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# From Habituation to Moral Internalization: Honesty Education, Psychosocial Safety, and Student Welfare in an Islamic Boarding School

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## Abstract

This study investigates the internalization of honesty values through habituation practices at Sa'adatuddaren Islamic Boarding School and identifies the structural and relational conditions that support or hinder this process. Honesty is a central concern in character education, particularly in Islamic boarding schools where moral values are cultivated through religious discipline, communal living, and daily routines. Using an interpretive qualitative case study design, data were collected over three months through participant observation, semi-structured interviews with students, teachers, an administrator, and the pesantren leader, as well as document analysis. The findings show that honesty is promoted through institutionalized routines, including truthful attendance reporting, independent academic work, transparent financial responsibility, communal duties, and religious participation. However, habituation alone does not ensure deep moral internalization. Students' honesty develops from external compliance to behavioral habituation, reflective awareness, and relational internalization when routines are supported by teacher modeling, reflective discipline, peer accountability, and psychosocial safety. This study contributes by conceptualizing honesty internalization in pesantren as an interaction between structural habituation and relational moral support within a welfare-oriented moral ecology.

**Keywords:** Character Education; Honesty Internalization; Psychological Safety; Student Welfare.

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## INTRODUCTION

Honesty is widely recognized as a foundational moral value in education because it shapes learners' integrity, responsibility, trustworthiness, and capacity to participate ethically in social life. In educational institutions, honesty is not merely an individual virtue but a social condition that sustains fairness, accountability, academic credibility, and collective welfare. This issue becomes particularly important in boarding school contexts, where students live, learn, worship, and interact within the same institutional environment. In such settings, moral values are not transmitted only through classroom instruction but are also embedded in daily routines, interpersonal relations, disciplinary practices, and institutional culture. Islamic boarding schools, or pesantren, are therefore significant sites for examining moral internalization because they integrate religious learning, communal living, discipline, teacher authority, peer interaction, and character formation into a continuous educational experience [1], [2], [3].

Within the pesantren tradition, honesty is expected to be cultivated through repeated practices such as reporting daily activities, fulfilling communal duties, completing academic tasks independently, maintaining financial accountability, and participating in religious obligations with sincerity. These practices reflect the broader logic of character education, which assumes that moral values become more stable when learners repeatedly enact them in concrete social situations rather than merely receive them as abstract concepts. Habituation is therefore frequently treated as a strategic mechanism for transforming external moral rules into consistent behavioral patterns. Prior studies on Islamic education and character development suggest that structured routines, collective discipline, teacher supervision, and religiously grounded norms can contribute to the formation of students' moral character when they are implemented consistently within a supportive institutional environment [4], [5], [6].

However, the relationship between moral habituation and moral internalization remains theoretically and empirically complex. Repetition does not automatically produce deep moral commitment, especially when students perform honest behavior primarily because they are monitored, afraid of sanctions, or expected to comply with institutional authority. A student may appear honest in supervised situations while failing to demonstrate integrity when external control is absent. This distinction is crucial because character education aims not only to regulate behavior but also to develop moral awareness, ethical reasoning, emotional commitment, and self-directed responsibility. Moral internalization requires learners to understand why honesty matters, feel personally responsible for acting honestly, and perceive honesty as part of their moral identity rather than merely as a rule imposed by teachers or institutional systems [7], [8], [9].

The issue of honesty internalization is also closely connected to student welfare. In a boarding school environment, disciplinary systems, peer relationships, teacher modeling, and psychological safety influence whether students feel secure enough to admit mistakes, report truthfully, and take responsibility for their actions. When honesty is cultivated through fear, excessive control, or punitive discipline, students may learn to avoid punishment rather than develop moral courage. Conversely, when educators respond to mistakes with fairness, guidance, reflective dialogue, and consistent role modeling, students are more likely to associate honesty with dignity, trust, and personal growth. From a social welfare perspective, honesty education is therefore not only a matter of moral instruction but also a matter of

building a safe, caring, and developmentally supportive educational ecology that protects students from shame-based discipline and enables ethical self-development [10], [11], [12].

Theoretically, this study is grounded in the intersection of moral development theory, social learning theory, and character education. Social learning theory explains that students acquire moral behavior by observing significant models, imitating valued practices, receiving social reinforcement, and interpreting the consequences of behavior within their environment [13]. In the pesantren context, teachers, senior students, dormitory supervisors, and peers function as moral models whose conduct can either strengthen or weaken the credibility of honesty education. Moral development perspectives further emphasize that ethical behavior depends not only on behavioral repetition but also on moral reasoning, affective engagement, and the ability to evaluate actions in relation to principles of justice, responsibility, and care [14], [15]. Character education scholarship similarly argues that moral formation becomes more effective when school culture, teacher example, student reflection, institutional consistency, and community participation work together as an integrated system [16], [17].

Although pesantren are often viewed as strong moral institutions, empirical realities show that the presence of religious instruction and daily routines does not always guarantee the internalization of honesty. Students may still engage in dishonest practices such as misreporting spending, hiding mistakes, cheating on academic tasks, or giving inaccurate information about attendance and responsibilities. These behaviors do not necessarily indicate the failure of pesantren as moral institutions; rather, they reveal the need to examine how moral values are negotiated within everyday life. The gap between moral teaching and moral action suggests that honesty education should be investigated as a dynamic process shaped by institutional expectations, peer norms, teacher consistency, emotional readiness, disciplinary climate, and students' diverse family and social backgrounds [18], [19].

Previous studies have contributed valuable insights into character education in Islamic schools, particularly by emphasizing the role of habituation, institutional culture, religious discipline, and teacher supervision. However, much of the existing literature tends to describe character education programs at a general level without sufficiently explaining how students experience, interpret, resist, or internalize honesty in their daily moral life. Studies on pesantren-based character education often highlight normative ideals and program implementation, yet fewer studies examine the micro-processes through which honesty shifts from external compliance to personal moral commitment. In addition, the relationship between habituation, reflective awareness, teacher modeling, peer influence, and psychological safety remains underdeveloped in the literature. This gap is important because the success of honesty education depends not only on whether routines exist, but on whether those routines are meaningful, relationally supported, emotionally safe, and morally understood by students [20], [21], [22].

This study addresses that gap by investigating the internalization of honesty values through habitual practices at Sa'adatuddaren Islamic Boarding School. The study does not treat habituation as a simple behavioral technique, but as a socially mediated process involving routines, supervision, teacher modeling, peer relations, reflection, and institutional climate. By focusing on students' daily experiences, this study seeks to explain why structured honesty practices may succeed in some situations but remain limited in others. The central argument is that honesty internalization occurs when habituation is reinforced by reflective understanding,

affective commitment, credible role modeling, and a psychologically safe environment that allows students to admit mistakes without excessive fear. In this sense, honesty education becomes part of a broader educational welfare framework because it supports students' moral growth, emotional security, social responsibility, and ethical participation within the school community.

The novelty of this study lies in its attempt to conceptualize honesty internalization in pesantren as an interaction between structural and relational processes. Structural processes include daily routines, institutional rules, reporting systems, supervision, and disciplinary mechanisms that shape students' external behavior. Relational processes include teacher example, peer influence, mentoring, dialogue, emotional support, and trust-based interactions that help students transform external expectations into personal values. By integrating these two dimensions, this study contributes to character education theory by showing that habituation becomes effective only when it is accompanied by moral reflection, social modeling, and student-centered institutional care. Practically, the findings are expected to inform pesantren leaders, teachers, dormitory supervisors, and education policymakers in designing honesty education programs that move beyond rule enforcement toward sustainable moral internalization, student welfare, and ethical school culture.

## METHODS

### *Research Design*

This study employed an interpretive qualitative case study design to examine how honesty values are internalized through habituation practices in an Islamic boarding school context. A qualitative case study was considered appropriate because the study aimed to understand a socially situated moral phenomenon in depth, rather than to measure the effectiveness of an intervention through numerical indicators. The case study design enabled the researcher to explore how honesty was practiced, negotiated, reinforced, and sometimes resisted within the everyday life of students at Sa'adatuddaren Islamic Boarding School. This design is particularly relevant for investigating value internalization because moral formation is not a linear process; rather, it is shaped by institutional routines, interpersonal modeling, peer relationships, disciplinary culture, and students' subjective interpretation of moral expectations [23], [24].

The study was positioned within a constructivist-interpretive paradigm. From this perspective, honesty was not treated merely as a fixed behavioral category, but as a moral value constructed and interpreted through daily interaction among students, teachers, dormitory supervisors, and institutional leaders. This paradigm allowed the researcher to investigate how students understood honesty, how they responded to habituation practices, and how the pesantren environment influenced their moral decision-making. The focus was therefore not only on what honesty-related routines existed, but also on how these routines contributed to students' gradual movement from external compliance toward moral awareness and personal responsibility.

### *Participants and Sampling*

Participants were selected using purposive sampling. This technique was chosen because the study required information-rich participants who were directly involved in the process of honesty habituation and moral supervision in the pesantren. The participants consisted of students, teachers, one administrator, and the pesantren leader. The inclusion of multiple participant groups was intended to obtain diverse perspectives on the same phenomenon and to strengthen data triangulation.

The student participants were selected because they were the primary subjects of honesty habituation practices. Teachers and dormitory supervisors were included because they played a central role in guiding, monitoring, and modeling honesty. The administrator was involved because of their responsibility in managing discipline and daily routines, while the pesantren leader provided institutional-level insight into the vision, policy, and moral direction of character education. The final number of participants was determined based on the relevance of their experience and the sufficiency of emerging information. Data collection continued until no substantially new themes emerged from interviews and observations, indicating that thematic saturation had been reached.

### *Data Collection Procedure*

Data were collected over a three-month period using three complementary techniques: participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The use of multiple data sources was intended to capture honesty internalization from behavioral, experiential, and institutional perspectives. Observation was used to identify how honesty-related habits appeared in daily practice. Interviews were used to explore participants' meanings, reflections, and explanations. Document analysis was used to examine the formal rules, schedules, and institutional documents that supported character education.

Observation was conducted regularly in natural settings, including classrooms, dormitories, communal activity areas, religious activity spaces, and other relevant locations within the pesantren. The researcher observed honesty-related behaviors such as admitting mistakes, reporting attendance accurately, returning misplaced items, fulfilling communal responsibilities, completing assignments independently, and complying with rules when supervision was limited. Observations were conducted approximately twice a week, with each session lasting around 60 to 90 minutes. Field notes were written immediately after each observation session to preserve contextual detail and reduce memory bias.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants to obtain deeper insight into their experiences and perceptions. The interviews were carried out in Bahasa Indonesia to allow participants to express their views naturally and comfortably. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes and was audio-recorded with participant consent. The interview guide included questions about honesty practices, teacher role modeling, student challenges, peer influence, disciplinary responses, and suggestions for strengthening honesty internalization. Follow-up probing questions were used to clarify participants' responses and obtain richer explanations.

Document analysis was conducted by examining relevant institutional documents, including pesantren rules, character education plans, student activity schedules, written disciplinary guidelines, and documents related to honesty and responsibility. These documents

were analyzed to understand how honesty was formally framed by the institution and how formal expectations corresponded with observed practices and participant narratives.

### *Research Instruments*

The main instrument in this qualitative study was the researcher, supported by observation guidelines, semi-structured interview protocols, and a document analysis checklist. The observation guideline was designed to focus on concrete indicators of honesty in students' daily lives, such as truthful reporting, independent task completion, responsibility in shared duties, admission of mistakes, and ethical peer interaction. The interview protocol was developed to explore participants' understanding of honesty, their experiences with habituation practices, and the factors that supported or hindered moral internalization. The document checklist was used to examine whether the pesantren's formal rules and programs explicitly supported honesty education.

Before data collection, the interview questions were reviewed to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives. The protocol remained flexible during fieldwork to allow the researcher to pursue emerging themes. This flexibility was important because honesty internalization is a complex moral process that cannot be fully captured through rigid questioning.

### *Data Analysis*

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis supported by the interactive logic of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analysis began while data collection was still ongoing, allowing emerging findings to inform subsequent observations and interviews. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, while field notes and document excerpts were organized according to source and date. The researcher repeatedly read the transcripts, observation notes, and documents to become familiar with the data and to identify recurring patterns related to honesty internalization.

The first stage involved open coding, in which meaningful statements and observed behaviors were labeled according to their relevance to honesty habituation, teacher modeling, peer influence, fear of punishment, reflective discipline, and moral awareness. Similar codes were then grouped into broader categories. These categories were gradually refined into themes that explained how honesty was internalized, why internalization was sometimes incomplete, and what institutional or relational conditions supported deeper moral formation. The themes were continuously compared across different data sources to ensure consistency and credibility.

The analysis did not merely summarize participant responses; it interpreted the relationship between routines, social interaction, discipline, and moral development. Particular attention was given to the distinction between external compliance and internalized honesty. This distinction helped the researcher identify whether students' honest behavior was driven mainly by fear, supervision, social expectation, reflective understanding, or personal moral commitment.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

#### *Institutionalized Habituation Practices for Internalizing Honesty*

The findings show that honesty internalization at Sa'adatuddaren Islamic Boarding School was not implemented as a single moral instruction, but as a set of institutionalized habituation practices embedded in students' daily routines. Honesty was introduced, practiced, monitored, and reinforced through repeated activities in academic, religious, dormitory, financial, and communal contexts. These practices created a moral environment in which students encountered honesty not only as a value taught by teachers, but also as a behavior expected in everyday life.

Observation data indicated that students were repeatedly exposed to honesty-related expectations through classroom assignments, attendance reporting, communal responsibilities, dormitory routines, and religious participation. In academic settings, honesty was emphasized through independent task completion, avoidance of cheating, and encouragement to admit learning difficulties rather than copy from peers. In dormitory and communal settings, honesty was practiced through shared responsibilities, transparent management of collective funds, and truthful reporting of daily activities. In religious settings, students were expected to report their participation in congregational prayer and other compulsory activities accurately.

The habituation system was therefore structured around repeated moral practice. Students were not only told to be honest; they were placed in situations where honesty had to be enacted. The most visible pattern was that honesty became part of routine accountability. Students were expected to demonstrate truthfulness in small but repeated situations, such as acknowledging mistakes, returning misplaced items, reporting attendance accurately, and completing duties without manipulation. These ordinary practices formed the empirical basis of honesty internalization in the pesantren.

**Table 1.** Forms of Honesty Habituation Identified in Daily Pesantren Life

Domain of Habituation	Forms of Practice	Observable Honesty Indicators	Empirical Meaning
Academic activities	Independent task completion, prohibition of cheating, honest admission of learning difficulties	Students submitted their own work, admitted incomplete work, and were reminded not to copy from peers	Honesty was framed as academic integrity rather than merely obedience to classroom rules
Attendance and religious routines	Reporting attendance in prayer, study sessions, and compulsory activities	Students were expected to provide truthful information about their presence and participation	Honesty was linked to religious responsibility and institutional trust
Dormitory life	Compliance with dormitory rules, admission of mistakes, respect for shared belongings	Students were observed returning misplaced items, acknowledging minor mistakes, and following rules	Honesty was embedded in communal living and interpersonal responsibility
Financial accountability	Reporting shared funds, cafeteria	Students responsible for funds were required to	Honesty was practiced as

Domain of Habituation	Forms of Practice	Observable Honesty Indicators	Empirical Meaning
	spending, and collective financial responsibilities	report use of money transparently	accountability in managing resources
Communal duties	Shared cleaning tasks, group responsibilities, and peer-based reminders	Students reminded one another about duties and ethical behavior	Honesty was reinforced through collective responsibility and peer accountability

The data also show that honesty habituation was most effective when students encountered repeated moral expectations across different settings. When the same value was reinforced in classrooms, dormitories, religious activities, and peer interactions, students received a consistent moral message. This consistency helped students understand that honesty was not limited to formal learning situations, but was expected as part of their broader identity as members of the pesantren community.

However, the findings also indicate that habituation alone did not automatically produce deep internalization. Some students performed honest behavior because it was expected by the institution, while others demonstrated stronger signs of moral awareness. This difference suggests that honesty habituation operated at multiple levels. At the basic level, it produced behavioral compliance. At a deeper level, it encouraged students to reflect on honesty as a personal and social responsibility. The transition from compliance to internalization depended on the quality of guidance, role modeling, peer culture, and disciplinary response provided by the pesantren community.

### *Supporting Conditions for Honesty Internalization*

The second major finding concerns the conditions that supported the internalization of honesty values. The data show that honesty was more likely to be internalized when institutional routines were supported by teacher modeling, reflective discipline, psychological safety, and peer accountability. These factors transformed honesty from a procedural requirement into a meaningful moral experience for students.

Teacher modeling emerged as one of the strongest supporting factors. Students were more willing to practice honesty when they observed teachers and dormitory supervisors demonstrating fairness, consistency, openness, and responsibility in daily interactions. Teachers who admitted mistakes, applied rules fairly, avoided excessive punishment, and gave moral guidance strengthened the credibility of honesty education. In contrast, honesty habituation became less convincing when students perceived inconsistency between moral instruction and adult behavior.

Reflective discipline also played an important role. The findings show that students responded more positively when mistakes were addressed through advice, dialogue, reflection, and responsibility-based correction rather than harsh punishment. When teachers used counseling, short moral explanations, or reflective writing, students were more likely to understand the meaning of honesty. This pattern indicates that discipline was more effective when it encouraged moral awareness rather than fear-based compliance.

Psychological safety was another important condition. Students were more willing to admit mistakes when they felt that honesty would not automatically lead to humiliation, harsh punishment, or social embarrassment. A safe emotional climate allowed students to be truthful about errors, difficulties, and misconduct. This finding is important because honesty requires not only knowledge of what is right, but also courage to disclose the truth in situations where students may feel vulnerable.

Peer accountability also supported honesty internalization. Observations showed that students sometimes reminded their peers to follow rules, complete responsibilities, or avoid dishonest behavior. In this sense, honesty was not reinforced only by teachers but also by the student community. Peer reminders helped normalize honesty as a shared expectation. However, this factor was ambivalent because peer relationships could also discourage honesty when students prioritized group loyalty over truthfulness.

**Table 2.** Supporting Conditions for the Internalization of Honesty Values

<b>Supporting Condition</b>	<b>Empirical Manifestation</b>	<b>Contribution to Honesty Internalization</b>
Teacher role modeling	Teachers showed fairness, admitted mistakes, applied rules consistently, and guided students through moral advice	Strengthened the credibility of honesty education and provided concrete examples for students
Reflective discipline	Mistakes were followed by advice, counseling, reflective writing, or responsibility-based correction	Helped students understand the moral meaning of honesty beyond fear of punishment
Psychological safety	Students felt safer admitting mistakes when teachers responded constructively	Encouraged truth-telling, self-awareness, and moral courage
Repeated institutional routines	Honesty was practiced across academic, religious, dormitory, and communal settings	Created consistency between moral instruction and daily behavior
Peer accountability	Students reminded peers about honesty, duties, and ethical behavior	Reinforced honesty as a shared community norm
Communal responsibility	Students managed shared tasks and resources transparently	Connected honesty with trust, responsibility, and social welfare

The findings reveal that the most productive pattern occurred when these supporting conditions worked together. Habituation provided the structure, while teacher modeling and reflective discipline gave moral meaning to the structure. Psychological safety made students less afraid to tell the truth, while peer accountability expanded honesty from an individual virtue into a collective norm. Thus, the internalization of honesty was not the result of routine alone, but of the interaction between structured practice and relational support.

A key empirical pattern was that students tended to understand honesty more deeply when they experienced it as part of care, guidance, and trust. When teachers responded to mistakes with constructive guidance, students were more likely to interpret honesty as a path toward self-improvement. Conversely, when students associated honesty mainly with punishment, they were more likely to conceal mistakes or comply only under supervision. This

finding suggests that the moral climate surrounding habituation practices determined whether honesty developed into internalized value or remained external conformity.

### *Barriers and Stages in the Internalization of Honesty*

The third finding shows that honesty internalization was a gradual and uneven process. Although the pesantren had established structured routines to promote honesty, several barriers limited the depth and consistency of students' moral internalization. These barriers included diverse family backgrounds, fear of punishment, peer pressure, inconsistent role modeling, and the tendency to treat honesty as rule compliance rather than personal conviction.

Students entered the pesantren with different moral experiences from their family and previous school environments. Some students were already familiar with disciplined moral routines, while others needed more time to adjust to the pesantren's expectations. This diversity affected how students responded to honesty habituation. For some students, honesty practices were quickly accepted as meaningful. For others, the practices were initially understood as external demands imposed by the institution.

Fear of punishment was another significant barrier. Some students hesitated to admit mistakes because they were afraid of consequences. This pattern indicates that disciplinary systems can create unintended effects when students perceive honesty as risky. Instead of encouraging truthfulness, fear-based discipline may encourage concealment, avoidance, or strategic compliance. The findings suggest that students may obey rules when they are monitored but fail to internalize honesty when they do not feel emotionally safe.

Peer pressure also affected honesty practices. In some situations, students were reluctant to report mistakes made by friends or groups because they feared damaging relationships. This indicates that peer loyalty sometimes competed with honesty. Students did not always make moral decisions individually; they negotiated honesty within social relationships. As a result, honesty internalization depended not only on personal awareness but also on peer norms and group expectations.

The data further suggest that internalization occurred through several stages. At the initial stage, students practiced honesty mainly because of rules, supervision, and fear of punishment. At the second stage, repeated practice helped students become familiar with honesty as an expected behavior. At the third stage, teacher modeling, reflection, and supportive relationships helped students connect honest behavior with moral meaning. At the more advanced stage, students began to show honesty because they perceived it as part of personal responsibility and moral identity.

**Table 3.** Barriers to Honesty Internalization

<b>Barrier</b>	<b>Empirical Indication</b>	<b>Effect on Internalization</b>
Diverse family and social backgrounds	Students entered the pesantren with different prior moral habits and levels of discipline	Created variation in students' readiness to accept honesty as a personal value
Fear of punishment	Some students hesitated to admit mistakes or disclose misconduct	Encouraged concealment and compliance rather than reflective honesty

Barrier	Empirical Indication	Effect on Internalization
Peer pressure	Students sometimes avoided reporting peer mistakes to maintain group harmony	Made honesty dependent on peer acceptance and group loyalty
Inconsistent role modeling	Students could become confused when adult or senior behavior did not fully match moral instruction	Weakened the credibility of honesty habituation
Routine without reflection	Students followed rules but did not always understand the moral meaning behind them	Limited internalization to procedural compliance
Emotional immaturity	Some students understood honesty cognitively but struggled to practice it consistently	Delayed the transition from moral knowledge to moral action

**Table 4.** Stages of Honesty Internalization Identified in the Study

Stage of Internalization	Main Characteristics	Dominant Motivation	Observable Indicator
Stage 1: External Compliance	Students follow honesty-related rules because they are monitored or fear sanctions	Avoiding punishment and fulfilling institutional expectations	Students behave honestly when supervised but may hesitate when supervision is absent
Stage 2: Behavioral Habituation	Students become accustomed to honesty-related routines through repeated practice	Adjusting to pesantren norms and daily expectations	Students complete duties, report attendance, and follow rules more consistently
Stage 3: Reflective Awareness	Students begin to understand why honesty matters for themselves and others	Moral understanding and social responsibility	Students admit mistakes, accept correction, and reflect on consequences
Stage 4: Relational Internalization	Students connect honesty with trust, dignity, and responsibility within the community	Maintaining moral identity and communal trust	Students practice honesty even in low-supervision situations and remind peers ethically

Overall, the results show that honesty internalization at Sa'adatuddaren Islamic Boarding School was not a simple outcome of repeated routines. It was a progressive moral process shaped by the interaction of habituation, modeling, reflection, discipline, peer relationships, and emotional safety. The pesantren had established a strong foundation through structured routines and daily moral expectations. However, the findings also show that deeper internalization required more than behavioral repetition. Students needed opportunities to understand the meaning of honesty, observe credible moral examples, feel safe when admitting mistakes, and experience honesty as part of relational trust within the school community.

The most important finding is that honesty developed along a continuum from compliance to internalization. At one end, students practiced honesty because of external rules and supervision. At the other end, honesty became part of students' moral awareness and social

identity. The transition between these stages was not automatic. It depended on whether the pesantren's habituation system was supported by reflective guidance, consistent role modeling, constructive discipline, and a psychologically safe educational environment.

### *Discussion*

The findings of this study demonstrate that honesty internalization in pesantren is not merely produced through verbal moral instruction, but through the repeated enactment of honesty within students' everyday institutional life. The practices identified in this study, including truthful attendance reporting, independent completion of academic tasks, transparent management of shared funds, admission of mistakes, and responsibility in communal duties, indicate that honesty is embedded within the daily moral ecology of the pesantren. This finding supports the broader argument in character education literature that moral values become more meaningful when students encounter them repeatedly in authentic social situations rather than only as abstract classroom content. Character formation requires continuity between what is taught, what is practiced, and what is reinforced in the educational environment [25], [26], [27]. In this respect, pesantren provide a distinctive educational setting because students' moral learning occurs not only during formal instruction but also through dormitory life, religious practice, peer interaction, and communal responsibility. This confirms previous studies suggesting that Islamic boarding schools function as integrated moral communities where religious knowledge, discipline, social responsibility, and character formation are continuously interconnected [5], [28], [29].

The study further reveals that habituation is an important but insufficient condition for honesty internalization. Repeated routines can shape students' outward behavior, yet they do not automatically generate deep moral awareness or personal commitment. Some students in this study showed honest behavior because they were accustomed to institutional expectations, while others still associated honesty with surveillance, fear of punishment, or the need to avoid sanctions. This finding is consistent with moral development theory, which emphasizes that moral behavior cannot be reduced to observable conformity because genuine moral internalization involves reasoning, affective commitment, and self-regulated responsibility [30], [31]. It also strengthens the critique that habituation based character education may become procedural if it is not accompanied by reflection and meaning-making. When students follow rules without understanding the moral reasons behind them, honesty remains at the level of compliance rather than becoming part of their personal moral identity. Therefore, the findings extend previous research on habituation in Islamic education by showing that repetition must be pedagogically connected to reflection, emotional engagement, and ethical self-awareness [32], [33], [34].

Teacher modeling emerged as one of the most influential factors in strengthening honesty internalization. Students were more likely to accept honesty as a meaningful value when they observed teachers and dormitory supervisors demonstrating fairness, consistency, openness, and accountability in everyday interactions. This finding is strongly aligned with social learning theory, which argues that individuals learn behavior not only through direct instruction but also through observation, imitation, reinforcement, and the perceived credibility of role models [35]. In the pesantren context, teachers are not only academic instructors but also moral figures whose behavior carries symbolic and practical authority. When teachers

admit mistakes, apply rules fairly, and guide students without humiliation, they make honesty visible as a lived value. Conversely, when adult behavior is inconsistent with moral instruction, students may perceive honesty education as merely rhetorical. This supports previous studies showing that teacher exemplarity and relational consistency are central to moral education because students assess the credibility of moral values through the conduct of adults around them [36], [37].

Another important finding is that reflective discipline plays a crucial role in moving honesty from external compliance to internal moral awareness. The study indicates that students responded more constructively when mistakes were addressed through advice, dialogue, counseling, reflective writing, or responsibility-based correction rather than through harsh punishment. This finding is important because punitive discipline may produce short-term obedience but can also encourage concealment, fear, and strategic dishonesty. When students perceive honesty as dangerous because it may lead to embarrassment or punishment, they may choose to hide mistakes rather than admit them. In contrast, reflective discipline enables students to understand the consequences of dishonest behavior, recognize the value of truthfulness, and develop responsibility for repairing mistakes. This finding is consistent with contemporary approaches to character education that emphasize moral dialogue, restorative practice, ethical reflection, and supportive school climate as conditions for sustainable moral development [26], [38], [39].

The findings also show that psychological safety is a significant condition for honesty internalization. Students were more willing to admit mistakes when they felt that honesty would be met with guidance rather than humiliation. This suggests that honesty is not only a cognitive or behavioral issue but also an affective and relational one. Students need emotional security to tell the truth, especially when honesty exposes their mistakes, weaknesses, or misconduct. This finding expands the discussion of character education by linking moral internalization with student welfare. A morally educative environment must not only enforce ethical behavior but also create conditions in which students feel safe to be truthful, self-critical, and responsible. In boarding school contexts, where students live under continuous institutional supervision, psychological safety becomes particularly important because excessive control may transform moral education into fear-based obedience. Therefore, honesty education should be understood as part of a broader welfare-oriented educational practice that protects students' dignity while cultivating responsibility, self-regulation, and ethical agency [40], [41].

Peer relationships were found to have a dual role in the internalization of honesty. On the one hand, peer accountability supported honesty when students reminded one another to follow rules, complete responsibilities, and avoid dishonest behavior. This indicates that honesty can become a shared community norm when it is reinforced not only by teachers but also by students themselves. On the other hand, peer pressure could also weaken honesty when students prioritized loyalty, group harmony, or fear of social rejection over truthfulness. This ambivalence confirms that moral development is socially mediated and that peer culture can either strengthen or undermine institutional character education. Previous research on moral development and school climate similarly shows that students' ethical behavior is shaped by peer norms, group expectations, and the moral meanings negotiated within social relationships [42]. In the pesantren context, this finding is particularly relevant because students live

collectively and interact intensively with peers across academic, religious, and dormitory settings. Therefore, honesty internalization requires not only teacher supervision but also deliberate cultivation of peer culture that supports truthfulness, accountability, and moral courage.

The study also found that students' diverse family and social backgrounds influenced their readiness to internalize honesty values. Students entered the pesantren with different prior habits, moral expectations, disciplinary experiences, and interpretations of authority. Some students were able to adapt quickly to honesty-related routines, while others initially perceived them as institutional demands. This finding suggests that character education in pesantren should not assume that all students begin from the same moral starting point. Instead, honesty internalization should be treated as a developmental process requiring differentiated guidance, especially for students who are newly adjusting to boarding school life. This is consistent with moral development perspectives that view ethical growth as gradual, context-dependent, and influenced by prior socialization experiences [43]. It also highlights the need for pesantren to strengthen orientation, mentoring, and relational support during students' early period of adaptation.

A central contribution of this study is the identification of honesty internalization as a staged process moving from external compliance to behavioral habituation, reflective awareness, and relational internalization. At the initial stage, students may act honestly because of rules, supervision, or fear of consequences. Through repeated practice, honesty becomes a familiar institutional expectation. However, deeper internalization occurs only when students begin to understand the moral meaning of honesty, observe credible role models, experience constructive guidance, and feel responsible for maintaining trust within the community. This staged pattern contributes to existing literature by clarifying that habituation is not equivalent to internalization. Habituation can initiate moral behavior, but internalization requires cognitive, affective, relational, and social reinforcement. This finding strengthens integrated models of character education that combine behavioral practice, moral reasoning, social learning, emotional engagement, and institutional culture [34], [44], [45].

The novelty of this study lies in its conceptualization of honesty internalization in pesantren as an interaction between structural and relational processes. Previous studies on pesantren character education have often emphasized institutional routines, religious discipline, or moral instruction as the main mechanisms of character formation. This study advances the discussion by showing that routines become morally effective only when supported by teacher modeling, reflective discipline, psychological safety, peer accountability, and meaningful student engagement. The study therefore moves beyond a procedural view of habituation and proposes a more relational and welfare-oriented understanding of honesty education. Honesty is not internalized simply because students repeat honest actions; it is internalized when students experience honesty as meaningful, safe, socially valued, and connected to their identity as responsible members of the pesantren community.

The implications of this study are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, the findings enrich character education scholarship by demonstrating that moral internalization in boarding school contexts must be understood as a multidimensional process involving behavior, cognition, emotion, relationships, and institutional culture. Practically, pesantren leaders and educators should design honesty education programs that go beyond rule

enforcement and routine monitoring. Structured habituation should be accompanied by reflective dialogue, teacher consistency, restorative disciplinary practices, peer mentoring, and emotionally safe spaces for students to admit mistakes. For policymakers and curriculum developers, the findings suggest that character education standards in Islamic boarding schools should include not only indicators of student compliance but also indicators of reflective awareness, student welfare, ethical school climate, and relational trust. By integrating habituation with care, reflection, and credible moral modeling, pesantren can strengthen honesty education as a sustainable process of moral identity formation rather than a temporary form of institutional obedience.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the internalization of honesty values at Sa'adatuddaren Islamic Boarding School is a gradual, relational, and multidimensional moral process that cannot be achieved through habituation alone. Although structured routines such as honest attendance reporting, independent academic work, financial accountability, communal responsibilities, and religious participation provide an important behavioral foundation for cultivating honesty, these practices become genuinely internalized only when they are supported by reflective guidance, consistent teacher modeling, constructive discipline, peer accountability, and a psychologically safe educational environment. The findings show that students' honesty develops along a continuum, beginning with external compliance driven by rules and supervision, progressing through repeated moral practice, and moving toward reflective awareness and relational internalization when students understand honesty as part of personal responsibility, communal trust, and moral identity. Barriers such as fear of punishment, peer pressure, inconsistent role modeling, diverse family backgrounds, and routine practices without reflection indicate that character education in pesantren must move beyond procedural discipline toward a welfare-oriented educational culture that protects students' dignity while strengthening ethical agency. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in its conceptualization of honesty internalization as the interaction between structural habituation and relational moral support, offering theoretical and practical implications for pesantren leaders, teachers, and policymakers to design character education programs that integrate discipline, care, reflection, and trust as the basis for sustainable moral development.

## LIMITATIONS

This section provides a critical reflection on the study's constraints, helping readers assess the scope and boundaries of the findings. Limitations may arise from methodological issues such as sample size, data collection instruments, or context-specific variables that restrict the generalizability of the results. Authors should also acknowledge temporal and technological limitations, particularly when studying evolving platforms such as social media or emerging AI-based tools. Self-reported data, for example, may be subject to bias or misinterpretation, while digital analytics might be influenced by algorithmic changes beyond the researchers' control. Rather than undermining the study, a well-articulated limitations section reinforces the integrity of the research process. Authors are encouraged to suggest how future research can

address these limitations by adopting alternative methods, expanding populations, or exploring comparative studies in other contexts.

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## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

N. conceptualized the study, developed the research design, conducted data collection, performed data organization and thematic analysis, and drafted the initial manuscript. N.H. contributed to the refinement of the research framework, supported data interpretation, provided theoretical and methodological guidance, and critically reviewed and revised the manuscript for intellectual content, coherence, and academic quality. Both authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

"The authors declare no conflict of interest."

## DECLARATION OF USE OF AI IN SCIENTIFIC WRITING

The authors utilized ChatGPT for sentence rephrasing. The content was carefully reviewed and edited by the authors, who take full responsibility for the publication's content.

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