

## Spiritual Incubator and Social Laboratory: A Comparative Study of Character Education Ecosystems in Islamic and State Primary Schools

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### Abstract

Character education is a fundamental mandate of Indonesia's primary education system, implemented through two main pathways: Islamic primary schools (*Madrasah Ibtidaiyah/MI*) and state primary schools (*Sekolah Dasar/SD*). This study aims to comparatively analyze the character-building models in MI Nurul Ulum Mertak Tombok and SDN Mertak Umbak, focusing on differences in philosophy, practice, and outcomes. Using a qualitative approach with a comparative case study design, data were collected from 12 key informants through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis, and analyzed using Miles & Huberman's interactive model. Findings indicate that MI functions as a "spiritual incubator" applying an immersive-holistic model that shapes vertical-religious character through religious value integration, ritual habituation, and teacher role modeling. Conversely, SD operates as a "social laboratory" employing an experiential-constructivist model under the *Pancasila Student Profile* (P5) framework, fostering horizontal-social character such as collaboration and critical thinking. MI's primary challenge is translating religious values into broader civic contexts, while SD's challenge lies in deepening the moral foundation of its civic skills. The results affirm the complementary nature of both models and the importance of integration to produce graduates who are both spiritually devout and socially competent.

**Keywords:** Ecosystemic Comparative Study, Vertical Religious Character, Horizontal Social Character, Character Education

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## INTRODUCTION

Character education is a central mandate within Indonesia's national education system, aimed at shaping a generation that excels not only in intellectual capacity but also in faith, piety, and virtuous conduct grounded in the philosophical principles of Pancasila (Vhalery, Setyastanto, & Leksono, 2022). At the primary education level, this mandate is carried out through two parallel institutional pathways: *Sekolah Dasar* (SD), under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, and *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* (MI), managed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Although these institutions share a common national goal (Bullah, 2020), they operate on distinct philosophical and pedagogical assumptions, often resulting in significantly different ecosystems of character formation.

The discourse on effective character education has long been shaped by a paradigmatic tension between two approaches (Ainia, 2020). On one side, there is the immersive-holistic model, rooted in comprehensive religious education traditions, where moral and spiritual values are not taught as isolated subjects but are woven throughout the curriculum, school culture, and daily life. Habituation and teacher role modeling (*uswatun hasanah*) are emphasized as the principal mechanisms for character formation (Loloagin, Rantung, & Naibaho, 2023). On the other side, a progressive-humanistic approach draws from experiential and constructivist philosophies (Permana et al., 2024), asserting that character develops most authentically through student-led engagement with real-world problems in collaborative projects—embodied in Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum and the *Proyek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (P5) (Kemendikbudristek BSKAP, 2022).

Comparative research highlights that this philosophical divergence is not unique to Indonesia. In Malaysia, Islamic primary education is deeply integrated with character formation. Curricula infused with Islamic values foster students' moral and ethical development while simultaneously supporting academic achievement (Kasmawati et al., 2023). Here, exemplary character is cultivated through a curriculum that connects religious principles to all subject areas, ensuring students graduate as morally grounded individuals who can contribute positively to society. Similarly, in Pakistan, *madrasahs* serve as key institutions for instilling sincerity, honesty, respect, and other ethical values central to Islamic teachings (Abdullah et al., 2024; Lidyawati et al., 2023; Jallow, 2023). Both contexts emphasize that character education is not confined to the classroom but is reinforced through active community and parental involvement (Mahmud et al., 2024; Dian et al., 2024). Such collaboration expands the influence of moral instruction beyond school walls, ensuring alignment between institutional values and societal expectations.

Internationally, these approaches find parallels in OECD member countries. Finland, for example, integrates moral and character education into a comprehensive system that prioritizes student well-being and equitable learning opportunities, echoing the holistic ethos of Islamic schooling (Hazyimara et al., 2024). Canadian and Japanese models likewise emphasize mutual respect, responsibility, and empathy as foundations for developing ethical citizens (Ridwan et al., 2024). This convergence suggests that, despite cultural and religious differences, there is a shared global ethos: education must nurture both the moral compass and the civic competencies of learners.

In progressive education systems, civic education is often embedded within project-based learning (PBL). PBL engages students in authentic, problem-solving activities that connect classroom learning to community life, fostering active citizenship and social responsibility. This method aligns with Albert Bandura's social learning theory, which underscores the importance of observational learning, modeling, and imitation within social contexts (Mishra & Aithal, 2023; Fan et al., 2023). In PBL environments, students do not merely acquire knowledge; they observe and emulate the collaborative, communicative, and problem-solving behaviors of peers and teachers.

Evidence from multiple studies affirms that PBL strengthens communication, collaboration, and critical thinking (Kinasih & Ratnawati, 2024; Oktiarmi et al., 2023; Sudrajat et al., 2023). Kinasih and Ratnawati note that students engaged in PBL not only improve in teamwork skills but also develop a sense of civic engagement. This process mirrors Bandura's assertion that learning is socially constructed through active participation in meaningful contexts (Manasikana et al., 2023). By situating learning within projects that address community issues, PBL provides both the experiential basis and the social framework for civic character formation (Santoso, 2024; Gusnita et al., 2023).

The theoretical underpinnings of character education are well captured by Thomas Lickona's framework, which identifies three interdependent components: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral behavior. Recent interpretations adapt these components to 21st-century learning paradigms, emphasizing their integration into subject curricula and social-emotional learning practices (Arif et al., 2023). In modern application, these components are not treated as discrete but as overlapping dimensions that require coherent implementation to foster internalized moral responsibility.

John Dewey's educational philosophy complements and enriches Lickona's framework. Dewey (1938) viewed education as a continuous process of living, with experience as the core driver of meaningful learning. His emphasis on experiential learning resonates with both the immersive religious approach of MI and the project-based civic approach of SD. Dewey's advocacy for reflective thinking as part of the learning process parallels Lickona's focus on moral reasoning, suggesting that character development requires not only action but also critical engagement with the moral implications of one's behavior (Canillo & Bendanillo, 2024; Chen, 2023; Fiore, 2023).

Dewey's democratic ideal further aligns with contemporary civic education goals. He argued that schools should function as miniature democracies, providing students with opportunities to practice empathy, collaboration, and ethical decision-making in socially relevant contexts (Frank, 2023; Olmeda & Pérez, 2024). This ideal is reflected in PBL settings where students exercise agency, take on responsibilities, and contribute to collective outcomes, thereby linking moral growth with participatory citizenship.

Although numerous studies in Indonesia have explored character education in MI or SD independently, most focus on either religious immersion or civic competence in isolation. Abdullah (2020) examined how habituation in MI settings enhances religiosity but did not address how these values translate into broader social contexts. Conversely, Muliani and Lestari (2023) demonstrated that PBL in SD strengthens collaboration skills but did not assess the moral grounding of these competencies. This leaves a notable gap in comparative, ecosystemic research that examines the strengths and limitations of each model in parallel.

The need for such research is underscored by the policy landscape. While P5 initiatives in SD explicitly aim to develop civic competencies, MI must integrate these with a dense religious curriculum, potentially creating tensions in time allocation and pedagogical emphasis. Moreover, few studies have critically analyzed how the philosophical foundations of each system shape both the intended and unintended outcomes of character education.

International literature offers valuable comparative insights. For instance, Malaysian and Pakistani experiences illustrate that strong religious grounding can coexist with civic engagement when curricula intentionally connect moral principles with societal participation (Hidayat & Janan, 2023; Srimulat et al., 2024). Meanwhile, OECD contexts show that civic skills can be cultivated alongside moral virtues when supported by coherent, well-integrated school cultures.

This study addresses the identified gap by conducting a comparative case study of MI Nurul Ulum Mertak Tombok and SDN Mertak Umbak two schools representing the immersive-holistic and experiential-constructivist approaches respectively. By framing MI as a “spiritual incubator” fostering vertical-religious character and SD as a “social laboratory” cultivating horizontal-social character, the research aims to map their respective strengths and challenges. Furthermore, it introduces a dialectical thesis: that each school’s greatest strength reflects its most significant challenge MI’s depth in spiritual formation is counterbalanced by the difficulty of translating these values into secular social contexts, while SD’s success in social competence is tempered by the need to root these behaviors in enduring moral convictions.

This dual analysis is situated within an updated theoretical framework integrating Lickona’s and Bandura’s theories with Dewey’s experiential learning philosophy, enriched by comparative insights from Islamic education in Malaysia and Pakistan, and civic education in OECD countries. The outcome will contribute to both academic discourse and policy considerations, offering a nuanced understanding of how different educational ecosystems can complement each other in forming students who are both spiritually grounded and socially competent.

## METOD

This study is designed using a qualitative approach through a comparative case study design, chosen to obtain a deep, holistic, and contextual understanding of the phenomenon of “coaching patterns.” This approach is highly relevant for answering the “how” and “why” questions regarding how such patterns are formed and implemented in two different environments (Saimun, 2021). The research will be conducted at two primary education institutions in Central Lombok Regency: Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) Mertak Tombok and Sekolah Dasar Negeri (SDN) Jempong Eler. These locations were deliberately selected (purposive sampling) because they are considered representative of their respective models: MI Mertak Tombok, with a strong emphasis on religious coaching, and SDN Jempong Eler, which actively implements character-building programs based on the *Merdeka Curriculum*. The entire research process is planned to take place over six months, covering all stages from preparation to the final report.

The primary data sources in this study are key informants selected through purposive sampling. Informants were chosen based on their capacity to provide rich and in-depth information, including school principals, vice principals, Islamic education teachers, classroom teachers, and several students from both institutions. The number of informants was not determined using a statistical formula but rather the principle of data saturation, where data collection stops when no new significant information is obtained. To gather comprehensive data, this research will apply technique triangulation, combining three main methods: (1) in-depth interviews to explore perspectives and strategies, (2) participatory observation to

examine actual practices and school culture, and (3) document analysis to review relevant documents such as curricula and work programs.

The data analysis process will employ the interactive analysis model from Muslimin (2023) and Saldana, which is a continuous cycle of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. Specifically, the analysis will be conducted in two stages: first, *within-case analysis* to build a comprehensive understanding of each school, followed by *cross-case analysis* to compare findings and identify significant patterns, similarities, and differences.

The research activity plan has been systematically arranged. The preparation stage, which includes literature review and instrument development, will be carried out in the first month. Data collection at both sites will take place intensively from the second to the fourth month. Subsequently, an in-depth data analysis process will be conducted from the fourth to the fifth month, followed by the drafting and finalization of the research report in the fifth and sixth months, with the submission of the final report at the end of the sixth month.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Overview of School Profiles

The two case study sites MI Nurul Ulum Mertak Tombok and SDN Mertak Umbak differ considerably in their curricular priorities, pedagogical approaches, and community engagement models. Table 1 summarizes these contrasts.

**Table 1.** School Profile Comparison

Aspect	MI Nurul Ulum	SDN Mertak Umbak
Curriculum Focus	Religious integration across all subjects	P5 thematic projects, civic competencies
Pedagogical Approach	Immersive-holistic, ritual habituation	Project-based learning (PBL)
Community Engagement	High parental and community involvement in religious events	Community-linked projects, environmental campaigns

### Findings from MI Nurul Ulum Mertak Tombok

One of MI's distinctive strengths lies in the integration of Islamic principles into core subjects, a practice reinforced through daily ritual habituation. As Table 2 shows, subject-level integration occurs in multiple disciplines, reflecting the immersive-holistic nature of the curriculum.

**Table 2.** Examples of Religious Integration in MI Lessons

Subject	Integration Example
Mathematics	Division linked to <i>faraid</i> (Islamic inheritance law)
Science	Water cycle linked to Qur'anic verses on rain
Language	Stories from Hadith used in reading comprehension

### Findings from SDN Mertak Umbak

SD's implementation of PBL within the P5 framework has produced tangible improvements in collaboration, communication, and critical thinking among students. Table 3 outlines observed evidence of these skills in practice.

**Table 3.** PBL Impact at SDN Mertak Umbak

Skill Developed	Observed Evidence
Collaboration	Students working in teams to manage waste
Communication	Students presenting anti-bullying campaign to peers
Critical Thinking	Students proposing innovative solutions in cultural heritage project

### Cross-Case Comparative Findings

The comparative analysis reveals that each model has unique strengths and corresponding challenges, as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Cross-Case Comparative Themes

Theme	MI Nurul Ulum	SDN Mertak Umbak
Strengths	Deep spiritual formation, value internalization	Fosters civic engagement, 21st-century competencies
Challenges	Difficulty translating religious values into broader civic contexts	

### Findings from MI Nurul Ulum Mertak Tombok: Teacher Role Modeling

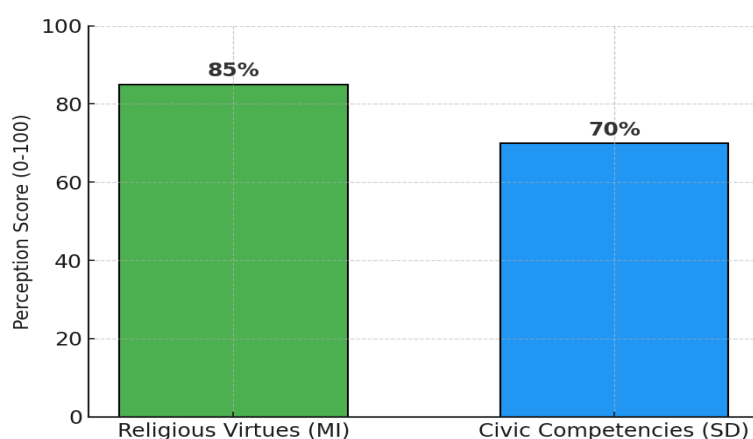
A defining characteristic of MI Nurul Ulum is the **intentional role modeling** of religious virtues by teachers. Observations confirmed that teachers consistently engage in behaviors that mirror the values they teach such as joining students in *shalat dhuha*, offering greetings, and demonstrating discipline in both academic and non-academic settings. This aligns with the *uswatun hasanah* approach (Rachmadtullah et al., 2024) and is reinforced by student perceptions.

*"Guru kami bukan hanya mengajarkan, tapi juga mencontohkan. Mereka ikut shalat, menyapa dengan sopan, bahkan memungut sampah yang terjatuh,"* (Siswa Kelas 5, MI Nurul Ulum)

### Findings from SDN Mertak Umbak: Teacher Role Modeling

At SDN Mertak Umbak, teacher modeling focuses more on **civic competencies** such as teamwork, communication, and problem-solving in project contexts. Teachers act as facilitators, guiding students to work collaboratively and manage group dynamics effectively. While religious modeling is less explicit, civic virtues are visibly modeled in daily interactions.

*"Guru mendorong kami untuk bekerja sama dan menghargai pendapat orang lain,"* (Siswa Kelas 6, SDN Mertak Umbak)



**Figure 1.** Student Perceptions of Teacher Role Modeling

As illustrated in **Figure 1**, students at MI Nurul Ulum rated their teachers highly for modeling religious virtues (85%), while students at SDN Mertak Umbak rated their teachers strongly for modeling civic competencies (70%). This contrast reflects the core pedagogical focus of each school MI's emphasis on vertical-religious character and SD's emphasis on horizontal-social character.

The patterns observed in Figure 1 reinforce the qualitative data: teacher behaviors are aligned with each school's educational ethos, which in turn shapes the dominant character outcomes among students.



The comparative analysis between MI Nurul Ulum Mertak Tombok and SDN Mertak Umbak offers a nuanced understanding of how two distinct educational ecosystems foster character development through different pedagogical and cultural approaches. The findings confirm that each institution cultivates a unique domain of character strength MI excels in forming vertical-religious character grounded in Islamic values, while SD thrives in nurturing horizontal-social character through civic-oriented, project-based learning. However, the results also reveal that these strengths are intrinsically linked to corresponding challenges, suggesting that neither model can be considered wholly sufficient in isolation.

The immersive religious model of MI Nurul Ulum demonstrates a high level of integration between curriculum, school culture, and moral objectives. Observations and interviews revealed that religious principles permeate all subject areas, with mathematics lessons linked to *faraid* inheritance laws and science topics enriched by Qur'anic verses, consistent with the integrative practices discussed by Purwati et al. (2023) and Kholila (2023). This pervasive approach reflects the Islamic pedagogical tradition that treats moral and spiritual education as inseparable from intellectual development, echoing findings in Malaysian Islamic schools where religious values are woven seamlessly into all learning activities (Kasmawati et al., 2023). The daily routines of *shalat dhuha berjamaah*, Qur'anic memorization, and ritual habituation not only reinforce discipline and piety but also create a school atmosphere where spiritual practice is normalized and internalized. Teachers play a central role in this environment, embodying the principles they teach in ways that students readily observe and emulate, supporting Bandura's assertion that modeling is one of the most effective strategies for transmitting moral norms (Bandura, 2018). This alignment between teacher conduct and institutional values strengthens the moral authority of instruction and, as Figure 1 illustrates, is recognized by students as a defining feature of their school experience.

Yet the strength of this immersive model also illuminates its primary limitation: the difficulty of transferring deeply internalized religious values into broader civic contexts. While students demonstrate high levels of ritual discipline and moral behavior in explicitly religious domains, there is evidence that these virtues are less consistently applied in non-religious situations, such as academic honesty during examinations or adherence to schedules for secular activities. This reflects what Lickona (2014) describes as the "application gap" between moral knowing and moral action. Similar challenges have been reported in Pakistani *madrasahs*, where moral education is robust within the religious framework but less explicit in its application to societal and civic responsibilities (Abdullah et al., 2024; Jallow, 2023). The issue is not the absence of values but the lack of deliberate strategies to bridge spiritual virtues with the everyday complexities of civic life.

In contrast, SDN Mertak Umbak's model, built around P5 and project-based learning (PBL), excels in fostering civic engagement, collaboration, and problem-solving skills. The results showed that students engaged in projects addressing real-world issues such as environmental sustainability or anti-bullying campaigns developed strong teamwork abilities, communication skills, and critical thinking, confirming the advantages of experiential learning frameworks described by Dewey (1938) and supported in contemporary studies (Kinasih & Ratnawati, 2024; Gusnita et al., 2023). These competencies are essential for active citizenship and align with the progressive education ideals practiced in OECD countries like Finland and Canada, where character and civic education are embedded within holistic, student-centered curricula (Hazyimara et al., 2024; Ridwan et al., 2024). Teacher facilitation in these projects models democratic participation, negotiation, and respect for diverse viewpoints, thereby operationalizing the principles of civic responsibility in daily classroom life.

However, the findings also reveal that while civic competencies are well developed, they are not always underpinned by enduring moral convictions. Behaviors such as cooperation and empathy are often context-dependent, emerging strongly during project activities but less evident outside those structured situations. This situational character performance, as noted in Table 4, suggests that without deeper moral anchoring, the civic behaviors cultivated through PBL risk being ephemeral. The concern mirrors international critiques of competency-based models that emphasize skills over virtues,

questioning whether such approaches sufficiently address the moral dimensions of character formation (Nucci & Narvaez, 2014). In the context of SDN Mertak Umbak, religious and moral instruction is largely confined to designated Islamic Studies classes, resulting in a compartmentalization of moral education rather than its integration into the broader curriculum.

These differences between MI and SD can be traced to structural and philosophical distinctions. MI's dual curriculum, mandated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, allocates substantial time to religious subjects, inevitably limiting opportunities for extended civic-oriented projects. The institutional ethos prioritizes piety and spiritual discipline as the foundation for all virtues. In contrast, SD operates under the Ministry of Education's framework, which emphasizes P5 and the cultivation of 21st-century competencies, with less emphasis on integrating religious instruction into non-religious subjects. This division reflects what Pratama & Abidin (2024) observed in Islamic high schools: institutional mandates significantly shape the domains in which students excel and the gaps they exhibit.

The implications of these findings extend beyond the two schools studied. Comparative research in Malaysia and Pakistan suggests that a more integrative model where religious values inform civic engagement and vice versa can bridge the gap between moral conviction and civic practice (Mahmud et al., 2024; Hidayat & Janan, 2023; Srimulat et al., 2024). For instance, Malaysian Islamic schools have experimented with PBL projects that address community needs while grounding activities in Qur'anic principles of justice, stewardship, and mutual assistance. This approach not only engages students in real-world problem-solving but also ensures that their actions are guided by a consistent moral framework.

Integrating these insights into the Indonesian context could mean designing civic projects in MI that explicitly connect religious teachings to social responsibilities such as environmental stewardship framed as fulfilling the role of *khalifah fil ardh* (steward of the Earth) while embedding moral reasoning exercises into SD's PBL activities. Such integration aligns with the suggestions of A'yun et al. (2023) and Aswirna et al. (2023), who found that character education is most effective when embedded in the core of subject learning rather than treated as an add-on. The hybrid model would capitalize on MI's strength in deep moral formation and SD's expertise in experiential civic learning, addressing each system's limitations.

The role of teacher modeling emerges as a pivotal factor in both contexts. At MI, the alignment between teacher conduct and religious instruction reinforces the moral messages delivered in class, as reflected in the high student ratings in Figure 1. At SD, teachers model civic virtues by facilitating inclusive discussions, mediating conflicts, and encouraging student agency. These behaviors are consistent with Bandura's (2018) theory of social learning, which posits that observation of credible role models is a critical mechanism for internalizing desired behaviors. The difference lies in the domain of modeling: MI's teachers are moral exemplars in the religious sense, while SD's teachers exemplify democratic and collaborative competencies. The challenge is to broaden the scope of modeling in each setting so that teachers in MI also model civic engagement and those in SD also model moral integrity anchored in spiritual or ethical values.

The results also underscore the value of direct observation as a research tool in capturing the nuances of school culture. Observations at MI revealed a school climate saturated with religious symbols, rituals, and language, creating an immersive moral environment consistent with Vincent et al.'s (2023) findings on the importance of congruence between institutional environment and character education objectives. At SD, observations documented the energy and engagement of students during collaborative projects, reinforcing the idea that participatory structures can cultivate a sense of community and shared purpose. These qualitative insights, grounded in direct observation, provide a richer understanding of how character education is enacted in practice and why it produces distinct outcomes.

While the study offers valuable contributions to understanding character education in different primary school ecosystems, it also has limitations that must be acknowledged. The research was conducted in only two schools in Central Lombok, which limits the generalizability of findings to other

regions or cultural contexts. The reliance on self-reported data from teachers and students introduces the possibility of social desirability bias, particularly in the moral domain where respondents may wish to present themselves or their institutions in a favorable light. Moreover, the study's cross-sectional design captures a snapshot in time, leaving unanswered questions about the long-term sustainability of the character traits observed.

Despite these limitations, the findings provide a strong basis for policy and practice recommendations. For policymakers, the evidence suggests that fostering synergy between MI and SD approaches could yield more balanced character outcomes. This could involve cross-institutional collaborations where MI students participate in civic projects with SD peers, and SD students engage in immersive moral formation activities alongside MI counterparts. For practitioners, the key lies in adopting pedagogical strategies that bridge the gap between moral conviction and civic competence. For example, MI teachers could design PBL units rooted in religious teachings but addressing contemporary societal issues, while SD teachers could integrate ethical discussions into project reflections to deepen moral understanding.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study affirms the relevance of integrating Lickona's framework of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action with Dewey's experiential learning theory and Bandura's social learning model. MI's strength lies in cultivating moral knowing and moral feeling through religious instruction and modeling, while SD's strength is in facilitating moral action in civic contexts. The challenge, as Lickona emphasizes, is ensuring that these three components are balanced so that moral action is both principled and consistent. Dewey's insistence on reflective thinking as part of learning could serve as the bridge, encouraging students in both contexts to critically connect their experiences with the values they profess.

The comparative analysis of MI Nurul Ulum and SDN Mertak Umbak underscores the idea that character education is most effective when it is comprehensive, integrative, and contextually responsive. Each school's approach reflects its institutional identity and cultural mission, producing commendable outcomes in its respective domain. However, the complexities of modern society demand individuals who are both morally grounded and socially competent who can draw on a strong moral compass while navigating the diverse and dynamic challenges of civic life. Achieving this ideal requires moving beyond the binary of religious versus civic education and embracing a model that harmonizes the virtues of both. The findings here, supported by both local and international literature, suggest that such a synthesis is not only possible but necessary for the holistic development of future generations.

## CONCLUSION

The comparative study between MI Nurul Ulum Mertak Tombok and SDN Mertak Umbak reveals that each institution fosters distinct but equally valuable domains of character formation. MI's immersive-holistic model, grounded in Islamic principles, excels in cultivating deep spiritual values and moral discipline, achieved through integrated curriculum design, structured ritual habituation, and consistent teacher role modeling. SD's experiential-constructivist model, centered on project-based learning, effectively develops civic engagement, collaboration, and problem-solving skills, aligning with 21st-century educational competencies. However, these strengths are accompanied by corresponding challenges: MI struggles to translate internalized religious virtues into broader civic contexts, while SD's civic skills sometimes lack a durable moral foundation. The findings underscore that no single model is superior in isolation; rather, they are complementary and, if strategically integrated, could produce graduates who are both morally grounded and socially competent. This synergy would respond to the modern educational imperative of forming individuals capable of ethical decision-making and active participation in diverse societal contexts.

## RECOMMENDATION

Based on these findings, it is recommended that policy makers, school leaders, and educators explore strategies for integrating the strengths of both models. For MI, incorporating project-based



activities rooted in religious principles but addressing real-world societal issues can help bridge the gap between moral conviction and civic application. For SD, embedding explicit moral and ethical reflection into PBL activities can strengthen the durability and depth of civic virtues. Cross-institutional collaboration between MI and SD such as joint community service projects, environmental stewardship initiatives, or inter-school cultural programs could foster mutual learning and expand students' character horizons. Teacher professional development should also emphasize the dual capacity to model both religious integrity and civic competence, ensuring that educators in both contexts can serve as comprehensive role models. At the policy level, curriculum guidelines should encourage an integrative approach that harmonizes moral and civic education, drawing on both national priorities and successful international practices. Further research should expand the geographical scope, include longitudinal designs, and assess the long-term sustainability of character traits formed through such hybrid models, thereby strengthening the evidence base for more holistic character education in Indonesia.

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