Tafaqquh Fiddin-Based Character Education Strategies in Facing Pop Culture Challenges Among Students

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ABSTRACT: *This study analyses Tafaqquh Fiddin-based character education strategies for addressing the challenges of popular culture (pop culture) among students at MTs Muhammadiyah 05 Kalikuning. This study is motivated by the growing moral crisis and deviant behaviour among adolescents, exacerbated by the negative influence of social media and popular culture. This study used a qualitative case study approach. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews with teachers and the principal, and analysis of documents related to the madrasah's character education programs. The findings show that the Tafaqquh Fiddin-based character education strategy at MTs Muhammadiyah 05 Kalikuning is implemented through three main stages: (1) program planning, including the preparation of annual, semester, weekly, and daily learning plans; (2) program implementation through classical and individual learning using various methods such as Qur'anic learning, memorisation, storytelling, question-and-answer activities, and educational games; and (3) continuous assessment to measure the development of students' religious and moral values. The study also found that the school implements strategies to strengthen religious character through value-based learning, habituation, exemplary conduct (uswah hasanah), and religious programs such as tahfiz, mabit, and muhadharah. This integrated approach has proven effective in improving students' discipline, responsibility, and moral values, while creating an environment that supports the development of Islamic character amid the widespread influence of popular culture. These findings emphasise the importance of educational institutions in equipping students with strong character so that they can respond wisely and selectively to the challenges of the times.*

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi pendidikan karakter berbasis *Tafaqquh Fiddin* dalam menghadapi tantangan budaya populer (*pop culture*) pada siswa MTs Muhammadiyah 05 Kalikuning. Latar belakang penelitian ini adalah adanya krisis moral dan perilaku menyimpang yang semakin meningkat di kalangan remaja, yang diperburuk oleh pengaruh negatif media sosial dan budaya populer. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam dengan guru dan kepala sekolah, serta analisis dokumen terkait program pendidikan karakter di madrasah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi pendidikan karakter berbasis *Tafaqquh Fiddin* di MTs Muhammadiyah 05 Kalikuning diimplementasikan melalui tiga tahap utama, yaitu: 1) perencanaan program yang meliputi penyusunan rencana pembelajaran tahunan, semester, mingguan, dan harian; 2) pelaksanaan program melalui pembelajaran klasikal dan individual dengan

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berbagai metode seperti pembelajaran Al-Qur'an, hafalan, bercerita, tanya jawab, dan permainan edukatif; serta 3) penilaian berkelanjutan untuk mengukur perkembangan nilai agama dan moral siswa. Penelitian ini juga menemukan bahwa strategi penguatan karakter religius dilakukan melalui pembelajaran berbasis nilai, pembiasaan, keteladanan (*uswah hasanah*), dan program keagamaan seperti *tahfiz*, *mabit*, dan *muhadhoroh*. Pendekatan terintegrasi ini terbukti efektif dalam meningkatkan disiplin, tanggung jawab, serta nilai-nilai moral siswa, sekaligus menciptakan lingkungan yang mendukung pengembangan karakter Islami di tengah gempuran budaya populer. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya lembaga pendidikan dalam membekali siswa dengan karakter yang kuat agar mampu menyikapi tantangan zaman secara bijak dan selektif.

Keywords: *Character Education, Tafaqquh Fiddin, Pop Culture.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information and communication technology has significantly transformed contemporary society, including education and adolescents' social experiences. The widespread use of social media, short-video platforms, and algorithmically curated digital content has created new opportunities for communication, learning, and self-expression. However, these developments have also introduced challenges for educational institutions, particularly those responsible for developing students' moral and religious character. Young people, especially students in Islamic junior secondary schools (*madrasah tsanawiyah*), increasingly encounter diverse cultural influences that shape their lifestyles, preferences, social interactions, and perceptions of identity (Mulyana, 2023). Consequently, Islamic educational institutions must reconsider how to internalise and maintain religious values in an increasingly interconnected digital environment.

Popular culture (pop culture) has become an influential component of adolescents' everyday lives. Korean popular music (K-Pop), Korean dramas, TikTok trends, and other forms of digital entertainment provide cultural references that young people use to construct identities, build social relationships, and express their preferences. Although popular culture can foster creativity, social interaction, and cultural exchange, uncritical consumption may also encourage excessive consumption, celebrity imitation, and prioritising entertainment over educational and religious responsibilities. Rohmah & Diana (2023), for example, identify K-Pop culture's influence on students' sociocultural behaviour, including imitation of clothing styles, language, and entertainment preferences, as well as potential consumerism, excessive fanaticism, and declining interest in local culture. These concerns suggest that popular culture should not be understood merely as entertainment but also as a social environment in which adolescents negotiate values and construct their identities.

The increasing integration of digital media into adolescents' lives makes this issue particularly relevant to character education. Šramová & Pavelka (2023) discuss the significance of media consumption in shaping young people's preferences and cultural experiences. In educational contexts, digital content can function as an informal source of values and behavioural models beyond the direct supervision of teachers and parents.

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Nevertheless, popular culture's influence should not be treated as uniformly negative. Its effects depend on the content consumed, the intensity of engagement, the social environment, and the individual's capacity for critical evaluation. Therefore, the central educational challenge is not simply to prevent students from encountering popular culture but to equip them with the religious understanding and moral judgment necessary to evaluate its various influences.

This challenge is particularly relevant to MTs Muhammadiyah 05 Kalikuning, an Islamic educational institution expected to integrate religious learning with character development. The researcher's initial observations raise concerns about students' respect for teachers, language use, attitudes toward school responsibilities, and engagement with Islamic values. These observations raise questions about the relationship between students' participation in contemporary popular culture and the school's efforts to cultivate religious character. However, such indications should be examined through systematic empirical investigation rather than automatically attributed to popular culture. Students' behaviour may also be influenced by family practices, peer relationships, school culture, and broader social changes. Accordingly, the issue requires an educational approach that considers how digital cultural influences interact with the processes through which religious values are taught, experienced, and practised.

From a theoretical perspective, Islamic character education emphasises the relationship between religious knowledge, moral understanding, and the practical expression of Islamic values. One relevant concept is *Tafaqquh Fiddin*, which refers to the deepening of religious understanding. Its Qur'anic foundation can be found in Surah At-Tawbah (9:122), which emphasises the importance of developing religious understanding and conveying religious guidance to the community. In the context of Islamic education, this principle can be interpreted as a foundation for developing learners who do not merely acquire religious information but also understand its significance for personal conduct and social responsibility. The educational relevance of *Tafaqquh Fiddin* therefore lies in connecting the intellectual dimensions of religious learning with the formation of attitudes and behaviour.

The concept also resonates with Lickona (1991) framework of character education, which distinguishes character development into moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. These dimensions highlight that knowledge of moral principles does not automatically produce moral behaviour. Students must also develop an affective commitment to those principles and the capacity to translate them into everyday decisions. When applied to *Tafaqquh Fiddin*-based education, this framework provides an analytical perspective for examining how religious knowledge may be transformed into internalised values and observable conduct. It also helps explain why religious instruction needs habituation, exemplary behaviour, reflective learning, and opportunities for students to practice the values they learn.

Previous research provides several foundations for investigating this relationship. First, studies of popular culture and adolescent behaviour indicate that media consumption can influence students' lifestyles, preferences, and social interactions. Rohmah & Diana (2023) highlight the sociocultural implications of K-Pop consumption, while literature on students suggests that engagement with Korean dramas may be associated with delayed prayer, neglected school assignments, late-night viewing, and reduced social interaction. These findings illustrate possible tensions between entertainment

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consumption and students' educational or religious responsibilities. Nevertheless, these effects should be examined contextually because media consumption does not necessarily produce the same outcomes for all students. These studies are educationally significant because adolescents need appropriate guidance to evaluate media content and regulate their engagement with digital entertainment.

Second, research on the internalisation of *Tafaqquh Fiddin* provides a basis for understanding how religious values may shape students' character. Purwati (2024) research identifies three stages of internalisation: cognitive understanding, emotional acceptance, and behavioural change. This perspective suggests that the effectiveness of religious education depends not only on delivering knowledge but also on students' affective engagement and the practical application of religious values. Accordingly, *Tafaqquh Fiddin* can be understood as a process of character formation in which students develop religious understanding, build an emotional connection with Islamic teachings, and gradually incorporate these teachings into their daily behaviour.

Third, research on character education Rahmawati & Yekti (2025) identifies several strategies for strengthening students' religious character, including value-based learning, habituation, exemplary conduct, and structured religious programs. Activities such as *tahfiz* (Qur'an memorisation), *mabit* (an overnight religious development program), and *muhadharah* (speech and public-speaking practice) are presented as ways to support students' discipline, responsibility, and moral development. These findings provide an important contextual foundation for examining religious character formation in schools. They also suggest that character education involves formal instruction, routine practices, and the examples provided by educators.

Despite these contributions, several issues require further investigation. Studies on popular culture have primarily emphasised its influence on adolescents' lifestyles and sociocultural behaviour, while research on religious character education has emphasised learning strategies, habituation, and teacher role modelling. Meanwhile, research on *Tafaqquh Fiddin* has highlighted the stages through which religious values are internalised. These strands of research are related. Still, their intersection requires more explicit examination: how are *Tafaqquh Fiddin*-based educational strategies implemented to strengthen students' religious character, and how might the internalisation of religious values help students respond critically to popular culture? This question matters because the existence of religious programs does not, by itself, show that students have developed the capacity to evaluate digital content or regulate their behaviour. The relationship between educational strategies, the internalisation process, and students' responses to popular culture must therefore be examined through contextual evidence.

The novelty of the present study lies in its integrated examination of *Tafaqquh Fiddin*, religious character formation, and popular culture within the context of MTs Muhammadiyah 05 Kalikuning. Rather than treating religious education and popular culture as separate issues, this study examines how religious learning, habituation, teacher role-modelling behaviour, and structured religious activities may contribute to students' internalisation of Islamic values. It also considers whether this internalisation gives students a framework for evaluating cultural influences selectively and critically. The study does not assume that all popular culture is harmful or that religious education automatically eliminates its influence. Instead, it approaches *Tafaqquh Fiddin* as a

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potential educational resource for developing religious understanding, moral judgment, and self-regulation amid changing cultural conditions.

Based on this background, the study aims to analyse *Tafaqquh Fiddin*-based character education strategies in addressing the challenges of popular culture among students at MTs Muhammadiyah 05 Kalikuning. Specifically, it examines four interconnected aspects: the implementation of the *Tafaqquh Fiddin* program; the strategies employed to strengthen students' religious character; the process through which *Tafaqquh Fiddin* values are internalised in students' attitudes and behaviour; and the roles of teachers, parents, and the wider educational environment in supporting character formation. Through this focus, the study seeks to contribute to discussions of Islamic education by explaining how religious learning may be connected to the development of students' capacity to navigate contemporary cultural influences while maintaining their religious and moral commitments.

II. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to examine the implementation of *Tafaqquh Fiddin*-based character education strategies in addressing the challenges of popular culture at MTs Muhammadiyah 05 Kalikuning. A qualitative case study was selected because it enables an in-depth investigation of educational practices, social interactions, and meaning-making processes within their natural institutional context. This design was particularly appropriate for exploring how religious values are integrated into learning activities, internalised through character education practices, and connected to students' responses to contemporary popular culture.

The research was conducted at MTs Muhammadiyah 05 Kalikuning, which served as the bounded case. The researchers purposively selected participants based on their involvement in implementing the *Tafaqquh Fiddin* program and their ability to provide relevant information on religious character development. The informants included the principal, Islamic Religious Education teachers, homeroom teachers, and students. The principal described institutional policies and program planning, while teachers explained instructional strategies, religious habituation, and character-development practices. Students were interviewed to explore their experiences of religious learning, their understanding of Islamic values, and their perceptions of popular culture. The number of informants and their selection criteria should be reported according to the actual fieldwork conducted.

Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Participant observation focused on the implementation of *Tafaqquh Fiddin* activities, classroom interactions, religious habituation, teacher role modelling, and observable manifestations of students' religious character. Where supported by the research protocol and actual fieldwork, observations also examined how students discussed or responded to popular-culture content. Field notes were maintained to document relevant activities, interactions, and contextual information.

The study conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with selected informants to obtain detailed accounts of program implementation, character education strategies, students' experiences, and perceived challenges associated with popular culture. Interview questions covered the planning and implementation of religious programs, the

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internalisation of religious values, the roles of teachers and parents, and students' approaches to evaluating cultural influences. Interviews were documented through recordings or written notes, with participants' consent, and then transcribed or organised for analysis. Document analysis examined relevant institutional materials, including the madrasah curriculum, lesson plans, schedules of religious activities, program guidelines, and student assessment records, where available. These documents were used to contextualise and corroborate information obtained through interviews and observations.

Data analysis followed the interactive model developed by Miles et al. (2014), which involves three interconnected activities: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data condensation involved selecting, organising, and coding information relevant to the research questions, particularly information on program implementation, character education strategies, value internalisation, and responses to popular culture. Data display involved organising the coded information into descriptive summaries, thematic matrices, and comparisons across informants and data sources. Conclusion drawing and verification involved identifying recurring patterns, examining relationships among themes, considering alternative interpretations, and checking emerging conclusions against the available empirical evidence. The analytical process was iterative, allowing preliminary interpretations to be refined as additional data were examined.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed source triangulation and method triangulation. Source triangulation involved comparing information obtained from the principal, teachers, and students, while method triangulation involved comparing interview findings with observational records and relevant institutional documents. Discrepancies among sources were examined rather than automatically treated as errors, as such differences could reveal variations in participants' experiences and perspectives. Where feasible, clarification with informants and the maintenance of an organised record of data collection and analysis were used to strengthen the credibility and traceability of the findings.

Ethical considerations were addressed by ensuring participation was voluntary, obtaining appropriate institutional permission and informed consent from participants or their guardians where required, and protecting participants' identities in reporting the findings. Particular care was taken when involving minor students. The researchers handled interview records and other research materials confidentially and used them solely for research purposes. The interpretation of students' behaviour and engagement with popular culture was grounded in the collected evidence, avoiding unsupported assumptions about the relationship between media consumption and moral decline (Ikhwan, 2021).

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of the *Tafaqquh Fiddin* Program at MTs Muhammadiyah 05 Kalikuning

The implementation of the *Tafaqquh Fiddin* program at MTs Muhammadiyah 05 Kalikuning shows that religious education is not merely the transfer of Islamic knowledge but a systematic process of cultivating students' religious understanding, attitudes, and behaviour. Based on the field data, the program is implemented through

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three interconnected stages: planning, implementation, and assessment. These three stages show that *Tafaqquh Fiddin* is an integrated educational program rather than an additional religious activity.

> "The Tafaqquh Fiddin program is not only directed at making students know religious material, but how that knowledge becomes habits and behavior. Therefore, we connect religious learning activities with habits of daily worship and morals." (interview data).

The statement indicates that the program is oriented toward transforming religious knowledge into religious practice. This orientation is important because religious character cannot be formed solely through cognitive instruction. Lickona (1991) character education framework distinguishes character into moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Thus, religious education becomes meaningful when students not only know religious values but also develop an emotional attachment to those values and demonstrate them through concrete behaviour (Anggraeni & Maknunah, 2025).

The planning stage is reflected in the preparation of annual, semester, weekly, and daily learning programs. The documentation may include lesson plans, religious activity schedules, students' activity books, and program guidelines (Documentation data). Integrating religious values across subjects indicates that the school avoids separating religious education from general education. In this model, *Tafaqquh Fiddin* functions as a value framework that permeates the school culture (Nurfadillah, 2026).

Classroom observations showed that teachers delivered religious messages not only during Islamic Religious Education lessons. Teachers also reminded students about discipline, honesty, responsibility, manners, and prayer practices in routine classroom interactions. This finding suggests that *Tafaqquh Fiddin* is implemented through both formal instruction and the school's hidden curriculum (Observational data).

The implementation stage employs classical and individual learning. Qur'anic learning uses the *Tilawati* approach, memorisation, question-and-answer sessions, and teacher guidance. Classical learning enables teachers to provide common religious knowledge to the entire class, while individual learning allows teachers to respond to differences in students' abilities.

> “In our teaching, we cannot use a single approach for all students. Some students grasp the material quickly, while others require individual guidance. Therefore, following the general lesson, we provide additional support to those students who need it.” (Teacher interview data).

This finding reinforces the view that *Tafaqquh Fiddin* should be understood not simply as increasing the quantity of religious material but as developing depth of understanding and the capacity to apply Islamic values. The combination of classical and individual approaches enables the school to address both collective religious learning and individual religious development (Nuryadin et al., 2025).

The assessment stage is also significant. Based on the findings (Assessment instrument documentation data), assessment does not focus exclusively on students' ability to answer questions concerning Islamic teachings but also considers religious practices, discipline, participation, and attitudes. This aligns with the broader understanding of character education, where cognitive achievement alone is insufficient to demonstrate character formation. Recent studies of Islamic habituation likewise report that

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systematic religious routines can strengthen students' moral behaviour and engagement in religious activities (Nurizah & Amrullah, 2024).

Therefore, implementing *Tafaqquh Fiddin* at MTs Muhammadiyah 05 Kalikuning can be interpreted as a three-dimensional process: religious knowledge, religious internalisation, and religious practice. This becomes particularly relevant in the context of popular culture because students are not merely equipped with religious information but are expected to develop internal criteria for evaluating behaviours and cultural influences.

Strategies for Strengthening Religious Character in Facing Pop Culture

The findings indicate that MTs Muhammadiyah 05 Kalikuning develops religious character by integrating religious values, habituation, teacher modelling, and structured religious activities. These strategies show that the school responds to popular culture not primarily through prohibition, but by strengthening students' internal religious orientation.

The first strategy is integrating religious values into learning. Teachers attempt to connect subject matter with values such as responsibility, discipline, honesty, respect, and obedience to religious teachings. This strategy matters because character education is more sustainable when values are repeatedly encountered in different learning contexts rather than confined to one subject.

> "It is impossible for us to supervise students at all times, especially once they are outside of school. What we do instead is equip them with values and habits so that when they encounter something on social media, they are able to judge for themselves what is good and what is not." (Teacher interview data).

This statement reveals an important dimension of the school's strategy: internal regulation rather than external control. Students are expected to develop the ability to make judgments independently. This is particularly relevant in the contemporary digital environment, where adolescents encounter diverse forms of content outside the direct supervision of teachers and parents (Khabibah et al., 2025).

Recent research shows that social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok increasingly participate in the construction of Muslim youth identity. Islamic educational messages are therefore no longer received only through classrooms, mosques, or teachers but also through digital platforms (Soedjiwo et al., 2025). Similarly, recent research on Indonesian Muslim youth culture shows that religious expression has become intertwined with digital media, entertainment, lifestyle, and popular culture (Nafisah et al., 2026). Consequently, strengthening religious character requires more than simply limiting students' exposure to popular culture; it requires developing their ability to evaluate that culture critically.

The second strategy is religious habituation. Field observations indicate routine activities such as praying before and after learning, Qur'an recitation, Duha prayer, and other religious practices. These activities create repetition, which can gradually transform external instructions into habitual behaviour (Observational data).

This finding aligns with previous research showing that systematic Islamic habituation—including prayer, Qur'an recitation, gratitude practices, and religious school culture—can contribute to students' moral behaviour and religious engagement (Nurizah & Amrullah, 2024). Research at SMP Negeri 1 Gatak similarly identifies

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Qur'anic learning, congregational prayer, Friday religious activities, and habituation of discipline and tolerance as mechanisms for developing religious character (Rahayu & Istanto, 2025).

However, this study offers an important contextual extension. Habituation in MTs Muhammadiyah 05 Kalikuning is not merely intended to make students accustomed to religious rituals. It is also positioned as a protective mechanism for developing students' self-control. In this sense, the value of habituation lies not only in the visible activity but in the internal disposition formed through repeated practice.

The third strategy is *uswah hasanah*, or exemplary teacher behaviour. Teachers function as concrete representations of the values they teach. During observations, teachers participated in religious activities, reminded students about prayer, maintained polite communication, and responded to students' mistakes with advice rather than humiliation (Observational data).

This finding is strongly supported by previous qualitative research showing that teachers' exemplary behaviour and habituation are important mechanisms for developing students' religious character. Thus, the teacher's role extends beyond transmitting religious knowledge. Teachers become part of the students' social environment, where Islamic values are observed, interpreted, and imitated (Hidayah et al., 2025).

The fourth strategy consists of structured religious programs such as *tahfiz*, *mabit*, and *muhadharah*. These activities provide experiential dimensions of religious education. Students not only listen to religious explanations but participate in practices that require discipline, confidence, cooperation, and responsibility.

The combination of learning, habituation, exemplary behaviour, and structured activities can therefore be understood as a school-based religious character ecosystem. Its strength lies in the interaction between what students are taught, what they repeatedly practice, and what they observe from their teachers.

Internalisation of *Tafaqquh Fiddin* Values as a Shield against Pop Culture Influence

One of the most important findings of this study concerns the process through which *Tafaqquh Fiddin* values are internalised by students. The findings suggest that internalisation occurs through three interconnected stages: cognitive understanding, emotional acceptance, and behavioural transformation.

In the first stage, students gain religious knowledge through classroom learning, Qur'anic instruction, memorisation, religious discussions, and study of Islamic texts. This stage aims not only to expand students' religious vocabulary but also to give them a conceptual framework for distinguishing appropriate from inappropriate behaviour.

> "In the past, if I saw something on social media, I would just join in because it was trending. Now, I try to first consider whether or not it aligns with Islamic teachings." (Student interview data).

If supported by the interview data, this statement would show an important shift from passive consumption to critical evaluation. Such transformation corresponds to the moral knowing dimension in Lickona (1991) framework, particularly moral awareness, moral reasoning, and decision-making.

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The second stage is emotional acceptance. Religious values become stronger when students experience them affectively through worship, collective activities, *mabit*, *muhadharah*, Qur'anic recitation, and interaction with teachers. These activities can create emotional attachment to religious values. In other words, students are not simply told that a value is important; they experience it within a social and spiritual environment (Trisnantari et al., 2026).

During religious activities, students appeared to participate collectively in prayer, Qur'an recitation, and religious reflection. These experiences can strengthen the affective dimension of character because students associate religious values with social belonging, spiritual experience, and positive emotional experiences (Observational data).

The third stage is behavioural transformation. Internalisation can be considered successful when religious knowledge and emotional attachment are reflected in everyday conduct. Teachers reported improvements in punctuality, responsibility for religious activities, politeness in communication, and students' willingness to remind one another about religious practices.

This process corresponds to the moral action component of character education. Therefore, the internalisation process identified in this study can be conceptualised as:

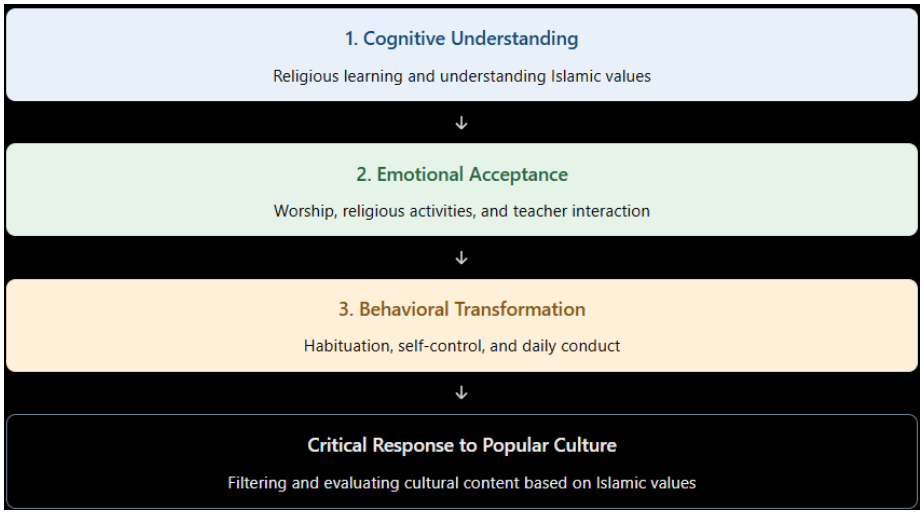


Figure 1. *Internalisation of tafaqquh fiddin values in responding to pop culture*

The relationship with popular culture is particularly important. Popular culture should not automatically be regarded as entirely negative. Contemporary youth encounter a mixture of positive and negative cultural content. The key educational task is therefore to develop students' ability to filter, negotiate, and respond critically to cultural content.

Recent studies of Islamic education and Muslim youth identity on social media show that digital platforms have become important spaces for constructing and negotiating religious identity (Soedjiwo et al., 2025). Research on Generation Z likewise emphasises the challenge Islamic education faces in responding to screen-based environments and changing youth values (Sarinah et al., 2025).

In this context, *Tafaqquh Fiddin* can be interpreted not simply as a defensive program against popular culture but as a religious literacy mechanism. Students with stronger religious understanding are expected to have greater capacity to distinguish between content that can be adopted and content that should be rejected (Arifin et al., 2026).

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This interpretation represents an important contribution of the study. Rather than viewing religious education as an isolated school subject, the findings suggest that *Tafaqquh Fiddin* functions as a framework for developing students' moral judgment and self-regulation in contemporary cultural environments.

The Role of Teachers and Collaboration with Parents

The findings also show that implementing *Tafaqquh Fiddin* cannot be separated from teachers' roles. Teachers function simultaneously as instructors, mentors, role models, motivators, and supervisors of students' religious development.

> "Teachers don't just explain religious material. If the teacher tells students to pray or watch their words, the teacher also has to show the same thing. It's easier for children to see examples rather than just hearing advice." (Teacher interview data).

This finding reinforces previous research showing that teacher exemplary behaviour contributes significantly to students' religious character development. A recent qualitative study found that teacher role modelling, combined with habituation programs, plays an important role in shaping religious character (Hafid et al., 2024). Other studies similarly demonstrate that habituation and teacher example provide students with concrete behavioural models through which religious values become visible in daily school life (Reksamunandar & Hadirman, 2022).

The teacher's role becomes even more important in relation to popular culture. Teachers cannot continuously monitor what students consume through smartphones and social media. Consequently, the educational objective should gradually shift from external supervision to internal self-control. The teacher's role is to provide students with religious principles and critical reasoning skills that can be applied even when teachers are absent (Ayini et al., 2026).

Parents constitute the second important component. Character formation cannot be sustained if religious values taught at school are inconsistent with students' home environment.

> “At home, we try to continue the habits taught at the madrasah—especially regarding prayer, the use of mobile phones, and how to interact with others.” (Interview data from parents).

If supported by actual data, this finding demonstrates the importance of continuity between school and home. Religious character formation becomes stronger when students encounter relatively consistent expectations across educational environments.

However, the findings should also acknowledge that collaboration between school and parents may not always be ideal. Differences in parental supervision, students' access to smartphones, and family routines may influence how well school-based religious values are maintained outside school. Therefore, collaboration should be understood not merely as communication but as shared responsibility for students' moral and digital environment (Syamsuriah et al., 2026).

The school-parent relationship can consequently be conceptualised as a complementary system. The school provides structured religious learning and habituation, teachers provide modelling and guidance, while parents reinforce these values in the home environment. The community and wider digital environment then constitute the broader context in which students apply their internalised values (Putra, 2026).

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IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the *Tafaqquh Fiddin*-based character education strategy at MTs Muhammadiyah 05 Kalikuning is implemented through three main stages: planning, implementation, and assessment. Strategies for strengthening religious character are carried out through value-based learning, habituation, exemplary conduct, and structured religious programs such as *tahfiz*, *mabit*, and *muhadharah*. Internalising *Tafaqquh Fiddin* values through cognitive understanding, emotional acceptance, and behaviour change has proven effective in shielding students from the challenges of popular culture. This integrated approach improves students' discipline, responsibility, and moral values while creating an environment that supports the development of Islamic character.

This study recommends strengthening collaboration among schools, parents, and communities in supporting student character development. In addition, curriculum development that is more responsive to the challenges of the digital era, while remaining grounded in *Tafaqquh Fiddin* values, needs to be pursued continuously. Educational institutions are also encouraged to allocate greater resources to character education programs and make character development an important component of the curriculum at all levels of education.

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