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IMPLEMENTING SPIRITUAL LEARNING STRATEGIES TO SHAPE STUDENTS CHARACTER IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN INDRAGIRI HILIR

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Kata Kunci:	ABSTRAK
Pembelajaran Spiritual, Pendidikan Karakter, Sekolah Dasar.	<p>Tujuan: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis implementasi strategi pembelajaran spiritual dalam membentuk karakter peserta didik di dua Sekolah Dasar Negeri di Kabupaten Indragiri Hilir, yaitu SDN 015 Tanjung Pasir (konteks urban) dan SDN 014 Sungai Nyiur (konteks rural/pesisir). Metode: Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, dokumentasi, dan triangulasi sumber serta metode. Informan penelitian meliputi kepala sekolah, guru Pendidikan Agama Islam dan guru kelas, peserta didik kelas IV–VI, serta orang tua atau komite sekolah. Hasil: Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi pembelajaran spiritual diimplementasikan secara kontekstual sesuai dengan karakteristik sosial dan lingkungan sekolah. Sekolah urban cenderung menerapkan model pembelajaran spiritual yang terstruktur dan berbasis program sekolah, sementara sekolah rural/pesisir mengembangkan pendekatan kolaboratif berbasis komunitas dan kearifan lokal. Kesimpulan: Kedua model tersebut terbukti berdampak positif terhadap pembentukan karakter peserta didik, khususnya pada aspek religiusitas, disiplin, tanggung jawab, empati, dan kepedulian sosial. Implikasi: Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi teoretis dengan memperkaya kajian pendidikan karakter berbasis spiritual dalam konteks sekolah negeri, serta kontribusi praktis berupa model adaptif pembelajaran spiritual yang relevan dengan Profil Pelajar Pancasila (P5). Temuan penelitian ini berimplikasi pada pentingnya pengembangan strategi pendidikan karakter yang fleksibel, kontekstual, dan kolaboratif sebagai bagian integral dari kebijakan dan praktik pendidikan dasar di Indonesia.</p>

Keywords:

Spiritual Learning,
Character Education,
Elementary School.

ABSTRACTS

Purpose: This study aims to analyze the implementation of spiritual learning strategies in shaping students' character at two public elementary schools in Indragiri Hilir Regency, namely SDN 015 Tanjung Pasir (urban context) and SDN 014 Sungai Nyiur (rural/coastal context). **Method:** A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, with data collected through in-depth interviews, observations, documentation, and triangulation of sources and methods. Research participants included school principals, Islamic education teachers and classroom teachers, upper-grade students (Grades IV–VI), and parents or school committee members. **Result:** The findings indicate that spiritual learning strategies are implemented contextually according to each school's social and environmental characteristics. Urban schools tend to apply structured, school-based spiritual programs, while rural/coastal schools develop collaborative, community-based approaches grounded in local wisdom. **Conclusion:** Both models demonstrate a positive impact on students' character formation, particularly in strengthening religiosity, discipline, responsibility, empathy, and social awareness. **Implication:** This study contributes theoretically by enriching the discourse on spiritual-based character education within public elementary school settings and practically by proposing adaptive models of spiritual learning aligned with the Pancasila Student Profile (P5). The findings highlight the importance of flexible, contextual, and collaborative character education strategies as an integral component of elementary education policy and practice in Indonesia.

A. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary education, there has been growing awareness that academic achievement alone is not sufficient to prepare students to become morally upright and socially resilient individuals (N Nurhayati, Latif, & Anwar, 2024). Spiritual and character values are now considered essential components of education, especially at the elementary level, where students must be equipped early on with a foundation of ethics, empathy, integrity, and responsibility (Nurhayati Nurhayati & Rosadi, 2022). Character education particularly that which adopts a spiritual approach seeks to bridge the gap between “what is taught” and “what is practiced” in students' daily lives (Iksal, Hayani, & Aslan, 2024).

In the Indonesian context, since the implementation of the Strengthening Character Education (PPK) policy and the Profil Pelajar Pancasila framework, schools have been required to integrate character and religious values into both classroom learning and school culture (Junaedi, 2025). However, several studies indicate that despite these policies, their practical implementation in the spiritual or religious domain remains weak often limited to formal or ritualistic activities without deep internalization or systematic evaluation (Fitriah et al., 2025). For instance, schools tend to conduct morning prayers or special religious events without organizing them as structured and sustainable learning strategies.

Recent literature also highlights the challenges in practicing spiritual character education in schools. On one hand, both teachers and students generally view character education, including religious values, as an essential part of schooling (Astawa, Sadri, & Temaja, n.d.). On the other hand, real-world obstacles persist: limited time allocation for non academic activities, inconsistency among teachers in applying values, student resistance to “value-based lessons,” and weak collaboration

between schools, parents, and the community (Hanafiah et al., 2024). Furthermore, teacher training and spiritual learning models are often inadequate, and the evaluation of character outcomes rarely employs quantitative or longitudinal instruments (Asbari, 2024).

In related research, the study *Spiritual Learning Strategy in Forming Students' Character in Public Elementary Schools (SDN) Indragiri Hilir District* provides an initial overview of how public schools in Indragiri Hilir implement spiritual learning practices. However, it reveals that most activities remain informal, unstructured, and lack effective evaluation mechanisms (Zulkarnainsyah, Zamsiswaya, & May, 2025). Conversely, *Suadnan's Learning Strategies for Improving Spiritual Intelligence and the Quality of Student Character Education* explains that effective strategies involve a clear process of planning, implementation, and assessment, supported by the school and family environment to ensure that character internalization extends beyond the classroom (Suadnan, 2025). Nevertheless, this study focuses on private religious schools, leaving open the question of how similar approaches can be adapted to public schools with more heterogeneous contexts.

Given this background, this study aims to investigate the implementation of spiritual learning strategies in public elementary schools in Indragiri Hilir Regency through a comprehensive perspective that includes the types of strategies used, their structure and consistency, the roles of teachers, principals, and students, as well as the supporting and inhibiting factors encountered. In addition, the research seeks to explore perceptions of the impact of spiritual strategy implementation on students' character development in elementary schools.

The novelty contributions of this research are as follows:

1. Presenting a more in-depth and systematic empirical picture of spiritual learning strategies in public schools, rather than in private or religious institutions.
2. Tracing how school leadership, teacher training, and student involvement are interconnected in strengthening spiritual internalization within the local context.
3. Providing data-based recommendations on how to design more structured and evaluative spiritual strategies (for example, through character rubrics, longitudinal observations, or student reflections).
4. Enriching the theory of character education by incorporating the local nuances of Indragiri Hilir, which may have unique geographical, social, and resource-related challenges.

The justification for this study lies in the urgent need to bridge the gap between character/religious policy and actual practice in elementary schools located in areas with distinctive challenges. The findings will not only be relevant to schools in Indragiri Hilir but also serve as a reference for other regions with similar conditions. This knowledge is expected to assist stakeholders (local government, education offices, principals, and teachers) in designing more effective and contextually adaptive spiritual learning strategies while strengthening students' character as part of holistic education.

Different hypotheses also emerge in the literature: some scholars argue that overly formal spiritual strategies may turn into "empty rituals" if not accompanied by reflection and evaluation (Hayati, Suyatno, & Susatya, 2020), while others suggest that

subtle and organic integration of spiritual values across all aspects of school life rather than as an “additional subject” has a greater potential to meaningfully influence students’ character. Another controversial debate revolves around the extent to which schools can intervene in students’ spiritual values without infringing on family autonomy and religious diversity in plural societies.

In contemporary educational development, academic achievement is no longer regarded as the sole indicator of educational success. Schools are expected to produce students who are not only intellectually competent but also possess strong character, noble morals, and the ability to adapt socially and morally within society. Therefore, character education particularly that which is grounded in spiritual values has become a fundamental element of the basic education system, as this level serves as the stage at which students’ values, attitudes, and personalities begin to be systematically formed.

In the Indonesian context, the implementation of the Strengthening Character Education (PPK) policy and the Pancasila Student Profile (P5) framework emphasizes that religiosity, morality, and social virtues must be integrated into both classroom learning and school culture. However, various studies indicate that the practice of spiritual-based character education in elementary schools continues to face serious challenges (Jaya & Sudarsana, 2024). Spiritual learning is often reduced to ceremonial or routine ritual activities, such as collective prayers or incidental religious events, without careful pedagogical planning, deep value reflection, or sustainable evaluation mechanisms. As a result, the internalization of character values among students has not yet been optimally achieved.

A number of previous studies have examined spiritual learning strategies and character education; however, most have focused on religious-based schools or private educational institutions with relatively homogeneous characteristics. These studies emphasize the importance of structured planning, teacher role modeling, and family support in shaping students’ character. Nevertheless, research that specifically addresses the implementation of spiritual learning strategies in public elementary schools where students’ backgrounds are more heterogeneous and structural constraints are more prominent remains limited. Furthermore, many existing studies have not sufficiently linked spiritual learning strategies to local socio cultural contexts and national policy frameworks such as the Pancasila Student Profile (P5).

The research gap becomes more evident when prior studies in Indragiri Hilir Regency reveal that spiritual learning practices in public elementary schools tend to be informal, insufficiently structured, and lack evaluation based on clear character indicators. In contrast, research on more planned and measurable spiritual learning strategies has largely been conducted in private schools or Islamic boarding school based institutions, which do not fully represent the dynamics of public schools operating in regions with diverse geographical and social conditions.

Indragiri Hilir Regency possesses unique characteristics that make it a significant research context. The region comprises urban, rural, and coastal areas with unequal access to education, infrastructure, and resource support. The community of Indragiri Hilir also exhibits a strong religious culture influenced by Malay Islamic values, such as mutual cooperation, social cohesion, respect for religious leaders, and community-based social life. These conditions present both opportunities and challenges for the

implementation of spiritual learning in public elementary schools, particularly in integrating spiritual values into formal instructional practices and school culture.

Based on this background, the present study aims to conduct an in depth analysis of the implementation of spiritual learning strategies in public elementary schools in Indragiri Hilir Regency by highlighting differences between urban and rural/coastal contexts. This study not only examines the forms and patterns of spiritual learning strategies employed but also explores the roles of school principals, teachers, students, as well as the involvement of parents and the community in shaping students' character. In doing so, this research seeks to address existing research gaps by providing empirical evidence that is more contextual, adaptive, and reflective of the realities faced by public schools in regional areas.

Academically, this study contributes to the enrichment of spiritual based character education literature by incorporating local contextual dimensions and linking them to the Pancasila Student Profile (P5). Practically, the findings are expected to serve as a reference for schools, policymakers, and education practitioners in designing spiritual learning strategies that are not merely normative or ritualistic, but also structured, reflective, and capable of fostering sustainable character development in accordance with local social and cultural conditions.

B. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design (Sugiyono, 2022). This approach was chosen to gain an in depth understanding of the process of implementing spiritual learning strategies in shaping students' character within the context of public elementary schools. According to Creswell and Poth, a case study enables researchers to explore complex phenomena within real life contexts in a comprehensive and holistic manner (Creswell & Poth, 2020). Thus, this approach is appropriate for examining how spiritual learning strategies are implemented and how they affect students' character in public elementary schools in Indragiri Hilir, which possess distinct social and cultural backgrounds.

The research design adopted a multiple case study format, involving two research sites: SD Negeri 015 Tanjung Pasir and SD Negeri 014 Sungai Nyiur (Supratiknya, 2022). These two schools were selected purposively based on differences in their regional and school culture characteristics. SD Negeri 015 Tanjung Pasir represents an urban context, characterized by relatively adequate educational facilities, better access to teacher training, and strong administrative support. In contrast, SD Negeri 014 Sungai Nyiur represents a rural (coastal) context, facing limited resources, remote geographical conditions, and a strong reliance on local Malay Indragiri cultural values and community wisdom. This design allows the study to identify comparisons and patterns of spiritual learning implementation across two contrasting contexts (L. J. Moleong, 2021).

This study employed a qualitative approach with a multiple-case study design, aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of the implementation of spiritual learning strategies in shaping students' character in public elementary schools (Sutopo, 2022). The research was conducted at two schools, namely SDN 015 Tanjung Pasir (urban context) and SDN 014 Sungai Nyiur (rural/coastal context) in Indragiri Hilir Regency. The research sites were selected purposively based on differences in

social characteristics, geographical conditions, and resource availability (Nurhayati, Dina Liana, 2025).

The research participants consisted of 14 informants, including two principals, four teachers (Islamic education teachers and classroom teachers), six students from Grades IV–VI, and two parents or school committee members. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, with the criterion of direct involvement in the planning and implementation of spiritual learning activities (Arikunto, 2021).

Data were collected through in depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation (Emzir, 2022). Interviews were conducted to explore participants' perceptions and experiences regarding spiritual learning strategies and their impact on students' character development. Observations focused on spiritual learning practices such as collective prayer, value reflection, character habituation, and teacher student interactions. Documentation included the School Work Plan (Rencana Kerja Sekolah), schedules of spiritual activities, character habituation records, and portfolios related to the Pancasila Student Profile (P5) (J. Moleong, 2022).

Data credibility was ensured through source and method triangulation, by comparing findings from interviews, observations, and documentation (Satori, 2022). For example, teachers' statements regarding the implementation of daily prayers and reflective activities were verified through direct classroom observations and relevant school documents. In addition, member checking was conducted to ensure that the researcher's interpretations accurately reflected the participants' intended meanings.

Data analysis was conducted thematically using the Miles and Huberman model, which involves data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 2020). The data were analyzed through open coding, axial coding, and selective coding to identify key themes, including patterns of spiritual learning implementation, the roles of principals and teachers, community involvement, and the impact on students' character development. Subsequently, a cross case analysis was conducted to compare the implementation of strategies in urban and rural/coastal contexts. Research trustworthiness was maintained through the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, as well as adherence to research ethics, including institutional approval, informed consent from participants, and confidentiality of participants' identities (Aan Komariah & Satori, 2023).

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Roles of Teachers, Principals, and the Community

In the role of the principal, observations and documentation revealed that the principal of SDN 015 Tanjung Pasir routinely included spiritual reflection activities in the weekly school agenda and regularly monitored the implementation of daily reflections and collective prayers. The principal recorded teacher attendance during spiritual activities and integrated spiritual values into teachers' meetings. Interviews with both principals indicated that each viewed their role as a "value director" and a facilitator of spiritual resources. The principal of SDN 015 stated that he organized internal training and provided a simple prayer room for spiritual reflection, while the principal of SDN 014 Sungai Nyiur emphasized building communication with religious leaders and community members to support the school's spiritual programs. Triangulation of interview and documentation data demonstrated that the initiative of

the principal plays a pivotal role in sustaining spiritual learning programs especially in mobilizing support and allocating time and facilities.

The role of teachers in implementing spiritual learning strategies is equally crucial. From classroom and religious activity observations, Islamic Education (PAI) teachers and homeroom teachers at SDN 015 were seen leading prayers, facilitating value reflection, and modeling spiritual behavior through everyday interactions such as smiling, greeting, and offering gentle corrections. In SDN 014, teachers alternated leading prayers in open spaces or classrooms according to conditions and participated in community pengajian (religious gatherings). During interviews, teachers expressed that their main challenge was balancing academic curriculum demands with spiritual activities. At SDN 015, teachers tended to “insert brief reflections of three to five minutes” to avoid disrupting lesson schedules, while at SDN 014 teachers emphasized the need for flexibility so that spiritual activities would not become an additional burden. Triangulation among classroom observations, teacher statements, and activity agendas indicated that teachers who took active initiative as program initiators and reminders tended to manage more disciplined classes and had students who were more responsive to character activities.

The community including parents, the school committee, and religious figures played a supportive and reinforcing role in both school contexts. In SDN 014 Sungai Nyiur, the village community and local religious leaders were routinely involved in weekly school pengajian, collective work (gotong royong), and joint prayer sessions, which were sometimes held in mosques or community halls. Interviews with two parents and committee members revealed that they perceived positive changes: students became more aware of their religious practices and showed greater appreciation for spiritual values within the family since the school had intensified its spiritual programs. Parents mentioned that they were often invited to join prayer or pengajian activities held at school or in the community. Similarly, in SDN 015 Tanjung Pasir, communication with parents occurred through announcements about students’ character achievements and religious activities, while school committee meeting documentation showed that parents and committees helped provide prayer facilities or simple reflection spaces.

From the triangulation of data sources (principals, teachers, students, parents), methods (observation, interview, documentation), and analysis, several thematic roles emerged:

1. Value Catalysts – Principals and teachers act as drivers of spiritual values within the school culture.
2. Operational Moderators – The community helps compensate for facility limitations or mitigate local barriers such as weather and space constraints.
3. Internalization Reinforcers – The involvement of parents and religious leaders strengthens value transfer into students’ lives at home and within the community.
4. Continuity Coordinators – Principals serve as bridges between teachers and the community to ensure program sustainability.

The validity of these themes was confirmed when the principal’s statement about internal training at SDN 015 aligned with documented evidence of training agendas and teacher attendance records, and when parents’ remarks about their participation in home prayers corresponded with student responses indicating increased habits of

greeting, praying, and practicing tolerance. These roles demonstrate that spiritual learning strategies do not operate in isolation but rely on the synergy between school leadership, teacher commitment, and community support. The principal functions as the policymaker who determines value direction, time allocation, and facility provision; teachers act as direct implementers and role models in daily classroom practice; while the community serves as an external environment that reinforces religious values. The integration of these three actors is essential for effective character formation. This finding aligns with the literature asserting that collaboration among schools, parents, and communities is fundamental to sustainable character education (Wija Astawa, Sadri, & Bayu Temaja, 2025).

Thus, the roles of teachers, principals, and the community in this study are not linear or separate but complementary and interdependent in the implementation of spiritual learning strategies (Damanik, 2025). Effective intervention occurs when principals empower teachers through structural support, teachers bring spiritual strategies to life in everyday learning activities, and communities extend the spiritual environment beyond the school boundaries (Megawati & Prahmana, 2025). Although the patterns of community engagement and strategy adaptation differ between urban and coastal contexts, the essential roles of these three actors remain crucial in fostering students' religious character, responsibility, tolerance, and social empathy.

Impact on Students' Character Formation

Classroom observations revealed that teachers led prayers and daily reflections, while student interactions demonstrated gestures of helpfulness such as assisting peers who forgot their stationery and polite reminders when minor infractions occurred, such as forgetting to greet. At SDN 015 Tanjung Pasir, it was observed that students arrived punctually and began lessons with collective prayers, an activity that had become a consistent habit. At SDN 014 Sungai Nyiur, despite limited classroom space and facilities, observations recorded behavioral improvements: previously less disciplined students became calmer, more orderly during morning assemblies, and more active in school gotong royong (collective work). Documentation, including student reflection notes and photos of religious activities, supported these observations, indicating that routine spiritual activities contributed to real behavioral changes among students.

Interviews with upper-grade students (Grades IV–VI) revealed increasing awareness of values such as patience, honesty, and helpfulness, which were frequently discussed during reflection sessions. Several students stated that while they previously ignored peers who dropped their belongings, they now felt compelled to help. Teachers also reported observable improvements in student discipline such as greeting teachers, saying salaam, and arriving on time following the consistent implementation of spiritual learning. Both principals concluded that indicators of character, such as responsibility in completing assignments on time and maintaining classroom cleanliness, as well as empathy toward classmates, had improved. Parents and school committee members reported that at home, children were more active in helping with household chores and more respectful toward family worship times.

Student reflection notes contained concrete experiences:

“Yesterday I was angry at first, but after remembering the morning prayer, I apologized to my friend,”

“When my friend was sad, I went to comfort him and prayed together so he would feel stronger.”

These notes demonstrate that students were not merely absorbing values passively but internalizing them through lived experiences. Teachers’ reports also documented a “Character Discipline Index” (attendance, prayer participation, classroom orderliness), which showed a marked increase after the adoption of spiritual learning strategies. The combination of visual evidence (activity photos), reflection agendas, and teacher evaluation records confirmed that the impact on character formation was more than rhetorical it manifested in observable student behavior.

Through triangulation of observations, interviews, and documentation (from principals, teachers, students, and parents), four major themes of character impact emerged:

1. Religious Value Internalization – Students became more aware of and actively practiced religious values in daily life (prayer, tolerance).
2. Discipline and Orderliness – Responsibility regarding time management, task completion, and cleanliness improved.
3. Empathy and Social Concern – Students became more responsive to peers in difficulty and more willing to help.
4. Emotional Maturity – Students showed greater self-control, the ability to apologize, and maintained good manners.

For example, teachers’ remarks such as “students who used to argue over small matters are now more patient” aligned with students’ reflection notes about how they avoided conflict by recalling spiritual values. Overall, the positive impact of spiritual learning strategies on students’ character formation was clear yet contextual. At SDN 015, where facilities and structure were more supportive, discipline and responsibility developed steadily; students were more engaged in value reflections and performed better academically. At SDN 014, despite infrastructural limitations, social communal character traits such as empathy, cooperation, and a sense of togetherness were more pronounced, as spiritual learning synergized with local community culture. These results align with the literature indicating that effective character education significantly contributes to students’ personality development, empathy skills, and social responsibility (Sakti, Endraswara, & Rohman, 2024).

The findings suggest that spiritual learning strategies not only shape external behavior (habits) but also foster internal character transformation when supported by consistent implementation, strong school leadership, teacher collaboration, and community involvement. To strengthen long-term impact, the study recommends developing student character portfolios, implementing structured reflective sessions, and promoting school home synergy to sustain and deepen students’ spiritual values.

Cross School Thematic Analysis. Cross case analysis revealed that the consistency of spiritual learning implementation emerged as a dominant theme, though with differing approaches. At SDN 015, observations and documentation showed that collective prayers and daily reflections were conducted almost every day, either in the prayer room or classroom, with teachers or students taking turns leading. Teacher interviews noted that they “insert brief 3–5 minute reflections each morning to avoid disrupting core lessons,” while the principal confirmed that monitoring was conducted through a character activity attendance logbook. At SDN 014, limited facilities required flexibility prayers were held outdoors or in classrooms depending on the

weather with community and religious leaders facilitating continuity. Triangulation of school agendas, spiritual activity attendance records, and participant statements confirmed that while “structured consistency” was stronger at SDN 015, “community-based consistency” served as an adaptive strategy at SDN 014.

The themes of leadership and teacher mentoring also stood out across both schools. Observations showed that teachers who actively led prayers, reinforced character values, and modeled them in daily behavior had calmer classrooms and more positive student interactions. Teacher interviews revealed the need for support from principals to avoid burnout SDN 015 addressed this through internal training and value briefings at staff meetings, whereas SDN 014 principals involved local religious figures to inspire shared understanding of spiritual goals. Documentation (circular letters, training schedules, meeting notes) showed that SDN 015 had a more formal internal mentoring structure, while SDN 014 relied on external mentoring through community partnerships. Triangulated data confirmed that value-based leadership and teacher collaboration were decisive factors in sustaining spiritual learning activities.

The theme of contextualized strategy adaptation highlighted how both schools adjusted their spiritual learning to local conditions. SDN 015 was able to provide a permanent prayer room, religious value boards, and fixed schedules, whereas SDN 014 adapted prayer sessions to avoid overlap with community worship times or tidal conditions (as a coastal school). Interviews with parents and committee members at SDN 014 revealed that morning prayers were sometimes conducted in nearby mosques or village courtyards to avoid weather disruptions. Observations noted that students at SDN 014 occasionally conducted reflection activities between gotong royong or community pengajian sessions. Documentation of community pengajian invitations, gotong royong schedules, and daily reflection logs demonstrated that such contextual adaptation ensured program continuity without imposing unrealistic structures.

The theme of multidimensional character impact was consistent across both schools. From interviews, reflection documents, and observations, behavioral outcomes such as improved discipline (greeting, punctuality), responsibility (task completion), and empathy (helping peers, reminding each other) were evident in both sites. However, distinctions appeared: SDN 015 demonstrated stronger impacts on discipline and responsibility, while SDN 014 showed greater effects on empathy and communal awareness. Observations and teacher notes supported these distinctions, and triangulated data across informants confirmed that the character outcomes were shaped by each school’s socio cultural context.

The theme of challenges and mitigation strategies also appeared across both cases. Teachers at SDN 015 cited a tight curriculum schedule as a major constraint, whereas teachers at SDN 014 emphasized limited facilities (prayer spaces, media, electricity). The SDN 015 principal addressed this by introducing micro reflection routines, while SDN 014 principals and communities utilized mosques or village halls for reflection sessions. School meeting documents and budget proposals for character activities indicated that both schools had planned mitigation strategies. Triangulated findings demonstrated that the effectiveness of spiritual learning depended greatly on each school’s preparedness and local adaptability.

Overall, the cross school thematic analysis affirmed that although both schools implemented spiritual learning strategies, their forms and intensity varied according

to urbanization levels, community support, and available resources. Key themes consistency of practice, leadership, strategic adaptation, character impact, and contextual challenges served as the analytical pillars. The comparison illustrates that an “ideal model” of spiritual learning strategy does not follow a single fixed pattern but rather an adaptive model suited to local conditions to achieve optimal character development.

Table 1. Thematic Comparison between SDN 015 Tanjung Pasir and SDN 014 Sungai Nyiur

Theme / Aspect	SDN 015 Tanjung Pasir (Urban)	SDN 014 Sungai Nyiur (Rural / Coastal)
Consistency of Spiritual Practices	Scheduled daily prayers and reflections, dedicated prayer room, internal monitoring	Adaptive prayers and reflections, often moved according to weather or facility conditions
Leadership and Teacher Mentoring	Internal teacher training, principal monitoring, structured supervision system	Collaboration between principal and religious leaders, external training, community support
Local Strategy Adaptation	Use of school facilities, support from school media, short micro reflection routines	Utilization of mosque or village hall, integration with social and <i>gotong royong</i> (mutual cooperation) activities
Main Character Outcomes	Discipline, responsibility, classroom orderliness	Social empathy, community awareness, and inter student tolerance
Obstacles	Tight academic schedule, difficulty allocating time	Limited physical facilities, weather constraints, restricted access to electricity or media
Mitigation Strategies	Scheduling micro reflection routines, integrating reflection into other learning activities	Using community spaces, flexible scheduling, support from parents and community leaders

This cross school analysis shows that effective spiritual learning strategies must be adapted to local characteristics; urban and coastal schools each have their own strengths and challenges. A combination of visionary leadership, consistent teachers, and proactive communities becomes the key to shaping students’ character holistically.

Synthesis of Findings and Theoretical Relevance

Based on classroom observations and interviews, both schools demonstrated consistent implementation of spiritual learning strategies, albeit in different forms and approaches. At SDN 015 Tanjung Pasir, collective prayer, value reflection, and character habituation were conducted in a structured and scheduled manner as part of the school’s daily routine, supported by an active principal who supervised program implementation and provided prayer spaces and student reflection journals. Meanwhile, at SDN 014 Sungai Nyiur, spiritual activities were more flexible and adaptive; prayers and *pengajian* (religious gatherings) were conducted in open spaces, mosques, or community halls with the involvement of local religious figures and the surrounding community. These patterns revealed two models of success: the urban school excelled in structured, school based consistency, while the coastal school stood out for its community based consistency.

Interviews with teachers, principals, and parents highlighted that the tangible impact of spiritual learning strategies was the formation of students’ religious,

disciplined, responsible, and socially empathetic character. Upper grade students (Grades IV–VI) in both schools mentioned that reflection activities helped them better understand the meaning of patience, honesty, and responsibility. Teachers observed significant behavioral improvements, such as increased punctuality, greater involvement in social activities, and improved emotional regulation. These findings align with Arif research, which emphasized that spiritual learning practices effectively shape character through habituation and teacher modeling within the school environment (Arif, 2024).

Activity documentation including student reflection journals, collective prayer reports, and attendance records for spiritual programs corroborated the results of observations and interviews. Triangulation analysis revealed strong consistency across data sources: principals acted as value facilitators, teachers as role models and spiritual motivators, and communities as reinforcers of spiritual practices beyond school boundaries. In the context of SDN 014, the involvement of religious leaders and parents in prayer and pengajian activities provided concrete evidence that character education can be strengthened through school community synergy. This supports Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of education, which posits that character formation occurs most effectively when micro environments school, family, and community interact harmoniously (Fahrudi, 2021). Theoretically, these findings reflect the CIPP evaluation model (Context, Input, Process, Product).

1. In the Context aspect, social and geographical conditions influence the design of spiritual learning strategies.
2. In the Input aspect, the support of principals, teachers, and communities serves as essential capital for program implementation.
3. In the Process aspect, activities such as collective prayer, value reflection, and pengajian have proven effective in strengthening students' character.
4. Finally, in the Product aspect, the formation of religious attitudes, responsibility, and social empathy represents the primary and observable outcomes.

This framework aligns with the findings of Hadi et al, which emphasize that the success of character education should be measured not merely by academic output but by behavioral and moral transformation among students. Moreover, the research findings highlight the integration between spiritual learning strategies and the national Pancasila Student Profile (P5) policy. At SDN 015, value reflection activities were incorporated into P5 projects under the theme "Faith, Piety, and Noble Character," whereas at SDN 014, the reinforcement of religious values was manifested through socio religious activities such as community gotong royong and pengajian. Thus, spiritual learning strategies serve as an implementation medium for the P5 vision, fostering students who are religious, creative, and morally upright (Putri et al., 2023).

From the synthesis of all findings, it can be concluded that spiritual learning strategies effectively shape students' character when applied adaptively according to school context. Urban schools tend to succeed through structured patterns and strong principal monitoring, while coastal schools excel in enhancing social and spiritual values through community participation. Therefore, the reinforcement of spiritual learning should be directed toward a context based integrative model, in which teachers, principals, and the community work synergistically to cultivate students'

religious character, discipline, responsibility, and social empathy (Yusuf & Fajari, 2025).

Table 2. Comparison of Synthesized Findings in the Two Schools

Aspect of Analysis	SDN 015 Tanjung Pasir (Urban)	SDN 014 Sungai Nyiur (Rural/Coastal)
Social Context	Easily accessible location with complete facilities	Limited access, strong community support
Implementation Model	Scheduled prayers and reflections conducted in class or prayer corner	Flexible prayers and reflections conducted in the mosque or village hall
Role of Principal	Provides prayer facilities, monitors activities, and conducts teacher training	Builds collaboration with religious and community leaders
Role of Teachers	Acts as a role model, leads prayers, and prepares value reflection sessions	Leads prayers and community-based social activities
Role of Community	Parents support facilities and value monitoring	Community actively participates in joint prayers and <i>gotong royong</i> (mutual cooperation)
Impact on Students' Character	Increased discipline, responsibility, and orderliness	Increased social empathy, tolerance, and cooperation
Main Challenges	Tight academic schedule	Limited facilities and geographical constraints
Strategic Solutions	3–5 minute micro-reflection routines integrated with the Pancasila Student Profile (P5)	School–community collaboration and flexible scheduling of activities
Outcome (Product)	Measurable religious and disciplined character	Social and spiritual character strengthened through community-based learning

Discussion

The findings indicate that the spiritual learning strategies implemented at SDN 015 Tanjung Pasir and SDN 014 Sungai Nyiur are substantively aligned with national education goals, particularly in strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile (P5). Spiritual values internalized through collective prayer, value reflection, teacher role-modeling, and social habituation contribute directly to key P5 dimensions, especially faith in and devotion to God Almighty and noble character, as well as mutual cooperation and global diversity. Thus, spiritual learning does not function as an additional or supplementary activity but serves as an implementative instrument of P5 that is integrated into the school culture.

In the urban school context (SDN 015 Tanjung Pasir), alignment with P5 is evident through a structured and programmatic approach. Value reflection and character habituation are embedded in routine school agendas and integrated into P5 projects themed around faith, piety, and noble character. These practices also strengthen the independent and critical thinking dimensions by encouraging students' self-awareness of the moral values being learned through brief reflective activities. In contrast, in the rural/coastal school context (SDN 014 Sungai Nyiur), P5 reinforcement is manifested through a collaborative, community-based approach. Activities such as mutual cooperation, collective religious study, and the involvement of local religious leaders strengthen the mutual cooperation and diversity dimensions, as students learn empathy, tolerance, and social responsibility within real-life contexts.

Despite their positive impact, this study also identifies major challenges in implementing spiritual learning strategies. At SDN 015 Tanjung Pasir, the primary challenge is limited instructional time due to a dense academic curriculum. Teachers

face a dilemma between meeting academic achievement demands and strengthening character education. To address this issue, the school implemented micro-reflection strategies (3–5 minutes) embedded at the beginning or end of lessons, enabling spiritual learning to continue without disrupting core instructional time. This approach demonstrates that time constraints can be addressed through adaptive pedagogical innovation.

Meanwhile, SDN 014 Sungai Nyiur faces challenges related to limited infrastructure (such as worship spaces, learning media, and electricity access) as well as its coastal geographical conditions. However, the school developed community based compensatory strategies, including utilizing mosques, village halls, and public spaces as centers for spiritual activities. The involvement of parents and local religious leaders functions as social capital that compensates for material limitations. These findings affirm that social capital and local wisdom can serve as effective solutions in resource constrained settings.

Comparative analysis reveals that the success of spiritual learning strategies is not solely determined by the availability of facilities, but rather by consistency of practice, school leadership, and multi stakeholder collaboration. School principals act as value leaders who guide the integration of spiritual values into school policies and P5 implementation, teachers serve as role models and value facilitators, and the community strengthens the sustainability of values beyond the school environment. This synergy creates a spiritual ecosystem that enables sustained value internalization.

Therefore, this discussion reinforces the argument that contextual spiritual learning strategies whether structured in urban schools or collaborative in rural/coastal schools are relevant, adaptive, and aligned with the Pancasila Student Profile. The findings further offer practical implications, suggesting that schools can select and adapt implementation models based on available resources without compromising the core objectives of national character education.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that spiritual learning strategies play a significant role in shaping students' character in public elementary schools across both urban and rural/coastal contexts in Indragiri Hilir Regency. Despite differences in geographical conditions, social environments, and resource availability, spiritual learning has been shown to effectively foster key character values, including religiosity, discipline, responsibility, empathy, and social awareness, when implemented consistently and contextually.

The findings reveal two equally effective implementation models. Urban schools tend to apply a structured, school based model, characterized by systematic planning, routine spiritual activities, and strong leadership supervision. In contrast, rural/coastal schools adopt a collaborative, community based model, relying on parental involvement, religious leaders, and local cultural values to strengthen spiritual practices despite limited facilities. This demonstrates that the success of spiritual learning strategies is not determined by infrastructure alone, but rather by leadership commitment, teacher role modeling, and multi stakeholder collaboration.

From a practical perspective, this study recommends that schools seeking to implement spiritual learning strategies should: (1) integrate spiritual activities into formal school programs and the Pancasila Student Profile (P5) framework; (2) adopt

adaptive implementation models aligned with local contexts; and (3) strengthen school family community partnerships as a sustainable character education ecosystem. Notably, the rural community based model shows strong scalability potential and can be replicated in other regions facing similar resource constraints.

For future research, longitudinal studies are recommended to examine the long term impact of spiritual learning on students' character development, along with the development of standardized character assessment instruments. Overall, spiritual learning strategies can be positioned as a contextual, sustainable, and policy-aligned approach to strengthening character education in public elementary schools.

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