PENDIKAR activities, it examines how values move from program design to practice, what may support continuity in family and community settings, and which claims remain pedagogical assumptions. It asks how *aqidah*, *ibadah*, and *akhlak* are integrated into PENDIKAR; what internalization mechanisms and indications of change are evident; and what implications and limitations arise for character education in Islamic higher education.

Halstead (2004) explains that Islamic education encompasses personal development, social-moral dimensions, and ethically oriented knowledge. Sahin (2013) frames *tarbiyah* as reflective self-formation rather than the mere transmission of religious information. These perspectives distinguish *aqidah* as a horizon of meaning, *ibadah* as a learned experience of devotion, and *akhlak* as moral choices traceable in social relationships. Nursalim et al. (2023) emphasize integrating institutional structure, culture, reflection, and activities. Putra and Hafiz (2024) suggest that religious character also involves respect and cooperation across difference. These studies are conceptual comparisons and do not establish unrecorded outcomes among UNISSAS students.

METHODS

This article analyzes field-research data using a descriptive-exploratory qualitative design and pedagogical and psychological perspectives at UNISSAS, Sambas Regency, West Kalimantan. The focus is on *aqidah*, *ibadah*, and *akhlak*. Reported sources include interviews

with university leaders, PUSLATBIMA and PENDIKAR coordinators, lecturers, students from several faculties, and parents. These accounts are complemented by observations of religious activities, learning interactions, student organizations, community service, and institutional policy and program documents.

Analysis proceeded in four steps. First, information was separated into evidence concerning program design or policy, activity implementation, student experience, and observed behavior. Second, information was organized thematically under aqidah, ibadah, and akhlak, with statements spanning domains interpreted in context. Third, accounts from managers, students, parents, and observations were compared to identify convergence and limitations. Fourth, a synthesis of internalization was developed by connecting field evidence with literature on habituation, role modelling, and character education. This is consistent with the reduction, presentation, and conclusion-drawing processes reported in the dissertation (Murdiyanto, 2020).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Institutional Context and the PENDIKAR Program Structure

PENDIKAR is compulsory for new students over two semesters. It connects spiritual development with students' academic and social growth. PUSLATBIMA coordinates the program with managers and lecturers, and attendance is recorded. Activities include lectures, discussions, worship practice, Qur'anic recitation, leadership simulations, teamwork, social activities, and habituation of ethical interaction. The campus mosque serves as both a place of worship and a space for character education.

Formal PENDIKAR sessions reportedly take place on Friday mornings, whereas congregational prayer, Qur'anic recitation, and disciplined conduct occur more broadly in campus life. This distinction prevents the assumption that all positive behavior results from one weekly session. Values are more plausibly reinforced when formal learning is practiced repeatedly in the mosque, classroom, student organizations, home, and community. Lecturer role modelling, peer support, and parental involvement are therefore relevant.

Implementation includes planning, introducing content, practice, habituation, and evaluation. Program managers acknowledged that materials need more systematic organization. Without a clear sequence of competencies and achievement rubrics, activities may be evaluated mainly through attendance or outward compliance. Institutional strengthening requires tools to trace what students understand, internalize, and apply.

It is useful to distinguish the intended curriculum, the experienced curriculum, and habits that may develop. The intended curriculum appears in the rectoral decree, program agenda, and messages about aqidah, ibadah, and akhlak. The experienced curriculum emerges when students interact with lecturers, worship together, or lead groups. Internalization becomes more visible when students maintain practices outside supervised settings. This resembles the structural-organic-reflective-integrative model discussed by Nursalim et al. (2023), although the available source does not test every component of that model in PENDIKAR.

Internalization of Aqidah Values

Aqidah provides the orienting framework for PENDIKAR. Program materials and managers' interviews identify strengthening aqidah, ibadah, and akhlak as goals, so students develop not only academic knowledge but also awareness of spiritual responsibility. Short Qur'anic chapters, Islamic studies, prayer, and discussions of worship may connect religious knowledge with awareness of tawhid. Here, aqidah functions as a foundation for motivation and worldview, not as a measured psychometric variable.

The Qur'anic framework includes Qur'an 31:13–14. Luqman's advice not to associate partners with Allah conveys that awareness of tawhid should be cultivated through dialogue and example, then expressed through gratitude and respect for parents. In higher education, understanding tawhid should extend beyond reciting the articles of faith. Accountability to Allah may inform resistance to academic dishonesty, fulfillment of trust, and fair treatment of others. However, this relationship remains normative unless supported by students' explicit reflections on changes in belief.

One student interview described prayer as a way to maintain a relationship with Allah rather than merely discharge an obligation. This offers limited evidence of spiritual awareness but does not establish that tawhid strengthened among all participants. Stronger evidence requires reflection on intention, responsibility, belief, and ethical decisions in unsupervised situations.

Conceptually, aqidah internalization can be considered at three levels: cognitive recognition of tawhid, personal interpretation of one's position before Allah, and implications of belief for ethical choices. In Sahin's (2013) reflective approach to tarbiyah, students develop a responsible understanding of their actions rather than merely receiving doctrine. Available interviews provide limited indications of personal meaning, while program objectives demonstrate the institutional emphasis. Structured narratives of change across all three levels before and after the program are not available. Reflection could address the relationship between learning and academic trust, gratitude after success, and responsibility in difficult decisions, without coercively judging private beliefs.

Internalization of Ibadah through Routine and Meaning

Field evidence is more detailed for ibadah. Congregational prayers, particularly Dhuhr and Asr, Qur'anic recitation, Friday study sessions, and supplication reportedly create an environment that facilitates religious practice. Students described previously irregular practices becoming part of daily schedules. The campus provides facilities, peers, and lecturers as examples. Habituation is more feasible when the environment reduces barriers to good practice.

A student from the Faculty of Economics and Business stated: "I feel that my worship is now more regular. I used to pray only sometimes, but now it is something I cannot leave out. The campus environment really helps me remain steadfast" (student interview, 2026). This indicates a perceived shift toward a more sustained routine, but is self-reported evidence rather than quantitative proof of increased prayer frequency among all students.

Some students reported taking congregational prayer habits home by inviting parents and siblings to worship together. A parent described a student reminding family members about

prayer times and occasionally leading prayer. Students also reported more regular Qur'anic reading, including a shift from reading mainly during Ramadan to daily recitation. Parents observed some of these habits at home. Recitation functions as repeated practice, a subjective experience of calm, and an opportunity to improve reading with peer support.

Friday study sessions add a cognitive and reflective dimension. One student explained that the sessions helped them understand prayer as more than movements and recitations. Qur'an 29:45 connects prayer with refraining from wrongdoing, so its educational significance should also be explored through discipline, honesty, and respect. Akhyar et al. (2024) similarly discuss links between teacher leadership, worship habituation, and religious discipline. In higher education, reflection on worship should be connected with concrete academic habits.

Three conditions are related: accessible campus facilities, social reinforcement from lecturers and peers, and spiritual meaning developed through study sessions. Lally et al. (2010) explain that repetition in stable contexts can increase behavioral automaticity, but habit formation does not itself measure devotion or religious awareness. Prayer routines may indicate more stable behavior, while deeper understanding requires accounts of intention, meaning, and everyday decisions.

Reported continuity should be distinguished from verified continuity. Student and parent accounts offer different perspectives and suggest that some practices extend beyond campus, but there are no before-and-after frequency records, measures of habit persistence, or systematic accounts from students who did not change. Consistency therefore refers to a pattern reported by several informants, not an achievement demonstrated for every participant.

Internalization of Akhlak in Academic and Social Interaction

Akhlak becomes visible in relationships with lecturers, peers, families, and communities. Honesty, courtesy, trustworthiness, care, and responsibility are introduced through guidance and demonstrated in practice. Students participate in discussions, teamwork, community service, and leadership simulations that require ethical choices. Lecturer role modelling is described through punctuality, keeping promises, and supervising assignments fairly. Repeated interaction may help moral values move from external rules toward conscious habits.

Students reported changes beyond formal etiquette. A student described becoming more attentive to friends, including visiting those who were ill. Another reflected on cheating and tried to complete examinations honestly after understanding honesty as part of Muslim character. One student said: "I used to cheat sometimes during exams. Now I feel ashamed to do so because lecturers often remind us that honesty is part of a Muslim's character. So I try to do my own work honestly" (student interview, 2026). Such accounts indicate changes in personal moral evaluation, but cannot establish a general decline in misconduct without broader observation or disciplinary data.

Parents described changes in responses to advice, willingness to help with household tasks, and reminders to family members to pray on time. A student reported greater awareness of the need to respect parents. Family influence, developmental stage, organizational experience,

and other social factors may also contribute; it is more accurate to say PENDIKAR was reported to play a role than to identify it as the sole cause.

Community service provides an arena for practicing social morality. Collective work, helping residents clean their surroundings, teaching children to read the Qur'an, and participating in mosque events allow students to practice empathy and public responsibility. Such experiences expand akhlak from individual politeness to responsibility for others. Character education becomes meaningful when students perform concrete service, reflect on it, and continue acting without constant institutional instruction.

Leadership activities reinforce akhlak as ethical decision-making. Students serving as committee chairs or coordinators reported trying to arrive early, set an example, listen to different opinions, and resolve problems through deliberation. Parents observed greater confidence and leadership without arrogance. In al-Ghazali's account of akhlak, repeated practice may contribute to a disposition or *malakah*; here this is an interpretive lens, not proof that every student's character has become permanent.

Lecturer role modelling is important but requires careful assessment. Observations recorded efforts to be punctual, keep promises, and guide academic honesty. Sanderse (2013) cautions that educators do not automatically become effective moral models merely because students observe them. Role modelling becomes more meaningful when reasons behind conduct are explained and students can practice similar qualities. Systematic observations of consistency across lecturers and activities are not available.

Social morality also concerns the relationship between Islamic identity and engagement with others. Putra and Hafiz (2024) emphasize shared activities and educational culture in developing respect across differences. UNISSAS data more directly describe mutual assistance, helping residents, courtesy, and deliberation; they are not sufficiently specific to assess intergroup tolerance in depth. Future research should examine whether social concern also appears in cooperation with people of different beliefs or backgrounds.

Integrating Aqidah, Ibadah, and Akhlak

The three dimensions support one another, although the strength of field evidence differs. Aqidah explains the ethical and spiritual reasons for responsibility; ibadah provides practice in self-control, time discipline, and awareness of the relationship with Allah; akhlak makes values visible in everyday decisions. The relationship is not necessarily linear: doing good may deepen religious meaning, while routine worship without reflection and social application is not sufficient evidence of mature morality.

Table 1. Internalization of Values across Three Dimensions

Dimension	Development channels and main evidence
Aqidah	Curricular objectives, religious study, and tawhid orientation; evidence of changed belief remains limited.
Ibadah	Congregational prayer, Qur'anic recitation, study sessions, and supplication; student interviews and family accounts.
Akhlak	Role modelling, student organizations, and

	community service; reports of moral choices and behavioral observations.
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Source: Author's synthesis based on Nilawati (2026).

Aqidah is supported mainly by program objectives and content, whereas ibadah and akhlak have more concrete accounts of experience and observation. This difference reflects uneven documentation rather than a weakness in the framework. Evaluation should use suitable indicators: reflection on tawhid and intention for aqidah, consistency and understanding for worship, and observed conduct with feedback from multiple sources for akhlak. Assessment should respect students' privacy and freedom of conscience.

The dimensions require different competencies. Aqidah calls for explanations of reasoning, meaning, and reasons for action; ibadah calls for evidence of conscious and consistent practice; akhlak calls for evidence of fair and responsible choices in concrete social situations. Regular prayer does not automatically prove honesty in examinations, just as courteous behavior does not automatically demonstrate reflective understanding of tawhid.

Internalization Mechanism: From Policy to Habits across Settings

The proposed process has five layers. First is institutional orientation: the university establishes PENDIKAR as compulsory and allocates time, facilities, managers, and materials. Second is the presentation and discussion of values through lectures, discussions, Qur'anic study, and reflection on worship. Third is ritual and social practice, including congregational prayer, recitation, teamwork, and community service. Fourth is reinforcement by lecturers, peers, and family, which may help values persist beyond formal sessions. Fifth is reflection and evaluation of behavioral change.

These layers were not tested as separate experimental stages; the framework is the author's synthesis of field experiences and pedagogical interpretation. Its central movement is from attending because a program is compulsory toward acting because a practice is meaningful. Attendance records alone cannot establish this movement. Evidence is needed that students maintain practices when unsupervised, connect experiences with values they believe in, and consider the moral consequences of decisions.

Family and peer reinforcement is notable in accounts of worship and morality. When students invite relatives to pray, participate in neighborhood mosque activities, help neighbors, or reduce dishonest behavior, reported practices extend beyond the institution. Further research is needed to establish how long habits last after students complete PENDIKAR and whether they persist under pressure, conflicts of interest, or unsupportive conditions.

Ryan and Deci (2020) argue that motivation initially driven by external demands can become more autonomous when competence, relatedness, and meaningful choice are supported. PENDIKAR's compulsory status does not necessarily prevent internalization; it provides initial structure. However, compliance is more plausibly interpreted as internalization when students articulate personal reasons, continue practices beyond scheduled sessions, and make ethical choices when supervision decreases. Family accounts suggest this possibility but do not establish it for all students.

Learning design should balance structure and academic freedom. Attendance, punctuality, and basic rules help activities function, while case discussions, reflective writing, and service projects can offer meaningful choices and opportunities for students to evaluate their own actions. Future interviews could explore whether students practice worship because of attendance requirements, peer solidarity, a sense of calm, or personal conviction.

Comparison with Previous Research

Reported habituation of worship and akhlak at UNISSAS overlaps with Ma'arif et al. (2024), who discuss character internalization through repeated habits. Both emphasize everyday experience and environmental support. UNISSAS differs as a higher-education setting, where students have learning autonomy, organizational commitments, and opportunities for community service. Students need space to make decisions and explain their moral reasoning, not role modelling alone.

Aditya and Zuhdi (2023) note that value transfer may stop before becoming a stable behavioral orientation, while Lukman et al. (2024) emphasize synergy among learning, religious activities, role modelling, and habit support. These studies help interpret PENDIKAR: content and activities are prerequisites, while stronger indications of internalization arise when students explain changes in life choices and family members observe behavior at home.

PENDIKAR's distinctive feature is not congregational prayer or Qur'anic recitation themselves, but the opportunity to connect the campus mosque, academic activity, student organizations, and community service within one developmental environment. Religious values are practiced through academic honesty, helping others, fair leadership, and deliberation. Character education should therefore consider interpersonal relationships and social responsibility rather than stopping at ritual activity.

Sariyani (2025) shows that wasatiyyah Islamic values can be examined through reasoning, learning materials, and ethical practice in higher education. The UNISSAS study includes parent accounts and observations of religious and social engagement, but provides less balanced evidence on aqidah and no long-term evaluation. This comparison supports cross-dimensional assessment, not a claim that one program is more effective than another.

Overall, the study contributes documentation of student-reported change alongside family accounts, and distinguishes program design, ritual activity, religious reasoning, and social character. It is better suited to explaining how values are learned and expressed than estimating the percentage by which PENDIKAR improves aqidah, ibadah, or akhlak.

Challenges, Limitations, and Recommendations

Two challenges are directly evident: the need to systematize program materials and the imbalance in documentation across dimensions. Managers said that material delivered through lectures and question-and-answer sessions still required more systematic organization. Evidence concerning aqidah is also less detailed than evidence concerning ibadah and akhlak. These issues can be addressed by defining learning outcomes for each dimension, mapping appropriate activities, and developing qualitative evaluation rubrics. Existing activities need not be discontinued; rather, the links among objectives, methods, activities, reflection, and evidence

should be clarified.

For aqidah, lecturers could use guided reflection on gratitude, learning intentions, ethical decisions, and responsibility to Allah without judging personal belief. For ibadah, reflective records could combine routine, understanding of meaning, barriers, and the ability to maintain practice beyond campus; attendance alone is insufficient. For akhlak, evidence could include observations of teamwork, community-service records, examples of conflict resolution, and peer or parental feedback obtained with consent.

Table 2. Recommendations for Strengthening PENDIKAR Evaluation

Component	Recommended development
Aqidah	Guided reflection on intention, gratitude, tawhid, and ethical decisions.
Ibadah	Integrate practice, deeper understanding of meaning, and consistency beyond campus.
Akhlak	Use teamwork, social service, and leadership as settings for practicing values.
Program	Align learning outcomes, materials, schedules, responsibilities, and follow-up.

Source: Author's synthesis based on Nilawati (2026).

These recommendations are analytical implications of the findings, not procedures claimed to have been fully implemented at UNISSAS. Development should include ethical guidance, informed consent, protection of personal data, and reflection that does not harm participants. Future research should use a longitudinal design, compare interviews before and after activities, and trace development across multiple settings. To assess PENDIKAR-specific effects, researchers may consider a relevant comparison group while accounting for family education, organizations, prior religious experience, and developmental stage.

The findings can be synthesized in the model “orientation–experience–reflection–action–reinforcement.” Orientation provides spiritual reasons grounded in aqidah; experience consists of repeated worship and social interaction; reflection connects experience with personal deliberation; action appears in honesty, trustworthiness, care, or deliberation; reinforcement occurs when lecturers, peers, parents, and communities respond to these choices. This is an analytical construction based on reported data, not an intervention whose effectiveness has been tested.

The model may operate in two directions. Aqidah can motivate worship and morality, while helping residents or acting honestly can enrich the meaning of faith. Regular worship may facilitate self-control, but without reflection it does not prove moral maturity. Campus implementation could involve examining values through cases, practicing them in activities, writing reflections about challenges and achievements, and discussing feedback with lecturers or peers.

Assessment should be formative, open to reflection, and should not shame students. Qualitative rubrics may examine reasoning and practice, but should not issue verdicts on the quality of a student's faith. Managers could define semester learning outcomes, develop contextual cases, and assess change at comparable time points. Students should understand the

purpose of evaluation, how their information will be used, and the limits of conclusions drawn from participation.

CONCLUSION

The internalization of Islamic education values through PENDIKAR at Sultan Muhammad Syafiuddin Sambas University takes place through institutional policy, dialogic learning, worship practices, role modelling, organizational experience, and community service. Evidence is strongest for reported worship routines and aspects of moral conduct, including honesty, empathy, discipline, trustworthiness, and social responsibility. Evidence of changes in *aqidah* remains limited because the source contains few structured accounts of changes in personal belief. Student and parent accounts suggest that some practices extend into family life, but do not establish long-term effects for all participants.

The article contributes a layered framework connecting *aqidah*-based orientation, worship experience, moral action, and reinforcement across campus, family, and community settings. PENDIKAR managers are encouraged to systematize learning materials, develop domain-specific indicators, and combine reflective assessment with behavioral evidence. Future research should track students longitudinally, examine experiences before and after participation, and distinguish program influence from family, peer, and prior religious experiences. Evaluation should support moral autonomy and respect the privacy of students' beliefs.

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