

## Religious-Based Habituation and the Cultivation of Interreligious Harmony in School Culture

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### Abstract

This study examines how religious-based habituation strengthens school culture and fosters interreligious harmony in a religiously diverse public elementary school. Although previous research has explored school culture and religious habituation separately, empirical evidence is limited on how daily religious routines can function as inclusive social mechanisms that promote interfaith tolerance. This study addresses this gap by analyzing the implementation and impact of religious habituation at SDN 116 Cicaheum. A mixed-methods sequential exploratory design was employed. Qualitative data were collected through observations, interviews with the principal, teachers, and students, and documentation. Quantitative data were obtained from questionnaires administered to 30 sixth-grade students and analyzed using validity and reliability testing, followed by simple linear regression. The findings show that religious habituation is implemented through daily routines such as the 5S movement, collective prayers, and Qur'anic recitation, as well as weekly activities including Dhuha prayer, short sermons, and mini religious projects. These practices are designed inclusively, allowing students of different faiths to participate through alternative moral and social activities. Quantitative analysis indicates a positive and significant effect of religious habituation on school culture, with a regression coefficient of 1.645 and a significance value below 0.001. The study demonstrates that inclusive religious habituation not only strengthens students' spiritual character but also creates structured opportunities for interfaith interaction aligned with Intergroup Contact Theory. It concludes that adaptive habituation programs can be effective strategies for cultivating tolerance and a harmonious school culture in multicultural educational settings.

**Keywords:** Intergroup Contact Theory, interreligious harmony, religious-based habituation, religious tolerance, school culture.

**Abstrak**

*Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana habituasi berbasis religius berkontribusi pada penguatan budaya sekolah dan penumbuhan harmoni antarumat beragama di sebuah sekolah dasar negeri yang memiliki keragaman agama. Meskipun penelitian sebelumnya telah membahas budaya sekolah dan habituasi religius secara terpisah, masih terbatas bukti empiris yang menjelaskan bagaimana rutinitas keagamaan harian dapat berfungsi sebagai mekanisme sosial inklusif yang mendorong toleransi antaragama. Penelitian ini mengisi kesenjangan tersebut dengan menganalisis implementasi dan dampak habituasi religius di SDN 116 Cicaheum. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain mixed methods sequential exploratory. Data kualitatif dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara dengan kepala sekolah, guru, dan siswa, serta dokumentasi. Data kuantitatif diperoleh melalui kuesioner yang diberikan kepada 30 siswa kelas VI dan dianalisis melalui uji validitas, reliabilitas, serta regresi linier sederhana. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa habituasi religius dilaksanakan melalui kegiatan harian seperti gerakan 5S, doa bersama, dan pembacaan Al-Qur'an, serta kegiatan mingguan seperti salat Dhuha, kultum, dan proyek religius mini. Praktik-praktik ini dirancang secara inklusif sehingga siswa dari berbagai agama dapat berpartisipasi melalui aktivitas moral dan sosial alternatif. Analisis kuantitatif menunjukkan adanya pengaruh positif dan signifikan habituasi religius terhadap budaya sekolah, dengan koefisien regresi sebesar 1,645 dan nilai signifikansi di bawah 0,001. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa habituasi religius yang inklusif tidak hanya memperkuat karakter spiritual siswa tetapi juga menciptakan peluang interaksi antaragama yang terstruktur sesuai dengan Intergroup Contact Theory. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa program habituasi yang adaptif dapat menjadi strategi efektif untuk menumbuhkan toleransi dan budaya sekolah yang harmonis dalam konteks pendidikan multikultural.*

**Kata kunci:** Teori Kontak Antar Kelompok, harmoni antarumat beragama, habituasi berbasis religi, toleransi beragama, budaya sekolah.

**INTRODUCTION**

Schools are formal educational institutions that hold a fundamental responsibility in developing students' full potential. This responsibility extends beyond the development of intellectual capacity to include emotional and spiritual intelligence, which together form the foundation of holistic human development. As centers of learning and value transmission, schools are expected not only to deliver academic knowledge but also to shape students' character and moral orientation. These dimensions of development are cultivated not only through structured classroom instruction but also through the lived experiences of students within the school environment, particularly through school culture and routine programs that are implemented consistently and sustainably (Prasetyo, 2014). School culture refers to the system of shared values, norms, traditions, behavioral patterns, attitudes, and beliefs that shapes how members of the school community interact and function daily. According to Fullan and Hargreaves (1991), school culture influences relationships among school members through deeply embedded beliefs and expectations that are reflected in everyday practices and institutional norms. These cultural expressions manifest in various forms, including symbols, rituals, traditions, and language that collectively define the identity of a school (Fleming & Kleinhenz, 2007). As such, school culture serves as an invisible yet powerful force that shapes students' experiences, behaviors, and value orientations.

In the context of character education, school culture plays a strategic and decisive role. Through a culture consciously designed and consistently implemented, schools can create a distinctive identity that reflects the values they seek to uphold. These values are not merely articulated in formal documents but are embodied in the daily behavior of school members and institutional routines. Consequently, school culture becomes a crucial component in the success of character education, particularly in the internalization of religious and moral values (Megawati, 2004). An effectively managed school culture contributes to a conducive learning environment, supports students' character development, and strengthens relationships among teachers, students, and school leaders through positive and respectful communication (Samani, 2012). Schools, therefore, function not only as academic institutions but also as moral communities that provide role models essential for character formation (Indah, 2021).

Proper management of school culture significantly influences the development of students' religious character. When the values embedded in school culture align with the intended character outcomes, the process of character education becomes more effective and meaningful. Conversely, inconsistencies between proclaimed values and actual practices may hinder students' moral development. For this reason, the success of character education is highly dependent on how school culture is planned, implemented, and maintained in a consistent manner (Safitri, 2021). Character formation is a gradual, continuous process that cannot be achieved instantly. According to Budimansyah, as cited in Kurniawaty (2022), character development requires sustained efforts through structured stages. Drawing on the theory developed by Kohlberg and Lockhead, the internalization of character values involves four main stages: habituation as the foundational stage, cognitive understanding of values and behaviors, application of values in everyday actions, and reflection and evaluation to assess the impact of these behaviors (Kurniawaty, Purwati, & Faiz, 2022). Through continuous habituation, school culture serves as an effective medium for internalizing religious values and fostering tolerance among diverse students, ensuring these traits become deeply rooted in their holistic character development (Papageorgiou, 2025).

Habituation plays a crucial role because human behavior is largely shaped by routines and habits that are repeatedly practiced over time. Pierre Bourdieu's theory of *habitus* provides a useful lens for understanding this process. *Habitus* refers to a system of durable dispositions formed through social experiences and, in turn, shaping individual actions and perceptions (Bourdieu, 2013). According to this perspective, behavioral patterns are not merely individual choices but are socially constructed through ongoing interactions within specific social contexts (Nasution & Bahari, 2024). *Habitus* represents the internalization of social

structures, which are later reproduced through everyday practices (Ayuningtyas & Pramono, 2023). Applying Bourdieu's concept of habitus to the educational context, religious habituation should not be understood merely as a set of symbolic or ritual activities. Rather, it functions as a mechanism for forming internal dispositions that are embedded in students' minds and behaviors through sustained religious socialization at school. These dispositions are shaped within the framework of school culture, a social space where moral, spiritual, and social values are continuously transmitted and reinforced (Bourdieu, 2013).

Initial observations at SDN 116 Cicaheum indicate that the school has implemented various habit-forming programs as part of its school culture (Sari & Sadewo, 2024). These include daily routines such as the 5S movement (greeting, smiling, addressing, politeness, and courtesy), collective prayers before learning activities, and Qur'anic recitation, as well as weekly religious programs such as Dhuha prayers, religious talks, and project-based activities that integrate religious character values. These programs demonstrate the school's commitment to strengthening students' religious character through consistent habituation. However, an important dimension that requires deeper examination is the religious diversity present at SDN 116 Cicaheum. With students coming from various religious backgrounds, religious habituation practices function not only as instruments of moral and spiritual education but also as potential spaces for interfaith interaction. In such a context, religious practices may foster mutual respect, empathy, and tolerance, but they may also pose challenges if not designed inclusively.

In practice, several religious programs at the school attempt to accommodate diversity by adopting inclusive approaches. For instance, non-Muslim students are not required to participate in specific Islamic rituals. Still, they are encouraged to engage in universal activities such as social service, moral reflection, or collaborative projects centered on ethical and humanitarian values. Despite these efforts, challenges remain in developing habituation strategies that are truly adaptive to differences in students' religious beliefs.

Religious projects, in particular, have significant potential as spaces for dialogue on shared values. When designed from a multicultural perspective, such projects can facilitate collaboration among students from diverse religious backgrounds to implement concrete actions grounded in universal values such as honesty, compassion, and social responsibility. These collaborative experiences may foster interfaith awareness and mutual understanding from an early age. Multicultural approaches in religious education have been shown to promote empathy and interfaith understanding in school settings (Lestari, 2024). The implementation of multicultural religious values plays a crucial role in educational practice by strengthening mutual respect and interfaith dialogue within Indonesia's pluralistic educational context (Mukhlisin, Cikusin, & Ghony, 2025). Multicultural education has been shown to enhance students' awareness of

diversity and foster tolerance through the integration of interreligious dialogue and inclusive school activities (Hikmah, Paradise, & Mubin, 2025).

Despite the growing importance of this issue, there remains a lack of empirical studies that explicitly examine how religious habituation practices in elementary schools contribute to the cultivation of interreligious harmony. In an increasingly pluralistic educational landscape, schools are challenged to ensure that religious character education is inclusive rather than exclusive, serving as a vehicle for promoting tolerance, openness, and social harmony. Findings from Al Khozi and Amrullah (2025) indicate that religious habituation practices in elementary schools strengthen students' responsibility, moral awareness, and religious character through consistent routines (Al Khozi, 2025).

Intergroup Contact Theory, developed by Gordon W. Allport (1954), offers a relevant theoretical framework for addressing this challenge. The theory posits that direct interaction between individuals from different social or religious groups can reduce prejudice, provided that four conditions are met: equal status among participants, shared goals, cooperative interaction, and support from authorities or institutional norms. In multicultural elementary schools such as SDN 116 Cicaheum, this theory helps explain how inclusive religious habituation practices may create safe and productive spaces for interfaith interaction. In educational practice, Intergroup Contact Theory has been applied in various contexts. In the United States, it has informed the design of interfaith dialogue programs, facilitated group discussions, and collaborative learning projects. Similarly, in Malaysia, interfaith initiatives organized by institutions such as INSaF demonstrate that dialogue combined with joint social activities can effectively foster interreligious harmony when the conditions of contact theory are fulfilled (Majid, 2020). These experiences highlight the relevance of contact theory as a conceptual foundation for inclusive religious education.

Applying this theory to primary education requires developing religious habituation designs that encourage equal and cooperative interfaith interaction. This includes inviting students from all religious backgrounds to participate in moral and social activities, ensuring inclusivity through universal values and neutral symbols, and involving teachers as authoritative figures who actively promote tolerance and respect for diversity. Through this approach, religious habituation becomes not only a means of strengthening religious school culture but also a strategy for fostering interreligious harmony. Literature on interfaith education further emphasizes that schools can serve as strategic spaces for nurturing interfaith understanding through collaborative activities and the reinforcement of universal values shared across religious traditions (Fleming & Kleinhenz, 2007). Accordingly, this study moves beyond merely examining the role of religious habituation in shaping individual moral character. Instead, it focuses

on how such practices concretely contribute to the formation of a harmonious school culture in diverse educational settings. This focus is increasingly relevant in light of contemporary social challenges such as intolerance, polarization, and declining social empathy among younger generations.

This study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of a character education model rooted in spiritual values and grounded in religious habituation, while simultaneously promoting interreligious social harmony in elementary education. Although previous studies have extensively discussed school culture and religious habituation, many have treated these elements separately or examined them within relatively homogeneous religious communities. Research that explicitly integrates religious habituation as a strategic means of fostering tolerance and interfaith harmony in public elementary schools with diverse student populations remains limited.

Therefore, this study offers a novel approach by positioning religious habituation not only as a means of personal and spiritual development but also as a mechanism for building an inclusive and dialogical school culture, by examining how Islamic-based religious habituation programs at SDN 116 Cicaheum foster empathy, openness, and interfaith cooperation, this research expands the conceptual understanding of religious habituation within the broader framework of multicultural education.

## METHOD

This study employed a mixed-method approach using a Sequential Exploratory Design to obtain a comprehensive and contextually grounded understanding of how religious-based habituation contributes to the development of an inclusive and harmonious school culture. This design was selected because the research questions required an in-depth exploration of the processes, meanings, and interactions embedded in daily religious habituation practices, followed by quantitative verification of their influence on students' perceptions of religious tolerance. The qualitative phase served as the foundation for identifying key constructs and contextual nuances, which were then operationalized into measurable indicators in the quantitative phase. This approach ensured that the quantitative instrument was empirically aligned with the lived experiences of participants and the specific characteristics of the school environment.

The study was conducted at SDN 116 Cicaheum, a public elementary school with a religiously diverse student population. The population consisted of 337 students from grades one to six, while the sample was selected purposively to include participants who were directly involved in religious habituation activities. Sixth-grade students were chosen because they had the longest exposure to the school's habituation programs and were therefore able to provide more reflective and informed responses. Additional participants included classroom teachers, Islamic Education teachers, and the principal, who were selected based on their

roles in planning, implementing, and supervising religious habituation. Inclusion criteria required participants to have direct experience with daily and weekly religious routines, while individuals without such involvement were excluded to maintain data relevance and accuracy.

Data collection involved observations, interviews, documentation, and questionnaires. Qualitative data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which consisted of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During data reduction, information related to habituation practices, inclusivity strategies, and interfaith interactions was identified and organized. The data were then presented in thematic descriptions that reflected patterns aligned with the principles of Intergroup Contact Theory. Quantitative data analysis began with validity testing using the Pearson Product-Moment formula, followed by reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha to ensure internal consistency. After instrument validation, simple linear regression was conducted to examine the effect of religious habituation intensity on students' levels of religious tolerance. This step-by-step analytical process enabled the study to integrate qualitative insights with quantitative evidence, resulting in a robust interpretation of how religious habituation shapes school culture and interreligious harmony.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### **The Implementation of Religious Habituation in Daily and Weekly School Activities**

Findings from preliminary observations and interviews with classroom teachers, Islamic Education teachers, and students indicate that religious habituation has become an integral part of daily life at SDN 116 Cicaheum. The program is designed not only to instill religious values but also to strengthen a school culture that promotes mutual respect among students of different faiths. The school community consists of Muslim, Christian, and other religious groups, making the habituation practices a potential space for interfaith interaction. This aligns with Intergroup Contact Theory, which highlights the importance of equal status, shared goals, cooperative interaction, and authority support in reducing prejudice.

Daily routines include the 5S movement, collective prayers, and Qur'an recitation. The 5S movement is conducted every morning and, although rooted in Islamic values, is implemented inclusively. Non-Muslim students participate by offering greetings according to their beliefs and demonstrating friendliness toward peers. This practice reflects equal status and cooperative interaction. Collective prayer is also conducted in an inclusive manner, with teachers providing opportunities for non-Muslim students to pray according to their own traditions. Qur'an recitation is carried out in most classes, and while it is specifically Islamic,

teachers ensure that non-Muslim students remain engaged respectfully by listening or reading moral texts from their own religious traditions.

Weekly activities reinforce these routines through congregational Dhuha prayers, religious lectures, and mini religious projects. Muslim students perform Dhuha prayers, while non-Muslim students engage in character-building activities such as reading moral stories or discussing universal values. Religious lectures emphasize themes such as honesty, compassion, and cooperation, which are relevant to all students. Mini religious projects, such as greeting parents or practicing good deeds at home, are completed by all students with adjustments based on their respective religions. These projects encourage students to share their experiences in mixed groups, strengthening cooperative interaction and interfaith understanding.

The implementation of habituation is supported by the principal, teachers, and parents. The principal emphasizes that religious habituation is aligned with the school's vision and mission and is integrated into annual work programs. However, challenges remain, including limited facilities such as prayer rooms and religious materials, as well as external influences from technology and social media. Teachers recognize the need for adaptive and sustainable approaches to ensure that habituation remains meaningful and inclusive. From the perspective of Intergroup Contact Theory, the main challenge is expanding cooperative interfaith interaction through joint projects that involve all students regardless of religion.

Student reflections reveal that most students enjoy participating in religious activities because they feel calmer, more disciplined, and more respectful of others. Non-Muslim students report feeling acknowledged and included because they are given space to practice their beliefs while still participating in shared moral activities. These experiences align with Bourdieu's concept of habitus, where repeated socialization within the school environment shapes enduring dispositions. When implemented inclusively, habituation fosters not only religious character but also interfaith empathy, which is essential for harmony in a pluralistic society.

### **Stages of the Religious Habituation Process**

The implementation of religious habituation at SDN 116 Cicaheum is carried out through a structured sequence consisting of three interconnected stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation. These stages ensure that habituation is not conducted sporadically or in isolation, but instead follows a systematic and consistent pattern that reflects the school's commitment to integrating religious values into everyday life. The three-stage structure also allows the school to respond effectively to the religious diversity of its students, ensuring that every activity is designed with sensitivity to differences in belief and practice. By organizing habituation in this way, the school is able to maintain continuity,



monitor progress, and make necessary adjustments so that the program remains relevant and inclusive for all students.

The planning stage represents the foundation of the habituation process. At this stage, the principal and teachers, particularly Islamic Education teachers, work collaboratively to design programs that will be implemented throughout the academic year. This planning is not limited to listing activities but involves careful consideration of how each activity can accommodate students from different religious backgrounds. Activities such as the 5S movement, collective prayers, Qur'an recitation, Dhuha prayers, religious lectures, and mini religious projects are intentionally structured so that all students can participate meaningfully. For instance, during Qur'an recitation sessions, non-Muslim students are not left without guidance; instead, they are given opportunities to engage in reflective reading of moral values from their own religious texts. This ensures that the activity remains inclusive and that all students are involved in value-based learning. The planning stage therefore establishes a shared direction for the entire school community, ensuring that every activity contributes to the broader goal of nurturing character and fostering harmony.

The implementation stage translates the planned programs into daily and weekly routines that shape students' lived experiences at school. Daily activities such as the 5S movement involve all students and create opportunities for positive interfaith interactions from the moment they enter the school environment. Joint prayers conducted before lessons allow students to pray according to their respective beliefs, reinforcing mutual respect and acknowledging the religious diversity within the school. Weekly activities further strengthen these routines. Muslim students participate in congregational Dhuha prayers, while non-Muslim students engage in parallel character-building activities under the guidance of teachers. After these separate sessions, all students come together for religious lectures that emphasize universal values such as honesty, cooperation, and compassion. Mini religious projects extend the impact of habituation beyond the school setting by connecting school practices with home life. Students complete tasks according to their respective religions and then share their experiences in mixed groups, allowing them to learn from one another and fostering deeper cooperative interaction. Through these routines, the implementation stage ensures that habituation becomes a consistent part of students' daily and weekly rhythms.

The evaluation stage serves as a mechanism for reflection, monitoring, and continuous improvement. Teachers conduct periodic assessments through meetings, observations, and feedback from parents to determine how well students are internalizing the values emphasized in habituation activities. They record students' character development, including their religious practices and their attitudes toward religious differences. The school also recognizes and rewards

students who demonstrate tolerant behavior and interfaith cooperation, reinforcing the importance of these values within the school culture. Mini religious projects are evaluated not only in terms of ritual adherence but also in terms of how students interact with one another and demonstrate mutual respect. Students report that these activities help them appreciate religious differences and learn from peers of other faiths, indicating that habituation has a meaningful impact on their understanding of diversity. Through this evaluation process, the school ensures that habituation is not merely a set of routines but a sustained effort to internalize values within the school's social structure, shaping lasting dispositions that support interfaith harmony.

### **The Impact of Religious Habituation on Strengthening School Culture and Interfaith Harmony at SDN 116 Cicaheum**

The quantitative component of this study provides empirical support for understanding how religious habituation contributes to the strengthening of school culture and the cultivation of interfaith harmony at SDN 116 Cicaheum. Using a questionnaire administered to 30 sixth grade students, the research measured students' involvement in daily and weekly religious habituation activities that have been consistently implemented as part of the school's cultural routines. These activities include the 5S movement, collective prayers, Qur'anic recitation, Dhuha prayers, religious talks, and mini religious projects, all of which are designed to internalize moral and spiritual values while accommodating students from different religious backgrounds. School culture, in turn, was assessed through indicators that reflect the internalization of universal values, the consistency of students' engagement in positive routines, and their perceptions of the school as an inclusive environment that respects religious diversity. The use of simple linear regression allowed the study to quantify the extent to which habituation practices influence students' perceptions and behaviors related to school culture and interfaith relations.

The regression analysis produced a constant value of -51.107 and a regression coefficient of 1.645 for the religious habituation variable, with a significance value below 0.001. While the negative constant does not hold substantive meaning in the context of social behavior, the regression coefficient provides clear evidence of a positive and meaningful relationship between religious habituation and school culture. Specifically, the coefficient indicates that each one unit increase in the religious habituation score corresponds to a 1.645 point increase in the school culture score, demonstrating that students who are more actively involved in habituation activities tend to perceive the school environment as more supportive, inclusive, and value-driven. The significance value, which is far below the conventional threshold of 0.05, confirms that this relationship is statistically robust and unlikely to be due to chance. This statistical evidence reinforces the qualitative findings that religious habituation is not merely

symbolic but has a measurable impact on shaping students' attitudes, behaviors, and interactions within the school setting.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that religious habituation plays a substantial role in strengthening school culture at SDN 116 Cicaheum. When habituation is implemented consistently and inclusively, it fosters the internalization of moral values, encourages respectful interactions among students of different religious backgrounds, and reinforces positive behavioral routines. This outcome aligns closely with Intergroup Contact Theory, as the school successfully fulfills all four of Allport's conditions for reducing prejudice and promoting harmony: equal status among students, shared goals related to character formation, cooperative interaction through joint activities, and strong authority support from teachers and the principal. By meeting these conditions, religious habituation becomes more than a set of spiritual practices; it functions as a structured social mechanism that facilitates interfaith understanding and reduces potential barriers between students of different religions. The strengthened school culture that emerges from this process becomes an essential foundation for preparing students to live peacefully, respectfully, and collaboratively in a pluralistic society, reflecting the school's commitment to nurturing both religious character and interreligious harmony.

## DISCUSSION

### **Habitus and School Culture**

The findings of this study demonstrate that daily religious habituation at SDN 116 Cicaheum functions as a cultural foundation that shapes students' behavioral dispositions and social interactions in a sustained and meaningful way. The routines implemented at the school, such as the 5S movement, collective prayers, Qur'anic recitation, and weekly religious programs, operate as continuous value-forming practices that influence how students behave, communicate, and relate to one another. This pattern aligns with Megawati (2004) and Samani (2012), who argue that school culture becomes effective when values are embedded through consistent and repetitive practices rather than through isolated instructional moments. The findings at SDN 116 Cicaheum reinforce this argument by showing that habituation is not positioned as a narrow religious ritual but as a shared cultural framework that regulates respectful behavior across religious groups. The routines become part of the school's identity and shape the everyday atmosphere in which students learn to greet one another politely, interact respectfully, and participate in activities that reinforce moral awareness.

When interpreted through Bourdieu's (2013) concept of habitus, these repetitive practices cultivate durable dispositions such as discipline, politeness,

and empathy. The school environment functions as a social space in which students repeatedly encounter structured religious and moral routines that gradually become internalized as part of their behavioral tendencies. The findings show that students begin to embody these values not because they are explicitly instructed to do so, but because the school culture consistently reinforces them through daily and weekly habituation. Unlike studies conducted in mono-religious environments, the inclusive design observed at SDN 116 Cicaheum demonstrates that habitus formation can occur without privileging a dominant religious identity. Non-Muslim students are given opportunities to participate in ways that align with their own beliefs, such as engaging in reflective moral reading during Qur'anic recitation or joining character-building activities during Dhuha prayers. This inclusive approach complements literature that calls for culturally responsive character education in diverse settings, showing that religious habituation can be adapted to multicultural contexts without losing its formative power.

The study further reveals that religious habituation serves as a structured space for interfaith interaction, allowing students from different religious backgrounds to engage in shared moral experiences. This finding closely aligns with Allport's (1954) Intergroup Contact Theory, particularly the conditions of equal status and cooperative interaction. Daily routines such as the 5S movement, which involve greeting, smiling, and showing courtesy, reduce social boundaries and encourage positive intergroup perceptions. These interactions occur naturally and repeatedly, creating opportunities for students to build familiarity and trust across religious differences. Weekly activities, including religious talks and mini religious projects, further reinforce these interactions by emphasizing universal values such as honesty, compassion, and cooperation. This supports Fleming and Kleinhenz (2007), who emphasize that interfaith harmony is strengthened when educational practices highlight shared moral values rather than doctrinal differences.

### **The role of institutions and challenges of creating habituation**

Institutional support emerges as another critical factor in sustaining inclusive habituation. The principal's commitment to embedding religious values into the school's vision and annual programs, along with teachers' facilitative roles, fulfills Allport's (1954) condition of authority support. This reinforces Safitri's (2021) assertion that character education succeeds when school leadership intentionally embeds values into policies and routines. Unlike studies that highlight the symbolic nature of religious programs when leadership is weak, the present findings demonstrate that consistent policy alignment and collaborative teacher involvement transform habituation into a lived cultural practice. This contributes to the literature by showing that institutional coherence is essential not only for character formation but also for ensuring that inclusivity is systematically upheld across religious differences.

Despite the positive implementation, the study identifies challenges related to infrastructure limitations, diversity management, and external influences such as technology and social media. These challenges echo concerns raised by Samani (2012) regarding the fragility of school culture when external pressures are not addressed. From the perspective of Intergroup Contact Theory, the limited opportunities for cooperative interfaith projects suggest that the condition of sustained intergroup collaboration is not yet fully optimized. This complements Fleming and Kleinhenz (2007), who argue that interfaith harmony requires intentional and structured opportunities for shared action. The findings therefore highlight the need for adaptive strategies that expand collaborative activities involving students from different religious backgrounds.

Students' reflections further confirm the effectiveness of religious habituation in shaping positive dispositions. Their experiences of calmness, discipline, and mutual respect align with Bourdieu's (2013) notion of habitus as embodied dispositions shaped through repeated socialization. These reflections also support Kurniawaty et al. (2022), who emphasize that character formation requires sustained exposure to value-laden practices. The inclusion of non-Muslim students in moral and social projects demonstrates that religious habituation can function as a dialogical space for interfaith understanding, extending Fleming and Kleinhenz's (2007) argument that shared moral learning fosters empathy. This finding enriches the literature by showing that inclusive habituation can bridge religious character education and multicultural education simultaneously.

Overall, the findings indicate that religious habituation strengthens school culture by embedding spiritual and moral values into daily practices while fostering interfaith harmony. This supports Megawati (2004) and Samani (2012), who highlight the centrality of school culture in character formation. However, the present study extends their work by showing that habituation can also function as a collective social strategy that promotes peaceful coexistence in pluralistic environments. When interpreted through both habitus theory and Intergroup Contact Theory, the findings reveal that inclusive habituation not only shapes individual character but also constructs a shared cultural space that normalizes tolerance and mutual respect.

The process of religious habituation at SDN 116 Cicaheum is implemented through a structured sequence of planning, implementation, and evaluation. The planning stage reflects a deliberate institutional effort to integrate religious values with inclusivity. This supports Safitri (2021), who argues that intentional design is crucial for effective character education. By ensuring that all activities accommodate students of different religions, the school fulfills Allport's (1954) condition of common goals, positioning all students as contributors to the school's vision. This approach complements Fleming and Kleinhenz (2007), who advocate

for emphasizing universal ethical principles in multicultural religious education. The planning process therefore prevents marginalization and promotes shared moral orientations.

The implementation stage demonstrates how planned programs translate into lived experiences that shape students' dispositions. The inclusive execution of daily and weekly activities supports Allport's (1954) principles of equal status and cooperative interaction. This aligns with studies emphasizing the importance of collaborative environments in reducing prejudice. From a habitus perspective, the consistent repetition of inclusive practices supports Bourdieu's (2013) argument that social structures shape internal dispositions over time. The findings complement earlier research by showing that inclusive religious habituation can embed values of empathy and openness, thereby functioning as an internalized cultural mechanism rather than a superficial routine.

The evaluation stage reinforces the sustainability of habituation by integrating reflection and monitoring into school routines. This aligns with Kurniawaty et al. (2022), who emphasize the importance of reflection in the final stage of character internalization. The school's reinforcement of tolerant behavior fulfills Allport's (1954) authority support condition, ensuring that inclusive norms are consistently upheld. These findings complement Safitri (2021), who highlights the role of institutional reinforcement in maintaining school culture. The emergence of interfaith empathy among students suggests that evaluation processes contribute not only to behavioral monitoring but also to deeper value internalization.

The quantitative findings further strengthen the qualitative insights by demonstrating a significant positive relationship between religious habituation and school culture. The regression coefficient indicates that increased involvement in habituation activities corresponds to stronger internalization of moral values and perceptions of inclusivity. This supports Megawati (2004) and Samani (2012), who argue that consistent religious practices strengthen school culture, and aligns with Hadi (2025), who notes that habituation remains a dominant strategy in building religious culture. The present study extends these works by showing that inclusive habituation predicts not only religious character but also interfaith harmony.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that religious-based habituation at SDN 116 Cicaheum contributes directly to strengthening school culture and fostering interreligious harmony. Daily and weekly routines such as the 5S movement, collective prayers, Qur'anic recitation, Dhuha prayers, religious talks, and mini religious projects function as structured mechanisms that internalize moral and spiritual values while creating inclusive spaces for interfaith interaction. When implemented consistently and supported institutionally, these practices

fulfill the conditions of Intergroup Contact Theory and shape students' dispositions in line with Bourdieu's concept of habitus, resulting in increased discipline, empathy, and respect across religious differences.

This study, however, is limited by its single-site design, relatively small quantitative sample, and reliance on self-reported perceptions, which may not fully capture the complexity of interfaith dynamics in broader school contexts. Future research should expand to multiple schools with varying demographic compositions, employ longitudinal designs to observe long-term internalization of values, and incorporate additional data sources such as classroom observations, peer assessments, or parental perspectives to strengthen validity. Comparative studies across regions or religious compositions would also help clarify how contextual factors shape the effectiveness of inclusive religious habituation.

Building on these findings, future studies could explore how specific components of habituation (such as joint moral projects or reflective activities) most effectively promote interfaith empathy, or how digital media can be integrated into habituation programs without undermining their character-building goals. Practically, the results highlight the need for schools to design religious habituation programs that are adaptive, inclusive, and aligned with universal values to support peaceful coexistence. Theoretically, this study contributes to the growing discourse on how religious character education, when framed inclusively, can operate as both a cultural and social mechanism for cultivating harmony in pluralistic educational settings.

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