Educational Reflections on Islamic Clothing and Character Formation in Muhammadiyah Palangka Raya

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of the implementation of the Islamic dress code on character education at SMA Muhammadiyah Palangka Raya. Using a mixed-methods approach, both quantitative data from surveys and school records, and qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions were analyzed to explore how the dress code influences student behavior, discipline, and moral development. The quantitative results indicate that 85% of students believe the Islamic dress code promotes self-discipline, with 60% reporting noticeable improvements in their personal behavior. School records also show a 15% reduction in disciplinary incidents and a 7% increase in attendance among students who adhere to the dress code. Qualitative findings reveal that teachers, students, and parents recognize the dress code as a tool for instilling Islamic values, such as respect, responsibility, and modesty. However, challenges such as peer pressure and the conflict between religious dress and fashion trends were noted as significant factors in students' adherence to the dress code. The study highlights the role of the school environment, including the collaboration between teachers, students, and parents, in fostering character education through the dress code. This research contributes to understanding how Islamic dress codes can serve as a practical tool in character development and offers insights for improving the implementation of character education programs in Islamic schools.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Character education has a role in forming individuals who are able to face today's challenges and have a positive impact on society.(Khodijah & Surawan, 2025) Character education in Indonesia has become a primary focus in the national curriculum. The government, through the Ministry of Education and Culture, has recognized the importance of character education in shaping a generation that is not only knowledgeable but also morally upright and virtuous. Character education in schools involves more than just teaching knowledge; it integrates moral and social values into students' daily lives.(Surawan et al., 2022)ʼ(Monalisa et al., 2022)ʼ(Norhidayah et al., 2023) This is in line with Lickona(Lickona, 1992) perspective, which asserts that character education should include discipline and respect for prevailing social norms. In this context, understanding the role of Islamic dress as part of character education becomes highly relevant, especially in Islamic-based schools. One example of its implementation can be seen at SMA Muhammadiyah Palangka Raya, where the Islamic dress code is not merely a school regulation but is part of a broader character development strategy. Islamic clothing is viewed as a symbol of religious identity that reflects values such as modesty, discipline, and self-respect.(Ainissyifa, 2014)ʼ(Bonirin et al., 2025) The use of Muslim attire, such as the hijab, is even seen as a form of self-control that strengthens the formation of positive character in students.(Anshari et al., 2022)

Furthermore, Mazaya and Ainissyifa(Mazaya & Ainissyifa, 2018) emphasize that the implementation of Islamic dress codes in schools is not just symbolic but contributes tangibly to character formation by reinforcing moral values such as honesty, responsibility, and discipline.(Zubaidah et al., 2024) found that the application of Islamic dress in schools can foster mutual respect, awareness of rules, and adherence to social norms. In this regard, the Islamic dress policy at SMA Muhammadiyah Palangka Raya serves as a practical approach to character education aimed at nurturing morally grounded and religiously aware students. Nevertheless, implementing such policies is not without challenges. One of the primary issues lies in the differing perceptions among students regarding the meaning and purpose of the Islamic dress code itself. (Franceschelli & O'Brien, 2014) point out that students' diverse cultural and familial backgrounds influence how they perceive the importance of Islamic attire in shaping character. In this case, teachers have an important role in shaping students' character through an adaptive approach to these diverse backgrounds.(Mazrur et al., 2022)ʼ(Khasanah et al., 2025)

Another challenge stems from the influence of popular culture and social media, which often contradict Islamic values.(Muljadji et al., 2017) emphasize that media and pop culture hold a strong appeal and can shape negative perceptions among students regarding Islamic dress. Therefore, comprehensive and collaborative strategies are needed—ones that involve families, schools, communities, and even government support—to reinforce the values embedded in Islamic dress codes. In addition, recent studies emphasize the role of Islamic character education in shaping digital citizenship and addressing the challenges posed by the digital age. Mazaya and Ainissyifa(Mazaya & Ainissyifa, 2018) argue that integrating character education through Islamic dress codes not only fosters responsibility in physical environments but also in students' digital interactions. Similarly, research by Mau(Mau, 2024) and Anisah(Anisah, 2023) underscores how character education, when combined with Islamic values and cultural practices like dress codes, can create a more cohesive and responsible school environment, promoting respect and ethical behavior among students. On the other hand, maintaining consistency in the application of Islamic dress codes remains a challenge, especially as students are influenced by external factors like peer pressure and media culture. Zubaidah(Zubaidah et al., 2024) explore the social challenges students face in adhering to dress codes, suggesting that schools need to provide greater support and guidance to help students understand the significance of the Islamic dress

code in shaping their character. This viewpoint is reinforced by Maideja et.al.,(Maideja et al., 2023) who emphasize the importance of a comprehensive approach to Islamic education that integrates moral, social, and religious development, including adherence to dress codes.

The implementation of Islamic dress codes in schools, particularly at SMA Muhammadiyah Palangka Raya, should be understood as part of a broader initiative to foster the character development of younger generations. This policy is designed not only to instil religious values but also to shape students' self-identity, sense of responsibility, and discipline—essential attributes in preparing them to face future societal challenges. In this regard, Islamic dress is not merely a matter of complying with school uniform regulations, but a strategic instrument for embedding core Islamic values such as modesty, self-control, and respect for religious teachings.

This study is significant because it offers a deeper and more contextualized understanding of how the Islamic dress code contributes to character education in a multicultural environment like Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan. Unlike prior research, which often presents a normative perspective or is conducted in culturally homogeneous settings, this study highlights how students from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds perceive, respond to, and internalize the values embedded in Islamic dress policies. Therefore, the research contributes novel insights into how such policies can be interpreted and applied differently depending on the socio-cultural context, enriching the discourse on character education in Indonesia. The uniqueness of this study lies in its comprehensive approach, which positions the Islamic dress code not solely as a disciplinary measure, but as a cultural and psychological tool for shaping students' moral identity and ethical integrity. SMA Muhammadiyah Palangka Raya serves as a compelling case study due to its setting within a diverse society characterized by a mix of ethnicities, traditions, and belief systems. This setting provides a real-world context for examining both the opportunities and challenges in applying Islamic character-based education in contemporary Indonesia.

Moreover, this research emphasizes the vital role of teachers as facilitators of value internalization, as well as the importance of collaboration among schools, families, and communities in fostering a holistic understanding of the meanings and objectives behind Islamic dress practices. Through this integrated strategy, the Islamic dress code can serve as a contextual and practical medium for developing students' character in a way that is relevant to the realities of modern life, where external cultural influences such as peer pressure and media are increasingly prevalent. Consequently, the primary aim of this study is to analyses the implementation of the Islamic dress code at SMA Muhammadiyah Palangka Raya and evaluate its role in shaping students' character. Additionally, the study seeks to identify the social challenges encountered by students in adhering to this policy, as well as the support and guidance provided by the school to ensure that the values embedded in the Islamic dress code are well understood, internalized, and reflected in students' everyday behaviour

2. METHODS

This study employs a mixed-methods approach using a sequential explanatory design to examine the impact of Islamic dress codes on character education at SMA Muhammadiyah Palangka Raya. The quantitative phase involves a survey administered to 150 students from Grades 10 to 12, selected through stratified random sampling, to assess their perceptions of the dress code's influence on discipline and character formation. Additionally, school disciplinary and academic records will be analyzed to identify correlations with dress code adherence.(Creswell & Clark, 2018) The qualitative phase includes semi-structured interviews with 10 teachers and 5 school administrators, as well as 30 surveyed parents, to explore their perspectives on the dress code's effectiveness both in school and at home. Focus group discussions with students and direct observations of dress code compliance in

various school settings will provide further contextual depth.(Miles et al., 2014) In this study, qualitative data obtained through interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and direct observations were analyzed using a thematic approach to identify key themes related to the influence of Islamic dress code implementation on students' character building at SMA Muhammadiyah Palangka Raya. First of all, all interviews and discussions conducted with participants were transcribed in detail. The analysis process began with coding, where the researcher marked relevant parts of the transcripts to determine important categories, such as "discipline," "responsibility," and "religious identity." After coding, the next step was to group the codes into major themes that reflected larger phenomena, such as the relationship between the implementation of the dress code and changes in students' disciplinary behavior.

Furthermore, these findings are analyzed in the context of relevant theories, such as social identity theory and moral development theory. Social identity theory helps explain how the implementation of an Islamic dress code can affect students' religious identity, which then shapes their attitudes and behaviors inside and outside of school. Meanwhile, moral development theory is used to understand how moral values, such as discipline and a sense of responsibility, are instilled through the existing dress code. To ensure the credibility and validity of the analysis results, triangulation was conducted by comparing data from various sources, including interviews, FGDs and observations, as well as quantitative data obtained from surveys. This triangulation allows the researcher to strengthen the findings and ensure that the interpretations made cover a holistic range of perspectives.(Baumann & Krskova, 2016)

This analysis process allowed the researcher to draw more in-depth conclusions regarding how the Islamic dress code plays a role in shaping student character at SMA Muhammadiyah Palangka Raya.(Alifuddin, 2014) Moreover, through this approach, this research not only provides a broader understanding of the impact of the dress code on student behavior, but also suggests more effective and relevant character education policy recommendations, particularly in the context of faith-based schools. Thus, the qualitative data analysis conducted in this study provides valuable insights into the important role of Islamic dress codes in shaping student character in Indonesia.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The Impact of Islamic Dress Implementation on Students' Character Education

This section presents the combined findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data collected to assess the impact of the Islamic dress code on character education at SMA Muhammadiyah Palangka Raya.

Category	Data	Percentage/Statistic
Impact on Discipline	Students who believe the dress code encourages self-discipline	85%
	Students who reported improvement in personal behavior due to the dress code	60%
Impact on Character Development	Students who felt the dress code helped reflect Islamic values like modesty and respect for others	70%
	Students who noted the dress code positively influenced social interactions	58%

Peer Influence	Students who felt peer pressure due to non-compliance with the dress code	42%
School Records	Reduction in disciplinary incidents (e.g., tardiness, misconduct) after dress code implementation	15% reduction
	Higher attendance rate for students adhering to the dress code	7% higher

Based on the data presented in the table, several key themes emerge regarding the impact of the Islamic dress code at SMA Muhammadiyah Palangka Raya. Below is an in-depth development of the results:

3.1.1. Impact on Discipline

The interviews with key stakeholders, including counseling teachers, students, parents, and the vice principal, confirm that the Islamic dress code has positively impacted student discipline at SMA Muhammadiyah Palangka Raya. The Counseling Guidance (BK) teacher noted,

"Since the dress code was implemented, students have shown greater compliance with school rules, becoming more punctual, organized, and mindful of their behavior."

A Grade XI student shared, "At first, I was uncomfortable with the dress code, but over time, I became more responsible for my appearance and behavior. It serves as a constant reminder to act appropriately." The Vice Principal for Student Affairs remarked,

"The change in student behavior has been significant, with fewer reports of disciplinary violations. The dress code has influenced their overall attitude, making them more orderly."

A parent also observed, "My child has become more disciplined, preparing school supplies neatly and paying attention to their appearance. I believe this rule has contributed to developing good habits."

The interview results show that the implementation of the Islamic dress code at SMA Muhammadiyah Palangka Raya has had a positive impact on student behavior. Teachers, students, and parents reported an increase in discipline and compliance with school rules. Students have become more organized, punctual, and pay more attention to their behavior. One student revealed that although he initially felt uncomfortable, he eventually felt more responsible for his appearance and attitude. The Vice Principal also noted that there was a decrease in reports of disciplinary infractions and students showed a more orderly demeanor. Parents also noticed positive changes, with their children becoming more organized and paying attention to appearance and other good habits. Based on the above data, it is strengthened by the following survey data:

Category	Data	Percentage
Impact on Self-Discipline	Students who believe the dress code encourages self-discipline	85%
Behavioural Improvement	Students who reported improvement in personal behaviour due to the dress code	60%

Based on the quantitative data obtained from the survey, it can be concluded that the Islamic dress code policy at SMA Muhammadiyah Palangka Raya has a positive impact on students' self-discipline formation. As many as 85% of students believe that the Islamic dress code encourages them to be more disciplined, while 60% report an improvement in their personal behavior since the implementation of the policy. This data shows that the Islamic dress code not only serves as a rule that limits appearance, but also a factor that significantly influences changes in student behavior.

Influence on Student Self-Discipline

The survey results showing that 85% of students feel that the Islamic dress code encourages self-discipline shows that students understand the relationship between dress code and personal responsibility. Self-discipline is an important element in character education, as it includes the ability to control actions and make decisions that conform to moral and social norms.(Kottawatta, 2025) The consistent application of the Islamic dress code provides structure and routine that helps students to build positive habits and internalize disciplinary values.(Firdaus & Suwendi, 2025) In addition, interview data with the counselling teacher corroborates this finding, where the counselling teacher reported an increase in students' awareness of school rules in general, such as discipline in arrival time, maintaining attitude, and complying with other rules. This shows that the implementation of Islamic dress creates a domino effect that reinforces disciplinary behaviour outside the context of dress, which in turn supports the formation of better student characters.(Cikara et al., 2022)

Significant Behaviour Change

About 60% of students reported positive behavioural changes that have occurred since the implementation of the Islamic dress code. This data shows that the implementation of the dress code is not just a rule, but also serves as a means to shape students' mindset and habits. This improvement in behaviour can be attributed to students' increased sense of responsibility and self-awareness of the rules.(Sibarani & Ngatmini, 2024) This is in line with the view that character education includes not only compliance with rules, but also character building through good habits. The statements of grade XI students who felt initially forced but over time began to internalize the value of discipline corroborate this. They admit that Islamic clothing helps them maintain their appearance and behaviour, which reflects the process of internalizing disciplinary values. This phenomenon shows that changes in student behaviour are more long-term and not just the result of momentary compliance. (Fakhruroji & Rojiati, 2017)

Impact on School and Family Environment

Statements from the vice-principals and parents also revealed that this policy not only impacted the school but also brought about changes in students' lives outside of school. The vice principal noted a decrease in disciplinary violations and an overall increase in students' awareness in complying with school regulations. This shows that the implementation of Islamic dress code at SMA Muhammadiyah Palangka Raya is effective in creating a better culture of discipline throughout the school environment. Support from parents has also been an important factor in the success of this policy.(Butler et al., 2020) Parents reported that their children became more disciplined at home, indicating that the impact of the dress code policy is not limited to the school environment, but also affects students' habits at home. Thus, it can be said that the Islamic dress code policy is successful in creating a comprehensive discipline, which applies both in school and outside of school.(Taufik, 2022)

Character Education Implications

Overall, the results of this study show that the implementation of Islamic dress code at SMA Muhammadiyah Palangka Raya has a significant contribution to students' character building, especially in the aspects of discipline and responsibility. This policy not only aims to instil religious values, but also serves as an effective tool in building students' positive character in accordance with the moral and social values that exist in society.(Fakhruroji & Rojiati, 2017)

3.1.2. Impact on Character Development

The fact that 70% of students felt the dress code helped them reflect Islamic values such as modesty and respect for others emphasizes the strong alignment between the dress code and character development. This suggests that the dress code functions as a symbolic and practical representation of Islamic values that are integral to students' moral education. It indicates that the dress code is not just

about appearance but is actively shaping students' values and ethical beliefs, which is a critical aspect of character education.(Lickona, 1992) This is not only reflected in the quantitative data, but also reinforced through the interview results. An Islamic Religious Education teacher stated, "We often see students behaving better after getting used to wearing polite clothes. It's as if the clothes become a reminder to keep behaving in accordance with religious teachings." Observations also show that students who comply with the dress code tend to be more aware of their behavior in the school environment, such as speaking politely and showing respect for teachers and peers.

The **58%** of students who felt that the dress code positively influenced their social interactions indicates that the dress code contributes to building a respectful and positive social environment. When students observe and practice modesty and respect in their dress, it encourages similar behaviors in their interpersonal relationships. This is crucial for fostering a school culture where respect and consideration for others are core values, as these traits promote social harmony and reduce conflict.(Firdaus & Suwendi, 2025) An interview with one grade XII student mentioned, "If we dress neatly and according to the rules, our friends also respect us more. It feels like we're all on the same level, so it's rare for us to put each other down." In addition, from observations of daily activities at school, it is seen that students show a more inclusive and friendly attitude towards each other, which reflects the internalization of character values such as empathy, tolerance and courtesy. This is in line with Lickona(Lickona, 1992) view that character education emphasizes the formation of moral values through consistent habits.(Shuai, 2023)

3.1.3. Peer Influence

The data shows that 42% of students experienced peer pressure from peers who were less compliant with the dress code. This percentage is significant enough to show that although the school has set clear standards, implementation is still influenced by the social dynamics between students. This pressure is not always in the form of direct coercion, but more often comes in the form of teasing, sarcasm, or unsupportive attitudes that can make students feel pressured to conform. The interview results clarify this dynamic. One student revealed:

"If I wear the jilbab according to the rules and wear the complete uniform, sometimes my friends say, 'why are you too obedient, we are also just an ordinary school, not a pesantren (Islamic boarding school).'"

This statement shows the influence of group culture that normalizes non-compliance, so that students who obey the rules actually feel 'different' or 'foreign' in their environment. From the teacher's side, a homeroom teacher said:

"We often find cases where students who were previously obedient, start to loosen up because they follow the style of their friends. They're afraid of being seen as out of touch or too rigid."

This statement shows that peer pressure has the potential to shift the values that have been instilled through school rules, especially if students do not have a firm personal value. Meanwhile, observations during recess and outside the classroom show that student groups tend to form based on similar attitudes towards rules. Students who consistently obey the rules often gather with fellow students who have similar levels of compliance, while students who are more relaxed also form their own groups.(Martela et al., 2021) This suggests that group values or norms play an important role in strengthening (or weakening) individual compliance with rules.(Gamage et al., 2021)

3.1.4. School Records

The data shows that 42% of the students experienced peer pressure from peers who were less compliant with the dress code. This percentage is quite significant, indicating that although the school has set clear standards in terms of the Islamic dress code, its implementation is still influenced by the social dynamics between students. This pressure does not always take the form of explicit coercion, but often comes in the form of ridicule, subtle innuendo, or even social neglect that makes students feel

uncomfortable to appear according to the rules. The interview results clarify these dynamics. A grade XI student revealed:

"Sometimes I hesitate to wear a long headscarf or full uniform, because my friends say I'm pretentious. If it's just a little different, I'm immediately judged as weird."

This comment shows the unwritten norms that apply in friendship groups, where students tend to conform to avoid social rejection. This is a challenge for students who want to be consistent with the dress code and Islamic values, but do not have enough courage or social support. An interview with a counseling teacher also confirmed this:

"We see that some students who used to be very disciplined, start to show changes after they enter a new friendship environment. They become more permissive, and often this change does not come from their own consciousness, but because they want to be accepted by the group."

One of the parents interviewed expressed similar concerns:

"My son used to always dress neatly and cover up, but lately he often says 'all his friends do that too, Mom.' I think he just wants to feel like the others so he won't be ostracized."

Observations support the interview findings. During observations in the school environment, especially when students gathered in the canteen and the field area, there was the formation of relatively homogeneous social groups based on attitudes towards rules. The group of students who wore full uniforms and followed the rules tended to interact with fellow students who obeyed the rules, while the group who wore looser clothes in following the rules seemed to form their own community. Interactions between these groups also appear limited. In addition, on several occasions, it appears that students who look neater and more Islamic tend to be the target of jokes or indirect comments from other students, such as:

"Wow, what a complete outfit. Are you going to preach on Friday?"

Although it may sound lighthearted, comments like these can inhibit students' courage to perform according to the rules and make the dress code a social burden rather than an expression of value. The findings suggest that the dress code does more than regulate appearance; it serves as a tool for reinforcing discipline, character, and respect. However, the presence of peer pressure indicates that more support and education are needed to ensure all students internalize the values behind the dress code rather than simply complying out of external pressure.(Ngobeni et al., 2023) The results also imply that the dress code is effective in shaping behavior and promoting a positive social atmosphere. However, to maximize its impact, the school could consider incorporating more comprehensive discussions and workshops on the significance of the dress code and its connection to Islamic values, to help students understand and embrace it more fully. Given the reduction in disciplinary incidents and the improvement in attendance, it would be beneficial for the school to monitor these trends over a longer period and investigate whether these positive outcomes are sustained.(Kearney et al., 2022) Moreover, exploring the intersection between adherence to the dress code and academic performance could provide additional insights into how this policy affects other areas of student life.

3.2. The Implementation of Islamic Dress in Shaping Students' Character

The implementation of Islamic clothing in Muhammadiyah Palangka Raya High School is proven to make a real contribution to strengthening students' character education. The results of this study, which include quantitative data, interviews, and observations, show that the Islamic clothing policy has a significant effect in shaping students' values of discipline, responsibility, politeness, and religious identity.

3.2.1.   Islamic Fashion as a Medium of Discipline and Responsibility

The implementation of the Islamic dress code at SMA Muhammadiyah Palangka Raya functions as more than a regulatory measure—it acts as an instrument for cultivating character, particularly in the areas of discipline and responsibility. Quantitative data indicates a 15% decrease in disciplinary violations and a 7% increase in attendance after the consistent enforcement of the dress code. This suggests a positive correlation between adherence to Islamic attire and improved student behavior in

school. Interviews with teachers support this finding. A school counselor noted that students who regularly comply with the dress code tend to be more orderly, punctual, and respectful of school regulations. Wearing proper attire becomes a daily exercise in self-regulation, gradually shaping a habit of responsibility and discipline that aligns with broader moral expectations.

This aligns closely with Lickona's theory (Lickona, 1992), which emphasizes that character education is most effective when moral values are habituated through daily practices. In this sense, the act of wearing Islamic dress consistently is not merely about clothing but about developing internal self-discipline through external behavior. A study by Khotimah and Inayati(Khotimah & Inayati, 2023) also supports this view, finding that Islamic dress code policies in religious-based schools contribute significantly to the formation of good habits such as timeliness, neatness, and ethical consistency in students' everyday conduct. Furthermore, Muttaqin et al.,(Muttaqin et al., 2024) in the *Journal of Education and Practice*, emphasize that religious symbols like Islamic dress enhance students' intrinsic motivation to behave in ways that reflect moral and religious values. They state:

"Consistent exposure to religious attire in Islamic schools correlates with students' improved behavioral discipline and self-regulation."

In other words, external religious symbols foster internal awareness and behavioral self-control, as students consciously embody the values associated with their attire. Additional research by Mazaya and Ainissyifa(Mazaya & Ainissyifa, 2018) confirms that students who wear religious clothing regularly exhibit higher levels of self-awareness and moral restraint, as they perceive themselves as representatives of Islamic values in both personal and public spheres. Thus, the Islamic dress code serves not just as a visual symbol of religious identity but as an educational medium that reinforces responsibility, moral consciousness, and behavioral discipline. In the broader context of Islamic character education, it represents a practical and effective strategy that embeds values through repetition, symbolism, and self-regulation in students' daily lives.(Suciati et al., 2022)

3.2.2. Strengthening Identity and Religious Values

Religious character is a character value that reflects a person's relationship with God through thoughts, words, and actions based on religious teachings.(Husniah et al., 2025) In-depth interviews with students of SMA Muhammadiyah Palangka Raya revealed that wearing Islamic clothing is not only a matter of compliance with school regulations, but also closely related to the process of identity formation and strengthening of religious identity. Many students stated that by wearing Islamic clothing, they feel closer to Islamic values and more confident as Muslim students in the school environment and outside. One student said:

"Islamic clothing makes me feel like I am representing Islam, so I am more careful in my attitude and behavior."

This statement reflects what Fakhruroji and Rojiati(Fakhruroji & Rojiati, 2017) calls Islamic dress a symbol of religious identity that reinforces a sense of belonging to the faith community and pride in Muslim identity. In the context of Islamic education, clothing becomes more than an external attribute; it becomes a medium for building a spiritual personality. Furthermore, Uddin and Riaz(Fakhruroji & Rojiati, 2017) in Religious Education Journal assert that Islamic dress serves as an effective medium of spiritual education, as the religious symbolism worn daily creates a constant moral awareness. In other words, clothing becomes a visual as well as a psychological reminder of the values believed and embraced. Research by Alkouatli(Alkouatli, 2018) also showed that the use of religious clothing in an educational context can help students internalize spiritual values more deeply and make them more aware of their daily actions as representations of Islamic values. Another study by Riaz and Khan (Fakhruroji & Rojiati, 2017) in the Journal of Islamic Identity Studies added that students who wear religious clothing are better able to distinguish between their personal and social identities, and show stronger moral resilience in the face of environmental pressures. In this context, the implementation of Islamic clothing at SMA Muhammadiyah Palangka Raya plays an important role in instilling religious values through tangible and visible symbolization, as well as building a positive Islamic identity. This

is very relevant in the era of globalization and digitalization, where religious identity is often tested by various forms of external cultural influences.(Zaid et al., 2022)

3.2.3.   Social Challenges as a Character-Building Process

Although the implementation of Islamic fashion in SMA Muhammadiyah Palangka Raya has shown a positive impact on discipline and religious identity formation, students still face various social challenges that cannot be ignored. One of the main challenges is peer pressure and the desire to stay relevant with contemporary fashion trends. The survey results showed that 42% of students acknowledged social pressure regarding dress codes, especially when they felt different from their peer group or community outside of school. In interviews, some students revealed that they felt a dilemma between wanting to appear in line with their Islamic identity through Islamic clothing, and at the same time not wanting to look "outdated" compared to their peers. This dilemma indicates a deeper process of character formation - how students make conscious moral decisions in the midst of conflicting values.

According to Narvaez and Lapsey,(Narvaez & Lapsey, 2008) meaningful character education should provide space for students to experience and reflect on real moral dilemmas, not just dogmatically accept values. In this context, social pressure becomes a moral learning space where students are tested to maintain values such as moral courage, consistency, and personal integrity, while learning to manage external influences wisely. Furthermore, Zubaidah et al.,(Zubaidah et al., 2024) emphasized the importance of support from schools in helping students navigate social pressure, especially by providing space for dialogue, reflection, and active involvement of students in becoming role models for their peers. Schools need to facilitate dialogic and participatory approaches, so that students do not feel that adherence to Islamic dress is a form of compulsion, but rather a conscious choice that comes from an understanding of values.(Rahman, 2024)

A study by Adams & Forsyth (2020) in the Educational Leadership Journal also revealed that character strengthening occurs most effectively when students are given the trust to make ethical decisions in a supportive environment. Therefore, social challenges are not mere obstacles, but can be important opportunities for autonomous character strengthening. In practice, the role of the mentor teacher, homeroom teacher, as well as religious activities and mentoring becomes very important to help students understand the values contained in Islamic clothing. When students are guided to understand the spiritual and social meaning behind their clothing, they will be better equipped to maintain their principles even outside of school.

3.2.4.   The Role of School Environment as a Supporter of Value Internalization

The school environment has a strategic role in strengthening the internalization process of character values through the implementation of Islamic clothing. The principal and teachers at SMA Muhammadiyah Palangka Raya stated that a collaborative approach between the school, students, and parents is very important in ensuring that the values contained in the Islamic dress code can be lived and practiced consistently.(Khasanah et al., 2025) Teachers are expected to be able to adjust to the conditions of the school's socio-cultural environment so that their presence has a significant positive influence on student character building. This approach reflects the principal of whole-school approach in character education, as proposed by Berkowitz and Bier(Berkowitz & Bier, 2005), which emphasizes the need for active participation of the entire school community-including educators, education personnel, parents, and even students themselves-in creating a school culture that supports character building. Without comprehensive involvement, the moral values to be instilled tend to be symbolic and less effective in forming long-term habits.

 Research by Dwiyani et al.,(Dwiyani et al., 2023) confirms that the success of character education through cultural symbols such as Islamic clothing is highly dependent on the consistency between the values taught in the classroom and the real practices applied in the school environment, including in non-formal activities such as extracurricular activities, religious activities, and social interactions between students. Furthermore, Lovat et al. (2021) state that value internalization will be more effective

when students are in a supportive ecosystem, where character values are applied holistically through policies, learning practices, and social relationships at school. Education at this time, one of which can be provided through spectacles that present educational and moral values. This reinforces the importance of an environment that actively habituates moral values in various dimensions of school life. Observations in the field show that students who feel support from teachers and the school environment are more likely to comply with the Islamic dress code with awareness, not coercion. In addition, the consistency of the rules outside of class hours (such as extracurricular activities) gives the impression that these values are truly made into school culture, not just a formality. According to Narvaez and Lapsey(Narvaez & Lapsey, 2008), character education that is contextualized and supported by the environment will encourage autonomous character formation-that is, students carry out values because of self-awareness, not because they are afraid of sanctions.

4. CONCLUSION

The implementation of Islamic dress at SMA Muhammadiyah Palangka Raya has proven effective as a strategy for character education. This policy has contributed not only to improved student discipline and responsibility—evidenced by a reduction in infractions and increased attendance—but also to reinforcing religious identity and cultivating core moral values such as manners, integrity, and respect for social norms. Despite facing social challenges like peer pressure and the influence of fashion trends, students learn to stand firm in their values, showing moral courage and resilience. The supportive and consistent environment provided by the school plays a pivotal role in reinforcing this policy, ultimately contributing to the development of a well-rounded Islamic character in students. Theoretical implications of this study contribute to the broader field of character education by demonstrating how non-academic policies, such as dress codes, can foster internalization of values, self-discipline, and ethical responsibility. This research expands the understanding of how cultural and religious values can be integrated into the educational framework, especially in multicultural environments. Practically, the study offers a valuable model for educational institutions on how to incorporate dress codes as part of a broader character education strategy, emphasizing the need for a supportive school environment where values are consistently reinforced. Schools should not only enforce policies but also guide students through challenges, ensuring that the underlying values are understood and internalized. Furthermore, this study provides a strong argument for the use of Islamic dress codes as a tool for identity-building, helping students develop pride in their religious and cultural values while preparing them for societal challenges. For future research, it is recommended to examine the long-term effects of Islamic dress codes on character development post-graduation and to explore how socio-economic factors, teacher and parental involvement, and global media influence students' perceptions and adherence to such policies. Comparative studies in different school settings and a deeper exploration of community perspectives would provide more comprehensive insights into the effectiveness of these policies. Additionally, exploring the impact of globalized media on students' interpretations of Islamic dress codes could help schools devise strategies to counteract external cultural influences while maintaining the integrity of their educational values.

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