



## Teachers' Strategies for Internalizing Honesty Values in Students: Insights from Akidah Akhlak Education

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### Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the strategies employed by Akidah Akhlak teachers to internalize the value of honesty among students and to identify the factors influencing the effectiveness of this process. Honesty is a fundamental moral value that plays a crucial role in shaping students' character, particularly amid growing concerns regarding academic dishonesty, plagiarism, and broader integrity issues in contemporary society. This research adopted a qualitative approach using a descriptive design. Data were collected through participatory observations, in-depth interviews with Akidah Akhlak teachers, school principals, and student representatives, as well as documentation analysis of instructional activities and learning materials. The findings reveal that the internalization of honesty values is implemented through several key strategies, including contextual value integration in active learning, habituation of independent and responsible academic behavior, teacher role modeling (*uswatun hasanah*), social control through educational sanctions, and regular moral reflection activities. These strategies contribute significantly to strengthening students' awareness and practice of honest behavior in both academic and social contexts. The study implies that sustainable collaboration between schools and parents is essential to ensure the consistent reinforcement of honesty values beyond the formal learning environment.

## INTRODUCTION

Education plays a fundamental role in shaping individuals who are not only intellectually competent but also morally responsible members of society (Rahman, 2026; Shoha, 2026). In contemporary social life, character-related issues have become a major concern due to the increasing prevalence of dishonesty, academic misconduct, corruption, and unethical behavior among young people. These conditions indicate that educational success cannot be measured solely through academic achievement but must also include the development of moral values and ethical conduct. Character education is therefore essential because it contributes to the formation of responsible citizens capable of making ethical

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decisions in both personal and social contexts (Hefniy & Alwahedi, 2025; Holidi, 2025; Khofsah, 2025). Evidence from various educational settings suggests that strong character formation positively influences students' social interactions, academic integrity, and long-term personal development. Consequently, educational institutions are expected to integrate moral values into learning processes systematically and continuously. Among these values, honesty occupies a central position because it serves as the foundation for trust, responsibility, and integrity in individual and social life.

One of the major challenges currently faced by society is the weakening of honesty among adolescents (Hikmah & Mudarris, 2026; Manshur, 2026). The rapid development of technology, unrestricted access to information, and shifting social values have created conditions that often encourage unethical behaviour (Kusumawati, 2025; Syafiih, 2025). Cases of cheating during examinations, plagiarism in academic assignments, manipulation of information, and dishonesty in social interactions have become increasingly common. These problems reflect a broader moral crisis that extends beyond schools and affects society as a whole. Educational institutions are therefore expected to play a strategic role in addressing these challenges by strengthening students' moral foundations (Firmansyah et al., 2025; Tohet & Nuraini, 2026). However, character formation cannot be achieved through theoretical instruction alone. It requires continuous guidance, supervision, and value internalization processes that enable students to transform moral knowledge into habitual behavior. Therefore, understanding effective strategies for internalizing honesty values has become an urgent educational concern that requires scholarly attention and practical solutions.

Field realities indicate that efforts to develop honesty among students often encounter various obstacles. Although schools frequently incorporate moral and religious values into their curricula, many students still demonstrate behaviors that contradict these values. Instances of academic dishonesty, lack of responsibility, and limited awareness of ethical consequences continue to be observed in educational settings. One contributing factor is the limited ability of some educators to design learning experiences that effectively connect moral concepts with students' daily lives. As a result, values taught in classrooms are not always translated into actual behavior. Furthermore, inconsistencies between school expectations and family environments may reduce the effectiveness of character education programs. These conditions suggest that the success of honesty education depends not only on curriculum content but also on the strategies employed by teachers to facilitate value internalization. Therefore, investigating how teachers implement honesty-based character education remains highly relevant and necessary.

Previous studies have emphasized the importance of teachers' roles in shaping students' character through religious and moral education. Teachers are recognized not only as transmitters of knowledge but also as role models who influence students' attitudes and behaviors through daily interactions. Research has shown that family support, educational guidance, and religious learning contribute significantly to character formation among students (Albustomi & Baharun, 2025; Huda & Habibu, 2025; Kumala & Nadya, 2024). In Islamic education, *Aqidah Akhlak* serves as an important subject designed to strengthen faith while fostering positive moral conduct. Studies have also highlighted the significance

of learning strategies in improving educational outcomes, suggesting that effective instructional approaches can enhance both academic achievement and character development (Adeoye et al., 2025; Rodliyah & Khusnuridlo, 2024). These findings demonstrate that character education requires intentional planning and systematic implementation to achieve meaningful behavioral change.

Despite these contributions, previous studies have primarily focused on the outcomes of character education rather than examining the specific mechanisms through which honesty values are internalized in classroom settings. Existing research tends to discuss the importance of moral education, teacher professionalism, and learning effectiveness in general terms, while limited attention has been given to the practical strategies used by Aqidah Akhlak teachers to cultivate honesty as a core character value (Ghozali, 2024; Holis et al., 2024; Rahmadan & Shudiq, 2024). Furthermore, many studies have not explored how contextual learning, habituation, teacher role modeling, moral reflection, and social control interact within the internalization process. This gap limits a comprehensive understanding of how honesty develops from a conceptual value into a consistent behavioral practice among students. Addressing this limitation is important because honesty represents a foundational value that influences students' academic integrity, social responsibility, and moral decision-making throughout their lives.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the strategic role of Aqidah Akhlak teachers in internalizing honesty values through a holistic educational process. Unlike previous studies that generally examine character education outcomes, this research specifically investigates how honesty is cultivated through contextual learning activities, behavioral habituation, teacher exemplification (*uswatun hasanah*), educational sanctions, and moral reflection practices. This perspective contributes to the development of character education literature by providing a more comprehensive understanding of value internalization processes within Islamic educational contexts. The study is also important because it offers practical insights for educators seeking effective approaches to strengthen students' honesty amid contemporary moral challenges. By identifying both instructional strategies and supporting factors, this research contributes to the development of sustainable character education models that can be adapted in similar educational environments.

Based on the issues, problems, and research gaps identified above, this study seeks to answer the following question: How do Aqidah Akhlak teachers internalize honesty values among students, and what factors influence the success of this process? This study argues that honesty can be effectively developed when teachers employ integrated strategies that combine cognitive understanding, emotional engagement, and behavioral practice. Drawing upon the concept of character formation proposed in Habit Formation Theory, honesty is expected to emerge not merely as knowledge of moral principles but as a deeply internalized value reflected in everyday actions. Therefore, this research contributes both theoretically and practically by expanding understanding of honesty internalization within Islamic education and providing evidence-based recommendations for strengthening character education in schools.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore the strategies used by Aqidah Akhlak teachers in internalizing honesty values among students (Mulyana et al., 2024; Okoko et al., 2023). A qualitative case study was selected because it enables researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of social phenomena within their natural setting and to capture participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors comprehensively. The study focused on understanding how honesty values are cultivated through educational practices and how these values are integrated into students' daily lives. Character development is considered one of the primary objectives of Islamic education, as educational success is not only reflected in cognitive achievement but also in the formation of students' moral and ethical character. This approach was therefore considered appropriate for examining the complex processes involved in character education and value internalization (Meydan & Akkaş, 2024; Niam et al., 2024).

The research was conducted at MTsN 7 Jember, an Islamic junior secondary school that actively promotes character education through both curricular and extracurricular activities. This site was purposively selected because the school emphasizes the development of students' honesty as an essential component of its educational mission. Furthermore, the school provides a relevant context for examining the implementation of honesty-based character education through Aqidah Akhlak learning. The study focused particularly on students in the superior eighth-grade class, where character-building programs and learning activities related to honesty values had been systematically implemented. The selection of this setting allowed the researcher to investigate the phenomenon within a context where character education is regarded as a strategic institutional priority.

Data were collected through three primary techniques: participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation analysis. Participatory observation was conducted to examine students' behavior, interactions, and engagement during learning activities and other critical situations related to honesty practices. In-depth interviews were carried out with Aqidah Akhlak teachers and selected students to explore their experiences, perceptions, and responses regarding the internalization of honesty values. The participants were selected using purposive sampling, involving Aqidah Akhlak teachers and students who were directly involved in the learning process under investigation. In addition, documentation analysis was conducted by examining lesson plans, instructional materials, school regulations, and records related to students' character development. The use of multiple data sources enabled the researcher to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the strategies employed in fostering honesty among students.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. Data condensation involved selecting, simplifying, and organizing the information obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. Subsequently, the data were presented systematically through narrative descriptions and thematic categorization to facilitate interpretation. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and verifying findings continuously throughout the research process to ensure consistency and credibility. To

enhance the trustworthiness of the study, source triangulation and technique triangulation were employed. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different participants, while technique triangulation involved comparing findings derived from observations, interviews, and documentation. These procedures were implemented to ensure the validity, reliability, and credibility of the research findings regarding the strategies of Aqidah Akhlak teachers in internalizing students' honesty values.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Comparative Analysis: Lecture Method for Efficient Content Delivery and Discussion Method for Active Student Engagement

The findings indicate that the Aqidah Akhlak teacher employed a combination of direct instruction and active learning approaches integrated within the Independent Curriculum framework and strengthened through the principles of the Love-Based Curriculum (Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta). This approach created a learning environment characterized by empathy, compassion, and mutual respect, allowing the internalization of honesty values to occur naturally and meaningfully. Rather than positioning religious learning as a rigid process focused solely on knowledge transmission, the teacher emphasized emotional connection and moral guidance, enabling students to develop a deeper understanding of honesty as a fundamental life value.

Classroom observations revealed a significant improvement in student participation throughout the learning process. At the beginning of the learning activities, most students tended to be passive listeners who relied heavily on teacher explanations. However, after the implementation of interactive lecture techniques combined with questioning strategies, students became more willing to participate in classroom discussions, ask questions, and express opinions. Observation data showed that student participation increased from approximately 60% in the initial stage to 85% in the subsequent stage, indicating that interactive instructional approaches successfully enhanced classroom engagement and learning motivation (Ali et al., 2025; Chaudhry et al., 2023).

Interviews with students further demonstrated that they preferred interactive lectures to conventional lectures. Students explained that interactive lectures provided opportunities to seek clarification, discuss difficult concepts, and connect learning materials with real-life situations. This finding suggests that lecture methods remain effective for delivering foundational religious concepts, particularly when supported by opportunities for dialogue and reflection. Therefore, rather than viewing lectures and discussions as competing approaches, the findings demonstrate that both methods can complement one another in promoting meaningful learning and character development (Al Awwaby et al., 2025; Elster, 2010).

These findings support contemporary educational perspectives emphasizing active participation as a prerequisite for effective learning. While traditional lectures facilitate efficient content delivery, excessive reliance on teacher-centered instruction may limit opportunities for critical thinking and moral reflection. Conversely, discussion-based approaches encourage students to construct knowledge actively and engage in deeper moral reasoning. Consequently, combining lecture and discussion methods offers a balanced

pedagogical strategy capable of addressing both cognitive and affective dimensions of learning.

### **Discussion-Based Learning as a Medium for Honesty Character Development**

The discussion method emerged as one of the most effective strategies for strengthening honesty character among students. Unlike conventional teacher-centered instruction, discussion-based learning promotes active interaction between teachers and students as well as among students themselves (Adeoye et al., 2025; Agus et al., 2025; Tuc & Karadag, 2023). Through collaborative dialogue, students were encouraged to exchange perspectives, evaluate ideas, and collectively explore solutions to various issues. Such interactions enabled students to experience moral values not merely as abstract concepts but as practical principles applicable to everyday life.

Student involvement in discussion activities extended beyond physical participation to include cognitive, emotional, and social engagement. During discussions, students demonstrated critical thinking skills by analyzing information, evaluating different viewpoints, and presenting arguments supported by evidence and personal experiences (Abas & Kholidah, 2025; Islamiah & Maulidiah, 2024; Naseer et al., 2025). When discussing topics related to honesty, students reflected on the consequences of dishonest behavior and examined the importance of integrity in academic and social contexts. These activities facilitated moral reasoning and encouraged students to internalize honesty as a personal commitment rather than simply complying with institutional regulations.

The discussion process also contributed significantly to the development of social competencies. Through collaborative interactions, students learned to respect differing opinions, negotiate disagreements constructively, and appreciate diversity of thought. Such experiences strengthened communication skills, teamwork abilities, empathy, and self-confidence. Students who were initially reluctant to speak in front of others gradually developed confidence in expressing opinions and defending their arguments. Consequently, discussion-based learning served not only as a vehicle for knowledge acquisition but also as an effective medium for character formation and social development.

### **The Learning Process and Collaborative Group Discussions**

The implementation of discussion-based learning followed a systematic process designed to maximize student participation and moral engagement. Learning activities began with topic orientation, during which the teacher introduced the lesson and presented stimulating questions intended to provoke critical thinking. These questions were intentionally linked to students' daily experiences, enabling learners to recognize the relevance of honesty in their personal and academic lives. This approach increased students' curiosity and encouraged active involvement in subsequent learning activities.

Students were then organized into heterogeneous discussion groups consisting of individuals with diverse academic abilities and backgrounds. Such group composition promoted peer learning and facilitated mutual support among group members. Consistent with cooperative learning principles, heterogeneous grouping encouraged collaboration, collective responsibility, and knowledge sharing, thereby creating opportunities for students to learn from one another

while developing interpersonal competencies.

During group discussions, students assumed specific responsibilities such as discussion leader, recorder, and presenter. The assignment of roles ensured equitable participation and strengthened students' sense of accountability. Observational findings demonstrated substantial improvements in students' communication skills, listening abilities, confidence in presenting ideas, and willingness to collaborate with peers. These outcomes support previous findings indicating that structured discussion activities positively influence both academic and social development.

### **Internalization of Honesty Values Through Moral Knowing, Moral Feeling, and Moral Action**

The internalization of honesty values was implemented through a comprehensive strategy encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. The first dimension focused on moral knowing, where teachers consistently introduced honesty as a core moral principle through contextualized learning. Religious teachings, Qur'anic verses, and prophetic traditions were connected directly to contemporary adolescent experiences. Through interactive lectures and guided discussions, students developed an understanding of the academic, social, and spiritual consequences of dishonest behavior, thereby strengthening their moral awareness.

The second dimension emphasized moral action through the habituation of positive behavior. Teachers deliberately created learning situations requiring students to demonstrate honesty in completing assignments, participating in assessments, and engaging in group work. Independent tasks and collaborative activities were designed to discourage cheating and plagiarism while encouraging authenticity and responsibility. Outside the classroom, these practices were reinforced through religious activities and daily routines that promoted self-discipline and spiritual accountability. Continuous exposure to such practices enabled honesty to become part of students' habitual behavior.

Another essential aspect of the internalization process was the provision of exemplary behavior (*uswatun hasanah*). Teachers consciously modeled honesty through transparency in grading, consistency in applying rules, punctuality, and alignment between words and actions. Students frequently identified teacher behavior as a major influence on their own attitudes and conduct. This finding confirms that character education becomes more effective when teachers embody the values they seek to instill in their students.

Educational corrective measures also played an important role in addressing dishonest behavior. Rather than employing punitive approaches, teachers implemented corrective actions aimed at fostering self-awareness and personal responsibility. Students who violated honesty norms were encouraged to reflect on their actions, recognize their consequences, and develop strategies for improvement. This approach aligns with restorative educational principles that prioritize moral growth and behavioral transformation.

In addition, teachers regularly conducted moral reflection sessions at the end of learning activities. During these sessions, students were invited to evaluate their behavior, discuss ethical dilemmas, and share experiences related to honesty. Reflection activities fostered emotional awareness and strengthened

students' moral sensitivity, enabling them to recognize the importance of honesty not only in academic contexts but also in everyday social interactions.

### Educational Contributions and Implications

Interviews with students revealed highly positive responses toward the integrated strategies employed by the teacher. Students reported feeling respected, valued, and emotionally supported through the compassionate and dialogical learning approach. As a result, they developed stronger intrinsic motivation to practice honesty and maintain integrity in both academic and social settings. Honesty was no longer perceived merely as a school requirement but as a personal value that guides behavior and decision-making.

The findings contribute significantly to the field of Islamic education by providing empirical evidence regarding how honesty character can be internalized through the integration of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. While many previous studies have focused primarily on the outcomes of character education, this study offers a deeper understanding of the pedagogical processes through which honesty values are cultivated and sustained within *Aqidah Akhlak* learning. The research demonstrates that the integration of interactive lectures, discussion-based learning, role modeling, behavioral habituation, educational sanctions, and reflective practices creates a comprehensive framework for character formation.

From a theoretical perspective, the study enriches the literature on Islamic character education by illustrating how religious values can be transformed into observable behaviors through systematic pedagogical interventions. From a practical perspective, the findings provide guidance for teachers, school leaders, and educational policymakers seeking to strengthen honesty character among students. The results suggest that character education should move beyond mere moral instruction and instead emphasize meaningful experiences, reflective engagement, and consistent role modeling. Through such approaches, educational institutions can contribute not only to students' academic success but also to the development of morally responsible and socially conscious individuals.



Figure 1. Illustration of Comprehensive Honest Development Strategy

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the integration of lecture and discussion methods within the framework of the Independent Curriculum and Love-Based Curriculum represents a pedagogically balanced approach that effectively addresses both cognitive and affective learning domains. The use of interactive lectures as an initial instructional strategy confirms the continued relevance of teacher-centered approaches in delivering foundational religious knowledge. However, unlike conventional lectures, the interactive format transformed passive learning into a dialogical process, allowing students to actively engage with the material. This aligns with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that knowledge is constructed through interaction and reflection rather than transmitted unidirectionally (Rahman & Widodo, 2024; Setiawan et al., 2023).

The significant increase in student participation—from 60% to 85%—indicates that instructional design plays a crucial role in shaping learner engagement. This finding supports prior research suggesting that questioning techniques and dialogic interaction can stimulate student curiosity and motivation (Chaudhry et al., 2023; Nurfadilah & Suryadi, 2024). Moreover, the preference for interactive lectures expressed by students suggests that contemporary learners require opportunities for clarification, contextualization, and personal relevance in order to fully comprehend abstract religious concepts such as honesty. Thus, lectures should not be abandoned but rather restructured to include participatory elements that foster deeper understanding (Hidayat et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the effectiveness of discussion-based learning in developing honesty character highlights the importance of social interaction in moral education. Through collaborative dialogue, students were not only exposed to diverse perspectives but were also required to critically evaluate their own beliefs and behaviors. This process reflects higher-order thinking skills, particularly analysis, evaluation, and synthesis, which are essential components of moral reasoning (Islamiah & Maulidiah, 2024; Abas & Kholidah, 2025). In this context, honesty is no longer perceived as a normative rule imposed by authority but as a consciously chosen value grounded in personal reflection and social awareness (Naseer et al., 2025).

The findings also reinforce the theoretical framework of moral development proposed by Lickona, particularly the integration of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. The study reveals that cognitive understanding alone is insufficient to shape character unless it is accompanied by emotional engagement and behavioral practice. The implementation of habituation strategies, such as honest task completion and reflective activities, ensured that students consistently practiced honesty in real-life situations. This continuous exposure contributed to the transformation of honesty from a conceptual understanding into a habitual behavior (Agus et al., 2025; Pratama & Lestari, 2023).

In addition, the role of teachers as moral exemplars (*uswatun hasanah*) emerged as a critical factor in the internalization process. The consistency between teachers' words and actions enhanced students' trust and reinforced the credibility of moral instruction. This finding is consistent with social learning theory, which posits that individuals learn behaviors through observation and imitation of role models (Bandura-inspired studies; Fitriani et al., 2024; Yusuf &

Karim, 2023). Therefore, character education cannot rely solely on curriculum design but must also consider the personal integrity and professionalism of educators.

Another important contribution of this study lies in its use of restorative approaches to address dishonest behavior. Instead of punitive measures, the emphasis on reflection and self-awareness allowed students to recognize their mistakes and take responsibility for their actions. This approach not only reduces resistance but also promotes long-term behavioral change, as students develop intrinsic motivation to act honestly (Tuc & Karadag, 2023; Adeoye et al., 2025). Such findings are particularly relevant in the context of Islamic education, where moral development is closely linked to spiritual accountability and self-regulation (Husna et al., 2024).

The collaborative group discussion model further strengthened students' social competencies, including communication skills, empathy, and teamwork. The assignment of roles within groups ensured equitable participation and fostered a sense of responsibility among students. This supports cooperative learning theory, which highlights the importance of structured interaction in enhancing both academic achievement and social development (Agus et al., 2025; Rahmawati et al., 2023). As students learned to respect differing opinions and resolve conflicts constructively, they developed interpersonal skills that are essential for functioning in diverse social environments.

From a broader perspective, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on character education by demonstrating that effective moral instruction requires a holistic and integrated approach. The combination of interactive lectures, discussion-based learning, role modeling, habituation, and reflective practices creates a comprehensive pedagogical framework capable of fostering both intellectual growth and moral integrity (Hidayat et al., 2025; Pratama & Lestari, 2023). This approach is particularly relevant in the context of Islamic education, where the ultimate goal extends beyond knowledge acquisition to the formation of morally responsible individuals.

In conclusion, the study underscores the importance of pedagogical innovation in addressing the challenges of character education in contemporary classrooms. By moving beyond traditional instructional methods and embracing interactive and reflective strategies, educators can create meaningful learning experiences that facilitate the internalization of moral values such as honesty. The findings suggest that future educational practices should prioritize student engagement, emotional connection, and consistent moral modeling in order to achieve sustainable character development (Rahman & Widodo, 2024; Husna et al., 2024).

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the internalization of honesty character values in Aqidah Akhlak learning is most effective when implemented through a holistic educational approach that integrates cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. The findings demonstrate that honesty is successfully cultivated through the synergistic application of contextual value instruction, habitual integrity-based practices, teacher role modeling (*uswatun hasanah*), educational corrective measures, and continuous moral reflection. The most important lesson

derived from this study is that character formation cannot be achieved solely through the transmission of moral knowledge; rather, it requires consistent experiences that enable students to understand, feel, and practice honesty in their daily lives. Through this process, honesty gradually evolves from an externally imposed rule into an internalized personal value that guides students' decisions and behaviors. These findings reinforce the view that Aqidah Akhlak learning functions not only as a medium for knowledge acquisition but also as a strategic instrument for nurturing moral resilience and ethical responsibility among students in an increasingly complex social environment.

From a scholarly perspective, this study contributes to the literature on Islamic character education by providing an empirical model of honesty-value internalization based on the integration of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. The study offers practical insights into how character education can be systematically embedded within classroom instruction and school culture through a combination of pedagogical and affective strategies. Nevertheless, this research has several limitations. As a single-case qualitative study conducted in one madrasah, the findings cannot be generalized to all educational contexts. In addition, the study primarily relies on interview and observation data collected within a limited period, which may not fully capture long-term changes in students' character development. Therefore, future research is recommended to employ comparative, longitudinal, or mixed-methods approaches across diverse educational settings to examine the sustainability, effectiveness, and broader applicability of honesty-character internalization strategies in strengthening students' moral development.

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