

THE EXISTENCE OF ISLAMIC SPIRITUAL CULTURE IN SHAPING STUDENTS' SPIRITUAL CHARACTER

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Abstract

The development of the tourism sector in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone (SEZ) has significantly influenced the socio-cultural dynamics of the local community, including the educational sphere. A major concern is the potential erosion of Islamic spiritual values among the younger generation as a result of rapid cultural globalization. This study aims to explore the existence of Islamic spiritual culture in schools in Kuta Village, Pujut District, Central Lombok, and to identify the challenges, opportunities, and strategies implemented to preserve Islamic values amid the rapid growth of tourism. This research employs a qualitative method with a field study approach, using participatory observation, in-depth interviews with principals, teachers, and community leaders, as well as documentation. Informants were chosen purposively,



while the data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Findings reveal that Islamic spiritual culture remains well preserved in schools through the habituation of religious activities, the integration of Islamic values into learning, and teacher role modeling. Nevertheless, challenges persist, such as the influx of hedonistic culture, weakening parental supervision, and shifts in students' social orientation. Conversely, tourism also creates strategic opportunities for schools to position themselves as centers for Islamic value education for both students and the surrounding community. This study underscores the vital role of schools in sustaining spiritual values while contributing to the development of Islamic education concepts that are environmentally responsive and relevant to religious-based policy formulation in the Mandalika area.

Keywords: *Spiritual Culture, Islamic Education, Special Economic Zones (SEZs), School Strategies, Influence of Tourism.*

Abstrak

Perkembangan sektor pariwisata di Kawasan Ekonomi Khusus (KEK) Mandalika telah berpengaruh signifikan terhadap dinamika sosial budaya masyarakat setempat, termasuk bidang pendidikan. Kekhawatiran utama adalah potensi erosi nilai-nilai spiritual Islam di kalangan generasi muda sebagai akibat dari globalisasi budaya yang cepat. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggali keberadaan budaya spiritual Islam di sekolah-sekolah di Desa Kuta, Kecamatan Pujut, Lombok Tengah, serta mengidentifikasi tantangan, peluang, dan strategi yang diterapkan untuk melestarikan nilai-nilai Islam di tengah pesatnya pertumbuhan pariwisata. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi lapangan, menggunakan observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam dengan kepala sekolah, guru, dan tokoh masyarakat, serta dokumentasi. Informan dipilih secara sengaja, sedangkan data dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman, yang terdiri dari pengurangan data, tampilan data,

dan penarikan kesimpulan. Temuan mengungkapkan bahwa budaya spiritual Islam tetap terjaga dengan baik di sekolah melalui pembiasaan kegiatan keagamaan, integrasi nilai-nilai Islam ke dalam pembelajaran, dan teladan guru. Namun demikian, tantangan tetap ada, seperti masuknya budaya hedonistik, melemahnya pengawasan orang tua, dan pergeseran orientasi sosial siswa. Sebaliknya, pariwisata juga menciptakan peluang strategis bagi sekolah untuk memposisikan diri sebagai pusat pendidikan nilai Islam baik bagi siswa maupun masyarakat sekitar. Penelitian ini menggarisbawahi peran vital sekolah dalam mempertahankan nilai-nilai spiritual sekaligus berkontribusi pada pengembangan konsep pendidikan Islam yang responsif lingkungan dan relevan dengan perumusan kebijakan berbasis agama di wilayah Mandalika.

Kata Kunci: *Budaya Spiritual Islam, Pendidikan Islam, Kawasan Ekonomi Khusus (KEK), Strategi Sekolah, Pengaruh Pariwisata.*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has become one of the leading sectors in Indonesia's national economic development strategy. The government continues to strengthen this sector by designating several regions as Tourism Special Economic Zones (SEZs) (Hidayat, 2022). Tourism SEZs are geographically delimited areas prioritized for tourism-based economic activities, supported through simplified licensing procedures, prioritized infrastructure, and a range of fiscal and non-fiscal incentives. This policy framework is designed to optimize regional potential, attract investment, and stimulate the creation of new employment opportunities (Bian & Liew, 2023).

One of the regions designated as a Tourism SEZ is Kuta Village in Pujut District, Central Lombok Regency (Irwan et al., 2022). The village possesses strong tourism potential due to its coastal landscapes, surrounding hills, and cultural richness that appeal to domestic and international tourists. The SEZ designation

positions Kuta Village within the government's broader development agenda, granting it a privileged status for growth acceleration. The expansion of tourism facilities, increased mobility, and more intensive interaction with visitors mean that the effects of this macro-level policy are not limited to economic indicators, but also permeate everyday life in micro-social spaces, including schools. As local communities increasingly orient their livelihoods toward the tourism sector, students are exposed to new lifestyles, aspirations, and value systems that inevitably intersect with the educational processes taking place in the school environment.

Within this context, schools in Kuta Village are not merely passive observers of tourism-led change; they stand at the frontline of responding to its socio-cultural implications. The presence of tourists with diverse and sometimes permissive lifestyles may influence the behavioural patterns of young people, particularly students. Several issues have emerged, such as tendencies to imitate hedonistic lifestyles, a weakening of discipline in worship, the growth of consumptive and materialistic attitudes, and the limited responsiveness of school policies in addressing these shifts. These dynamics raise concerns about the gradual erosion of Islamic spiritual values, which are crucial for shaping students' moral and spiritual character—such as their sense of *Taqwa*, modesty, responsibility, and social empathy—amid the pressures of a tourism-driven environment.

A number of previous studies have examined the relationship between tourism, culture, and religion. Olsen and Timothy found that despite socio-economic pressures, Balinese communities were able to maintain—and in some cases even strengthen—their religious identity in the midst of tourism development (Olsen & Timothy, 2021). Sharpley's research in Kerala, India, highlighted how schools struggle to safeguard traditional values while adapting to opportunities created by tourism (Sharpley, 2021). Meanwhile, Diktaş documented concerns in Turkey about the erosion of Islamic spiritual culture, while also noting creative efforts to integrate tourism themes into religious

education curricula (Diktaş, 2021). However, these studies primarily focus on general patterns of cultural maintenance or identity formation at the community level and do not specifically examine how Islamic schools or school environments operationalize spiritual culture through concrete pedagogical strategies, daily routines, and institutional practices, particularly within the unique context of a formally designated Tourism Special Economic Zone (SEZ). This leaves a conceptual and empirical gap concerning how Islamic spiritual culture is systematically cultivated within schools that are directly exposed to tourism dynamics.

In this study, the term “Islamic spiritual culture” refers to the set of values, practices, symbols, and institutional habits that nurture students’ relationship with Allah and shape their ethical attitudes in accordance with Islamic teachings. Conceptually, it draws on al-Attas’s view of Islamic education as a process of *ta’dib*—the instillation of proper adab so that knowledge leads to just and ordered behavior—and al-Ghazali’s emphasis on *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul) and *tarbiyat al-akhlaq* (moral training) as integral to the educational process. In the school context, Islamic spiritual culture is manifested through activities such as congregational prayers, Qur’an recitation, dhikr, religious celebrations, teacher role-modelling, and the habituation of manners in daily interactions. These cultural elements are not merely ritualistic, they function as systematic mechanisms for shaping students’ spiritual character, internalizing values of faith, sincerity, discipline, and social responsibility amidst the intense external influences brought about by tourism.

Building on this conceptual grounding, the present research focuses on the existence and operationalization of Islamic spiritual culture in shaping student character within schools located in the Tourism SEZ of Kuta Village, Pujut District, Central Lombok. By focusing the analysis on the school environment, this study examines how Islamic spiritual culture is transmitted, sustained, negotiated, and transformed among students amid the expansion

of the tourism sector. This focus is significant because schools hold a crucial mandate in internalizing the values of faith, devotion, and noble character, as mandated by Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System (RI, 2003). At the same time, it aligns with Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas's conception of Islamic education, which aims to produce individuals who are knowledgeable, well-mannered, and morally grounded according to the guidance of the Qur'an and Sunnah (Al-Attas, 1978). Unlike previous studies that primarily examined general cultural or religious identity maintenance in tourism contexts, this study specifically investigates how schools in a Tourism SEZ intentionally design and implement Islamic spiritual culture—through curricula, routines, and institutional culture—to shape students' spiritual character. Thus, the research titled *"The Existence of Islamic Spiritual Culture in Shaping Student Character in the School Environment of the Tourism Special Economic Zone of Kuta Village, Pujut District, Central Lombok"* is expected to contribute both conceptually and practically to a deeper understanding of tourism's impact on religious values and to the formulation of adaptive, contextual, and sustainable Islamic education strategies in tourism areas.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design as outlined by Creswell (2019). This design was chosen because the phenomenon under investigation, the existence and operationalization of Islamic spiritual culture within schools located in the Tourism Special Economic Zone (SEZ) of Kuta Village is contextual, complex, and requires an in-depth, real-world exploration. In this research, the "case" refers to the educational environment of three schools situated directly within the core area of the Kuta Tourism SEZ: SDN 1 Kuta, SDN 2 Kuta, and MTsN 3 Central Lombok. These schools were selected through purposive sampling because they experience direct and continuous interaction with tourism dynamics, making them appropriate sites

for understanding how Islamic spiritual culture is maintained, negotiated, or transformed in a tourism-driven context.

The study was conducted over a three-month fieldwork period from June to August 2025 and involved three Islamic Religious Education teachers, at every school. Participant selection followed purposive sampling to identify individuals who possessed significant knowledge of the research focus, complemented by snowball sampling to reach relevant community figures involved in school–community religious partnerships.

Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, participatory observations, and documentation analysis. Interview sessions were conducted, each lasting between 30 and 60 minutes, covering themes related to spiritual culture, challenges posed by tourism development, and school strategies in shaping students' spiritual character. Participatory observations were carried out two to three times per week, focusing on religious routines, classroom interactions, and daily practices that reflect the internalization of Islamic spiritual values. Documentation included school policy records, schedules of religious activities, character-building program archives, and institutional documents related to religious education. All participants provided informed consent, and parental consent was obtained for student involvement.

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (Miles, M.B, Huberman, A.M, & Saldana, 2014), which involves an iterative process of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. In this study, interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were read repeatedly to generate initial codes inductively, which were then grouped into broader analytical categories. The categorized data were subsequently arranged into thematic matrices and narrative summaries to identify patterns across schools and participant groups. Conclusions were derived through continuous verification, triangulation of data sources, and member checking with selected participants to ensure accuracy and credibility of interpretations.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed several validation strategies, including methodological triangulation, member checking, prolonged engagement in the field, peer debriefing with academic supervisors, and detailed documentation of analytical decisions. Ethical considerations were strictly observed, with institutional ethical clearance obtained prior to fieldwork. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured through the use of pseudonyms and secure data storage, and all data were utilized solely for academic purposes.

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design (Creswell, 2019). This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore in depth the dynamics of the existence of Islamic spiritual culture in schools located in the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) of Kuta Village, Pujut District, Central Lombok. The focus of the research is directed to understand contextually how Islamic values are maintained, the challenges that arise due to the development of tourism, and the strategies applied by schools in shaping the spiritual character of students.

Data collection was carried out through three main techniques, namely in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with school principals, Islamic religious education teachers, students, and relevant community leaders. Observations are carried out on religious activities in schools, learning activities, and daily practices of students as a form of internalization of Islamic spiritual culture. Documentation includes school policy records, schedules of religious activities, archives of character development programs, and other supporting documents related to religious education in schools.

The data source consists of primary data obtained through interviews and direct observations, as well as secondary data from literature, education policies, and previous research. Data analysis uses the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana which includes four stages: data collection, data condensation, data

presentation, and conclusion/verification (Miles, M.B, Huberman, A.M, & Saldana, 2014).

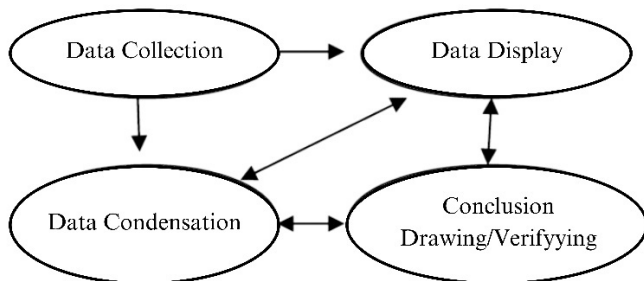


Figure 1. Data Analysis of Miles, Huberman and Saldana Interactive Models

With this approach, the research is expected to be able to reveal the strategic role of schools as a fortress of Islamic spiritual culture in facing the flow of globalization of tourism, as well as explain the real strategies applied to shape the spiritual character of students in a sustainable manner.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of research on the existence of Islamic spiritual culture in schools in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone (SEZ), Kuta Village, Pujut District, Central Lombok. Data was obtained through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation conducted at three educational institutions: SDN 1 Kuta, SDN 2 Kuta, and MTsN 3 Central Lombok. The findings of the study show that schools remain a center for the control of religious values as well as a fortress of Islamic culture in the midst of the rapid flow of tourism and globalization. This positioning indicates that schools do not merely function as educational institutions but also as cultural agents that actively negotiate external influences while safeguarding local Islamic identity.

To provide a more comprehensive understanding, the results of this study are elaborated into three main sub-sections, In line with the first research objective, this subsection explores: *First*, the existence of Islamic spiritual culture in schools as the foundation for the formation of students' character. *Second*, the challenges faced by schools in maintaining this culture amid the influence of tourism. *Third*, the strategies developed by the school to maintain and strengthen Islamic values in the daily lives of students. Beyond describing what schools do, these findings reveal why such practices persist and how they are shaped by local socio-cultural dynamics. For instance, the preservation of Islamic routines such as daily prayers, moral guidance, and Qur'an learning is not only upheld by institutional policy but also reinforced by community expectations in a region where Islamic identity functions as a source of social cohesion. Likewise, the challenges schools face, such as exposure to global lifestyles, shifts in student behaviour, and parental work in the tourism sector—show how the tourism economy subtly reconfigures students' attitudes and value orientations.

These findings carry theoretical implications for Islamic education amid globalization, particularly showing how schools act as adaptive cultural systems that selectively filter global influences while reinforcing core religious values. In this context, Islamic spiritual culture becomes both a protective mechanism and an adaptive strategy that enables schools to maintain moral continuity while responding to socio-economic change.

The Existence of Islamic Spiritual Culture in the School of Special Economic Zones

The existence of Islamic spiritual culture in schools in the Mandalika SEZ area shows how educational institutions function as a bastion of Islamic values in the midst of the rapid flow of globalization and tourism. The school not only runs a formal curriculum of Islamic Religious Education, but also presents

religious nuances that shape the character of students as a whole. This existence is important, considering that Kuta Village, Pujut District, as the center of SEZs, is a meeting space for various cultures that have the potential to influence the mindset and behaviour of the younger generation.



Figure 2. Forms of Islamic Spiritual Culture

In this study, the existence of Islamic spiritual culture is analyzed from real practices that take place in schools, the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Aqidah Akhlak teachers, as well as Islamic values that are used as the basis for fostering students' character. Data was collected through observation of religious activities, in-depth interviews with teachers, and documentation of school activities. The results show that despite being in the midst of the cultural flow of tourists, the school remains consistent in maintaining and internalizing Islamic values to students.

This consistency aligns with the theoretical notion of Islamic spiritual culture as a system of values, symbols, and practices that guide behaviour and worldview. The routine activities observed, such as communal prayer, morning dhikr, Qur'an recitation, and moral habituation, reflect the cultural mechanisms through which Islamic identity is reinforced. These practices do not merely

function as rituals but serve as pedagogical tools for shaping students’ moral consciousness, supporting the concept of character formation in Islamic education.

Furthermore, the findings resonate with Al-Attas’s educational philosophy, particularly his emphasis on *ta’dib*, the process of instilling proper discipline, moral order, and recognition of one’s place in the cosmos. The roles performed by PAI and Aqidah Akhlak teachers, who consistently integrate moral reasoning with spiritual habituation, demonstrate how schools operationalize *ta’dib* in daily learning contexts. Instead of separating religious knowledge from character formation, the schools embed spiritual values into students’ lived experiences, thus supporting Al-Attas’s argument that the aim of Islamic education is the creation of a balanced and virtuous human being (*insān ṣāliḥ*).

At the same time, the school’s persistence in upholding these values—despite tourism-driven cultural shifts, illustrates how Islamic spiritual culture functions as a form of cultural resilience. This supports theoretical perspectives that view religious culture as adaptive rather than static. Schools selectively filter external influences and prioritize practices that safeguard the continuity of Islamic identity, showing how local educational institutions negotiate globalization.

Overall, these findings not only support existing theories on Islamic spiritual culture and character formation but also extend them by revealing how schools in tourism zones operationalize these concepts within a context of intense cultural interaction. To give a more systematic picture, a summary of the results regarding the existence of Islamic spiritual culture is presented in the following table:

Table 1. Islamic Spiritual Existence Strategies in Schools

School/Madrasah	Islamic Spiritual Culture	Information
SDN 1 Kuta	a. Greetings when you meet	Consistently forming

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Prayer before and after study c. Reading short sentences (grades 1–3) d. Reciting Surah Yasin every Friday 	discipline, Islamic manners, and Qur'anic literacy from an early age.
SDN 2 Kuta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Morning prayer together b. Reading the letter Juz 30 c. Islamic songs d. Yasinan, dhikr, tahlil every Friday e. Infak Rp1,000–2,000 	Building the courage to appear in public, fostering social awareness through routine infak pioneered by teachers.
MTsN 3 Central Lombok	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Tadarus Al-Qur'an harian b. The Two Prayers c. Morning & Evening Dhikr d. Greetings, respect for teachers e. Maintain cleanliness and discipline 	More complex & structured; emphasizing the integration of ritual worship with Islamic moral values.

Based on the table above, it can be seen that each school has characteristics in implementing Islamic spiritual culture. SDN 1 Kuta emphasizes simple habits such as greetings, prayers, and Qur'anic literacy. SDN 2 Kuta develops a variety of morning activities and routine infak as a form of socio-religious education. Meanwhile, MTsN 3 Central Lombok carries out a more comprehensive practice, combining ritual worship with daily moral strengthening.

Although they differ in the technical implementation, the three schools show a common pattern that Islamic spiritual culture is not only taught as a theory, but is habituated through routine

activities, teachers' examples, and the atmosphere of the school environment. Thus, the existence of Islamic spiritual culture in the Mandalika (SEZ) area is maintained and becomes the main foundation for the formation of student character.

The existence of Islamic spiritual culture in the school environment, especially in areas that have undergone socio-cultural transformation due to tourism developments such as the Mandalika Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Kuta Village, shows dynamics that are vulnerable to occur in tourism areas. Schools, as one of the main socialization agents in society, play a strategic role in maintaining and transmitting religious values to the younger generation.

Based on the results of field research at SDN 1 Kuta, SDN 2 Kuta, and MTsN 3 Central Lombok, it was found that Islamic spiritual culture is not only taught through formal learning, but more than that, it is manifested in the form of daily habits, examples, and a religious school atmosphere. Practices such as saying greetings, praying together, reading short letters, reading Surah Yasin, regular infaq, dhuha prayers, morning and evening dhikr, as well as instilling values such as discipline, responsibility, and manners, become the spiritual foundation of students in daily life.

Theoretically, this corresponds to the framework of "Islamic spirituality" as described by Nurcholis Madjid, where spirituality is understood not only vertically (*hablun min Allah*) but also horizontally (*hablun min an-nas*). The implementation of this dimension is reflected in worship practices such as dhikr and prayer, as well as social manners such as respecting teachers and speaking politely. This shows the integration of spiritual and social values in the lives of students, as explained by Nurcholish Madjid (Nurcholish Madjid, 2008).

The existence of spiritual culture in this school does not stop at the cognitive level (knowledge), but touches the emotional and behavioral side of students (Islamic et al., 2024; Paridinova et al., 2023). Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers not only play the

role of material teachers, but also role models and spiritual guides, as depicted in the three schools (Rochim & Khayati, 2022). In this case, the approach used is very much in line with the Theory of Character Education by Thomas Lickona, which states that character education must include three dimensions: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action (Thomas Lickona, 1991). All three are reflected in the practice of spiritual education in schools, for example, students are not only taught about the virtues of infaq, but are also routinely invited to do so with teachers. Values such as honesty during exams, politeness in interacting, or discipline in attending school are forms of moral action that grow from habituation and example.

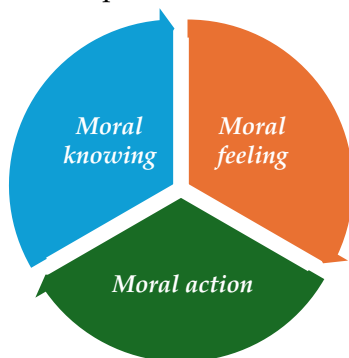


Figure 5. Moral Values According to Thomas Lickona

This existence also proves that educational institutions, in accordance with Azyumardi Azra's view, have the ability to adapt to modernity, namely by maintaining religious identity in a social environment that can adapt (Azra, 2017). Even during globalization and foreign culture, the three schools were able to build a character development system that still upheld Islamic values.

This Islamic spiritual culture shows not only physical existence, but also the recognition, respect, and practices that make up the school's identity. Thus, the existence of Islamic spiritual culture in schools in the Mandalika SEZ area can be said to be a form of cultural resistance as well as an actualization of Islamic values in facing the challenges of globalization. This proves that

Islamic education, if designed integratively and contextually, can become a bastion of values and morality during the rapid influence of outside cultures.

The findings of this study indicate that the existence of Islamic spiritual culture in schools is not only reflected in daily practices but also strongly supported by theoretical frameworks that emphasize the integration of faith, character, and behavior. Several relevant educational theories provide a foundation for understanding how spiritual values are transmitted and practiced in the school environment. These theories emphasize the significance of integrating spirituality with social interaction, character development, and comprehensive learning. The summary of these theoretical perspectives and their application in schools is presented in the following table.

Table 3. Existence relevance theory

Theory/ Reference	Core Ideas	Forms of Application in Schools
Concept of Islamic Spirituality (Nurcholish Madjid, 2008)	Islamic spirituality encompasses two dimensions: vertical (<i>hablun min Allah</i>) and horizontal (<i>hablun min an-nas</i>).	a. Vertical: collective prayers, dhikr, dhuha prayers, Qur'an recitation. b. Horizontal: politeness, respecting teachers, cooperation among students.
Character Education Theory (Thomas Lickona, 1991)	Character education must include moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action.	a. Knowing: understanding the importance of infaq, prayer, and noble character. b. Feeling: experiencing togetherness during

		collective prayers and Friday infaq.
		c. Action: practicing routine infaq, maintaining cleanliness, and discipline in worship.
The Role of Teachers act as Islamic Religious Education Teachers (Rochim & Khayati, 2022).	Teachers act as educators, role models, and spiritual mentors for students.	a. Guiding students to pray before and after lessons. b. Serving as examples of discipline in worship and morality. c. Nurturing students to be honest, polite, and responsible.
Holistic Spirituality (Paridinova et al., 2023).	Spirituality is not limited to cognitive aspects but also touches affective and behavioral dimensions.	a. Religious values are not only taught but also practiced. b. Instilling responsibility, discipline, and honesty in school activities.

The findings of this study demonstrate a strong alignment between the observed practices in Mandalika SEZ schools and the major theoretical frameworks discussed. Nurcholish Madjid’s concept of Islamic spirituality, integrating vertical devotion (*hablun min Allah*) and horizontal ethics (*hablun min an-nas*), is reflected in students’ consistent participation in collective worship, morning dhikr, Qur’an recitation, and their polite interactions with teachers and peers. Lickona’s triadic model of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action is evidenced through cognitive understanding of Islamic values in lessons (knowing), the cultivation of empathy and social solidarity through routine infaq and communal rituals (feeling), and visible behavioral outcomes such as discipline,

respect, and responsibility (action). Al-Attas' philosophy of adab, which emphasizes the unity of knowledge and moral behavior, is evident in the strong role-modelling practices of PAI teachers, whose daily conduct reinforces religious manners and spiritual integrity. Parsons' pattern-maintenance theory is also reflected in how schools function as stabilizing institutions that safeguard cultural-religious norms amid the disruptive influence of tourism, maintaining the cultural subsystem through habituation, supervision, and structured religious programs. Taken together, these theoretical perspectives illuminate how the empirical data depict Islamic spiritual culture not merely as ritual compliance, but as an integrated moral-social system sustained through example, institutional support, and continuous value transmission within a globalized tourism environment.

Challenges in Maintaining Islamic Spiritual Culture in Mandalika Special Economic Zone School

Although Islamic spiritual culture has been doing well in schools in the Mandalika SEZ area, the reality on the ground shows that there are various challenges that must be faced. The entry of global cultural influences through foreign tourists, changes in family parenting, and the development of modern lifestyles cause clashes with religious values instilled in schools. These challenges do not only come from the external environment, but also internally, such as the weak discipline of worship of some students and the use of less polite language. Thus, mapping challenges is important to understand the inhibiting factors as well as determine the right strategy in maintaining the existence of Islamic spiritual culture.

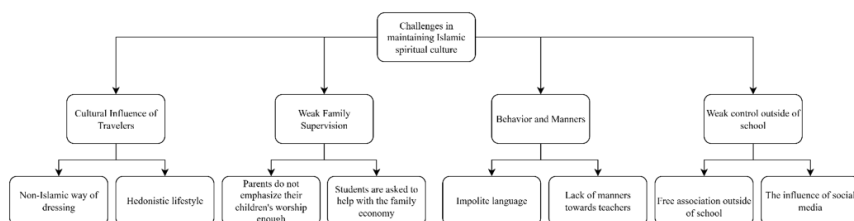


Figure 3. The main challenges in the practice of Islamic spirituality

A more challenges engagement with the implications of tourism globalization necessitates an examination of the specific mechanisms through which tourism-related dynamics shape students' spiritual orientations. The presence of hedonistic lifestyles, weakened parental control, and heightened social media engagement does not occur in isolation; rather, these phenomena are mediated by structural and cultural processes inherent to tourism-driven environments.

First, direct and sustained exposure to tourists introduces students to a wide range of cultural practices that often diverge from Islamic norms. Encounters with permissive dress codes, informal interpersonal interactions, and consumption-oriented behaviors gradually reshape students' perceptions of what is socially acceptable. For schools situated proximate to tourism hubs or located along major tourist routes, this exposure forms a continuous backdrop that normalizes alternative value systems and subtly erodes internalized expectations regarding modesty, etiquette, and religious comportment.

Second, tourism-related employment reshapes family structures and supervisory capacities. In many tourism-intensive communities, parents engage in labor that is characterized by irregular hours, high seasonal demand, and limited work-life balance. Such conditions diminish parental presence and restrict opportunities for reinforcing religious discipline within the household. Moreover, the economic imperative to maximize earnings during peak tourism periods often results in religious education being deprioritized. Consequently, students experience

weakened formation of spiritual habits, including adherence to prayer routines, Qur'anic study, and daily moral instruction.

Third, the digital media ecosystem associated with tourism production and promotion constitutes a powerful cultural transmitter. Social media platforms—frequently utilized to market destinations and circulate aspirational images of leisure and lifestyle—expose students to highly curated representations of modernity. This includes fashion trends, nightlife scenes, and materialistic aspirations that are often incompatible with Islamic ethical frameworks. For students in tourism regions, such digital content resonates more strongly because it mirrors the practices and imagery present within their local surroundings. As a result, digital consumption increasingly competes with and displaces time traditionally devoted to religious activities.

Fourth, the spatial configuration and commercial infrastructure of tourism areas facilitate youth participation in lifestyle practices that diverge from Islamic values. Cafés, entertainment venues, mixed-cultural social spaces, and commercial districts become accessible environments where students internalize alternative behavioral norms. These spaces serve as informal sites of socialization, reinforcing peer cultures shaped by consumerism, self-presentation, and relaxed moral boundaries.

A comparative analysis across the three schools indicates that these mechanisms operate with varying intensity depending on contextual factors such as proximity to tourism centers, degrees of economic dependence on tourism-related employment, and differential exposure to tourism-mediated digital content. Schools located closest to high-volume tourist zones face stronger pressures related to lifestyle imitation and value negotiation. Meanwhile, schools embedded in economically vulnerable communities experience more pronounced effects stemming from diminished parental supervision. Institutions situated along semi-urban tourism corridors confront a hybrid challenge driven primarily by digital-cultural influences.

Overall, the findings underscore that tourism globalization exerts its influence through intertwined economic, spatial, and cultural pathways. Understanding these mechanisms is essential for developing context-sensitive strategies capable of safeguarding and revitalizing Islamic spiritual culture within rapidly transforming tourism-driven environments. These findings show that the challenge of maintaining Islamic spiritual culture is multidimensional—stemming from the global environment, family, and the students' own internal environment. Therefore, a comprehensive strategy is needed so that Islamic values can continue to survive and develop in the midst of the flow of tourism globalization.

The development of the Mandalika Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Kuta Village has a significant impact on the social and cultural dynamics of the community, including in the context of education. Schools, as strategic institutions in transmitting Islamic spiritual values, face challenges that are not light in the midst of the onslaught of modernization and globalization brought by the tourism sector.

Based on research with PAI teachers and Aqidah Akhlak teachers at SDN 1 Kuta, SDN 2 Kuta, and MTsN 3 Central Lombok, the main challenge they face in maintaining Islamic spiritual culture lies in the influence of the changing social environment, the direct entry of foreign cultures, and the lack of control over information from the media and technology. For example, some teachers said that students began to imitate the style of dress, the way of speaking, and the attitude of the foreign tourists they met almost every day. In addition, the use of social media and exposure to external content that is not in line with Islamic values also help to form a mindset and habits that are contrary to Islamic teachings.

Theoretically, this challenge can be analyzed through an existential perspective, where Islamic spiritual values are not only judged by the existence or absence of religious activities, but further on how those values are received, recognized, and lived consistently in students' daily lives. In Jean Paul Sartre's framework

of thought, existence is not only present, but also forms meaning in complex social structures (Sartre, 2021). The challenge to the existence of Islamic spiritual culture in schools occurs when the religious meanings built by schools have to deal with new meanings brought by outside cultures that are in many ways the opposite in value (Muhajir, 2022). This is where the urgency of Islamic education is present as a process of forming kamil people, as theorized by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, that education is not just the delivery of knowledge, but an effort to unite intellect, manners, and faith in students (Al-Attas, 1978).

In addition, other challenges also come from the lack of involvement of families and communities in strengthening spiritual values outside of school hours. Islamic Education teachers realize that Islamic character development cannot be done alone by schools, but requires collaboration with parents and the surrounding environment. In this case, it is not enough to be a place of formal learning, but also to be a center for the cultivation of values. However, as conveyed by teachers in the field, the lifestyle of the community that has begun to shift towards materialism and liberalism, as well as the weak role model of the surrounding environment, are obstacles in strengthening the internalization of spiritual values in students. This reflects that the process of transmission of Islamic spiritual culture faces social and value disruptions, as described in cultural theory by Koentjaraningrat, that culture includes inherited value systems, norm systems, and patterns of behavior, but is not immune to the influence of the external environment (Koentjaraningrat 1984).

Thus, the challenge of maintaining Islamic spiritual culture in schools in the Mandalika SEZ area is not solely on the technical aspect of the implementation of religious programs, but touches on a deeper realm, namely, existential and cultural challenges. In this context, maintaining the existence of Islamic culture means keeping the spirit of these values alive and relevant, in the midst of changing times and increasingly complex shifting values (Khandakar Akhter Hossain, 2013). Therefore, schools must continue to formulate

adaptive and situational strategies, as explained in the strategy theory by Armstrong, namely by strengthening cooperation between teachers, families, and communities, as well as making Islamic Education teachers the vanguard in guarding Islamic spiritual culture in the midst of the current of globalization and strengthening value liberalism (Armstrong, 2024).

Strategies in Maintaining and Strengthening Islamic Spiritual Culture at the Mandalika Special Economic Zone School

In addition to describing the existence and challenges, this study also found that there are adaptive strategies developed by schools in the Mandalika SEZ area to maintain and strengthen Islamic spiritual culture. This strategy is not only aimed at maintaining religious practices that are already running, but also to build students' spiritual resilience in the face of the flow of tourism globalization. Through a collaborative approach between teachers, students, parents, and the community, this strategy serves as an important instrument in ensuring that Islamic values remain relevant, internalized, and become the foundation of students' character.

To provide a more systematic picture, a summary of the results on the strategy of the existence of Islamic spiritual culture is presented in the following table:

Table 2. Islamic Spiritual Existence Strategies in Schools

Strategy	Form of Implementation	Impact on Students
Teacher Example	PAI teachers and general teachers discipline worship, manners, responsibility, and maintaining manners	Students are easier to imitate, form a religious character naturally

Habituation of Religious Activities	Joint prayer, reciting the Qur'an, duha prayer, Yasinan, dhikr, Friday infak	Formation of worship routines, social spirit, and a sense of togetherness
Integration of Islamic Values in Learning	Insertion of Islamic moral messages in all subjects, strengthening morals in the classroom	Islamic values are understood not only theoretically, but also as a principle of life
School, Parent, and Community Collaboration	Involving parents in religious activities, cooperation with community leaders	External support strengthens the internalization of Islamic values in schools and homes

The table above shows the four main strategies that schools implement:

- 1 Teacher Example
- Teachers are central figures who provide real examples of Islamic behavior, both in the discipline of worship and social interaction. This creates a conducive learning environment and facilitates the internalization of Islamic values in students.
- 2 Habituation of Religious Activities
- The school consistently holds routine activities such as joint prayer, tadarus, Yasinan, duha prayers, and Friday infak. This habit fosters spiritual discipline, forms togetherness, and trains students' social care.
- 3 Integration of Islamic Values in Learning
- Islamic values are not only taught in religious subjects but also inserted into all subjects. Teachers try to relate the material to Islamic moral messages, so that students view religion as a whole principle of life, not just a theory.

4 School, Parent, and Community Collaboration

Schools involve parents in religious activities and encourage the role of community leaders in spiritual development. This collaboration strengthens the continuity of education between school and home, as well as expands social support for students' Islamic character.



Figure 4. Strengthening Islamic Spirituality of Students

Overall, this study contributes to the broader discourse of Islamic education by demonstrating that schools in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) or tourism-intensive areas can serve as resilient cultural institutions capable of sustaining spiritual identity amidst rapid socio-economic change. The preservation of Islamic spiritual culture in the Mandalika SEZ shows that character education rooted in habituation, teacher exemplarity, and value integration remains effective even within environments exposed to globalization and lifestyle shifts. These findings offer valuable insights for policymakers, suggesting the need for educational frameworks and regional policies that explicitly recognize the cultural vulnerability of tourism areas and prioritize programs that protect and strengthen students' spiritual development. In this regard, SEZs should not only focus on economic acceleration but also embed cultural-religious safeguards within their development agenda through school-community partnerships, curriculum contextualization, and support for spiritual-character education initiatives. Thus, this research reinforces the position of Islamic

education as a strategic pillar in shaping morally grounded generations in regions undergoing rapid tourism transformation.

These strategies show that schools in the Mandalika SEZ area function as the vanguard in shaping students' spirituality. Amid the forces of tourism and globalization, schools are able to reaffirm their role not only as formal educational institutions but also as centers for the cultivation of Islamic character that is resilient, adaptive, and future-oriented for the younger generation.

In facing the challenges of globalization and the entry of foreign culture due to the development of tourism in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone (SEZ), schools such as SDN 1 Kuta, SDN 2 Kuta, and MTsN 3 Central Lombok have implemented various strategies to maintain and strengthen Islamic spiritual culture in the educational environment. The strategy used is not only symbolic or ceremonial, but is comprehensive and structured. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers are the main actors who drive religious practices such as the habit of praying together, reading the Qur'an, duha prayers, morning and evening dhikr, and Friday activities. In addition, teachers are also direct role models in daily behavior, speech, and social interaction with students. This strategy is particularly relevant to Armstrong's theory of organizational strategy, which explains that strategy is not just a technical action, but the setting of long-term goals by allocating resources and creating work patterns that align with external challenges (Armstrong, 2024).

The application of this strategy also shows the existential dimension of spiritual culture as explained in the framework of the philosophy of existence, which values not only the need to be present, but also must be brought to life in the consciousness and practice of the community. In schools, the existence of Islamic spiritual culture is shown not only by worship routines, but also through value systems that are internalized in students' daily behavior. Schools not only serve as a place of learning, but also as a space for the formation of religious meanings that are adaptive to the realities of an active environment. This is where it can be seen

that the strategy taken by the school is not aimed at just survival, but to strengthen the position of Islamic spiritual culture as a cultural and social identity in the midst of pluralism and openness.

This strategy is also firmly rooted in the concept of Islamic education as theorized by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, that the main goal of education is the formation of kamil people who have a balance between knowledge, manners, and spirituality (Al-Attas, 1978). In practice, the school seeks to integrate the values of good manners and morals into the entire educational process, including in the supervision of student discipline, the preparation of character development programs, and the involvement of all school components in maintaining a religious atmosphere. Example, habituation, and giving responsibility to students to lead prayers or tadarus are part of a learning by doing strategy that strengthens the internalization of Islamic values.

The school also takes a collaborative approach by involving classroom teachers, parents, and principals in spiritual coaching programs, especially at SDN 2 Kuta which directly faces the influence of foreign culture from foreign tourists. This collaborative strategy shows the awareness that character and spirituality education cannot be done partially, but must be a shared responsibility. This is in line with Azyumardi Azra's view in the theory of religious cultural transmission, which emphasizes the importance of modernizing Islamic education while maintaining the essence of Islamic values. Schools also make religious activities not just a complement to the curriculum, but an institutional identity that distinguishes them from other educational institutions that tend to be neutral towards spiritual values (Azra, 2017).

When viewed through the lens of strengthening Islamic spiritual culture in the school environment located in strategic tourism areas such as Mandalika, the approach taken by schools can be understood through the lens of Systems Theory by Talcott Parsons. Parsons explains that society is made up of four main subsystems: cultural, social, personality, and behavioral. Within this framework, schools function as pattern maintenance agents

who are tasked with preserving the values and cultural norms of the community (Parsons, 1939). Strategies carried out by schools, such as the habit of joint prayer, dhikr, infaq, reading of the Qur'an, and character formation, are tangible forms of efforts to maintain the stability of religious values in the social system of society, which is changing due to the influence of tourism. If the cultural subsystem fails to be maintained in educational institutions, then the social system as a whole will experience disorientation. Therefore, schools are a crucial value control center, ensuring that tourism transformation does not compromise the spiritual foundations of local communities.

Thus, the strategy implemented by the school in maintaining and strengthening Islamic spiritual culture in the midst of the rapid flow of tourism not only answers contemporary challenges but also becomes a tangible form of cultural resilience and religiosity of Islamic education in the global era. This strategy is not only to survive the onslaught of external values, but also to actively strengthen the roots of spirituality, which is an important part of the social identity of the Muslim community in the Mandalika SEZ area. In this context, schools are not only educational institutions, but also the vanguard in rescuing, nurturing, and developing a dynamic Islamic spiritual culture that is dynamic, contextual, and rooted in the values of revelation.

The findings from this section highlight that schools in the Mandalika SEZ do not merely respond passively to the cultural challenges brought by tourism, but actively implement comprehensive and structured strategies. These strategies are grounded in Islamic educational principles, combining teacher role models, habituation of religious practices, integration of values across subjects, and collaboration with parents and the community. Such efforts show that schools serve as cultural guardians and centers of spiritual resilience, ensuring that Islamic identity remains intact in the face of globalization. The summary of these strategies can be illustrated in the following figure.

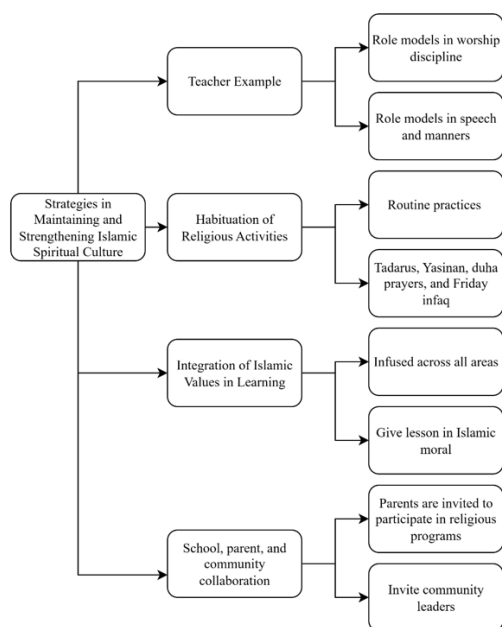


Figure 6. The Importance of Islamic Spiritual Culture

Rather than viewing globalization solely as a threat, a more nuanced analysis shows that global exposure in SEZ schools also offers opportunities for pedagogical enrichment and adaptive hybridity. Contemporary literature in the sociology of religion argues that Muslim schooling systems in globalized environments often develop *contextual modernity*, where students learn to negotiate identity through selective appropriation of global values such as discipline, creativity, multilingualism, and intercultural competence. In Mandalika, interaction with tourists and transnational workers can broaden students' social horizons, enabling Islamic spirituality to evolve from insular piety into a more confident, outward-looking ethical consciousness. This aligns with Giddens' theory of reflexive modernity, where individuals reinterpret tradition in light of global influences, not merely reject or imitate them. Theologically, this adaptive engagement resonates with Islamic principles of hikmah and wasathiyah, which encourage Muslims to extract beneficial aspects of external cultures

without compromising core values. Thus, tourism-induced globalization in Mandalika has a dual character: it introduces moral risks but also invites innovative pathways for revitalizing Islamic education through contextual interpretation, intercultural ethics, and spiritual resilience capable of engaging—not retreating from—the global world.

Contextual Comparison and Implications for Global Islamic Education

To situate the Mandalika SEZ findings within a broader scholarly conversation, it is important to compare how Islamic educational resilience manifests across different contexts. While the empirical results highlight unique adaptive strategies shaped by the tourism-driven environment of Mandalika, these dynamics become more analytically meaningful when contrasted with Islamic schooling patterns in non-SEZ regions and international settings. The following table synthesizes these comparative insights into three core dimensions, emphasizing how the Mandalika case contributes a forward-looking model for understanding spiritual formation in rapidly globalizing educational landscapes.

Table 4. Comparison and Implications for Global Islamic Education

Context	Key Distinction	Forward-Looking Contribution / Global Relevance
Mandalika SEZ Islamic Schools	Facing direct global exposure (tourists, hedonistic culture, rapid social change). Resilience is built through intensive habituation, teacher role models, and	Becoming a model of “Contextual Islamic Resilience”—how Muslim-majority schools maintain identity through adaptive engagement with

	school-community collaboration.	globalization, not through isolation.
Non-SEZ Islamic Schools (Rural/Urban Indonesia)	Rural: homogeneous culture, high value stability, low external challenges. Urban: pressures of modernity, digitalization, but no intense global cultural contact like SEZs.	Mandalika shows that high-pressure environments can actually strengthen character education when a spiritual approach is carried out systematically and contextually.
International Islamic School Settings	Adapting to modernity is largely achieved through policy and curriculum innovation, rather than through environmental interactions. The challenges lie more in pluralism and minority identities.	Mandalika's findings offer an alternative framework: practice-based resilience, which can be replicated in global tourism zones & multicultural societies..

The comparative synthesis demonstrates that Islamic schools in the Mandalika SEZ represent a distinctive model of contextual Islamic resilience that differs significantly from non-SEZ and international educational settings. Unlike rural or urban Islamic schools that rely on cultural stability or curriculum innovation, Mandalika schools sustain spiritual identity through daily practice, teacher exemplarity, and community-based reinforcement in the face of direct global exposure. This positions Mandalika not as a vulnerable site of value erosion, but as an adaptive learning environment where Islamic spirituality is preserved through intentional engagement with globalization rather than retreat from it. When contrasted with international Islamic schooling models—whether in Malaysia, Turkey, or

minority-Muslim contexts in the West—the Mandalika case offers a practice-based, environment-responsive paradigm that can inform global discussions on Islamic education in rapidly changing socio-cultural landscapes. Thus, the Mandalika experience contributes a transferable framework for strengthening spiritual formation in tourism-driven and multicultural regions worldwide.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Islamic schools in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone (SEZ) embody a *context-sensitive model of Islamic character formation* where spiritual practices, teacher exemplarity, and value habituation operate as adaptive strategies during tourism-driven globalization. Theoretically, these findings extend existing frameworks of Islamic education—such as Al-Attas’ concept of *adab*, Lickona’s triadic character model, and Parsons’ pattern-maintenance theory—by showing how these constructs manifest in an environment marked by direct cultural encounters and rapid socio-economic transformation. The Mandalika case thus contributes a new theoretical insight: Islamic spiritual pedagogy is not only resilient in homogeneous or controlled environments but can be *recontextualized* to function effectively within globalized, tourism-intensive settings. This positions the schools as exemplars of “contextual Islamic resilience,” where character formation is shaped through deliberate engagement with, rather than withdrawal from, global influences.

The empirical findings strongly support these theoretical contributions. Teacher modeling—especially in disciplined worship, mannered communication, and moral consistency—directly reinforces the formation of students’ religious behavior. Daily habituation practices such as Qur’an recitation, *dhuha* prayers, morning *dhikr*, and Friday *infaq* serve as structured mechanisms that internalize spirituality across cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. Meanwhile, collaborative efforts between schools, families, and community leaders strengthen the

continuity of value transmission beyond school hours. These practices collectively explain why Islamic spiritual culture remains robust in Mandalika despite exposure to hedonistic and materialistic lifestyles brought by tourism.

This study also acknowledges several limitations. The research is confined to three schools within a single SEZ region, limiting the generalizability of findings beyond similar cultural settings. The qualitative design provides deep contextual insight but does not measure changes in students' spiritual resilience over time. Furthermore, the cultural specificity of Mandalika—where Islamic identity is still dominant—may not represent contexts where Muslim communities are minorities or where tourism-driven globalization is more intensive. These limitations open opportunities for comparative and multi-regional studies.

The implications for policy and practice are significant. Policymakers in tourism zones could develop localized Islamic education frameworks that integrate spiritual formation with civic values, multicultural awareness, and digital ethics. Schools may adopt SEZ-responsive curricula that contextualize Islamic teachings within the realities of tourism, intercultural interaction, and global exposure. Institutional guidelines can also encourage structured collaboration between teachers, parents, religious leaders, and local tourism authorities to maintain cultural balance while fostering openness and ethical awareness among students.

Future research should expand this work through quantitative or mixed method approaches to measure variables such as students' moral resilience, intercultural attitudes, susceptibility to global lifestyle shifts, and the long-term sustainability of spiritual practices. Comparative studies involving other SEZs in Indonesia or tourism zones abroad, would also help validate whether the Mandalika model of contextual Islamic resilience can be generalized or adapted across diverse cultural and educational landscapes.

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