

Integrating Behaviorism into Hidden Curriculum of Islamic Education: Constructing an Anti-Hedonistic Profile of *Khalifah Allah*

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Abstract

Contemporary Islamic education faces severe challenges due to the rise of hedonism and the culture of flexing, which risk reducing humans to mere spiritual and social constructs devoid of deeper meaning. This condition demands a strengthened Islamic education paradigm oriented toward character building and students' transcendental awareness. This study aims to formulate a concept for strengthening the profile of *Khalifah Allah* that is resilient and anti-hedonistic by integrating B.F. Skinner's operant conditioning and Albert Bandura's social learning theory into the hidden curriculum of Islamic education. Utilizing a literature review method with a descriptive-analytical approach, the study shows that Skinner's positive reinforcement can be applied through the habituation of ritual and professional discipline as a means to control materialistic orientations. Meanwhile, Bandura's social learning theory is implemented through educators' modeling of moral integrity, social responsibility, and a modest lifestyle. The integration of both theories is holistically applied across five dimensions of Islamic education: theology, morality, intellect, physical development, and aesthetics. This synthesis yields a *Khalifah Allah* profile that balances rationality and spirituality, maintains professional competence, and possesses moral resilience against hedonistic cultures by framing all activities as forms of social and professional worship.

Keywords: Behaviorism, Islamic Education, Hidden Curriculum, Anti-Hedonism, *Khalifah Allah*

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Islamic education currently faces severe challenges due to the wave of digital globalization, which has triggered a massive shift in students' values. Social media has become the dominant space shaping the mindsets and lifestyles of the younger generation, with an average usage duration exceeding three hours per day. Intensive exposure to materialistic lifestyle content has given rise to a culture of hedonism and flexing (showing off wealth), which has the potential to shift the orientation of Islamic education from transcendental goals toward the mere pursuit of social status and material wealth (Lubis & Sazali, 2023). This flexing culture in the digital era has evolved into a new virtual phenomenon that utilizes symbols and attributes of luxury to gain social recognition, fulfill self-actualization needs, and construct a personal image in cyberspace (Rosida et al., 2023). This phenomenon not only implies the emergence of *riya'* and materialistic tendencies but also contributes to a shift in life orientation from otherworldly values to worldly interests. Furthermore, in certain contexts, this culture is associated with various forms of social deviance and emerging digital-based criminal activities. Empirical evidence indicates that exposure to flexing culture is significantly correlated with lower levels of gratitude and higher levels of social anxiety among madrasah students. These findings underscore that the digital environment exerts a powerful influence on the formation of students'

attitudes and behaviors and, therefore, cannot be disregarded within the Islamic education system (Rachman et al., 2023).

These issues become increasingly complex because character education in Islamic educational institutions remains dominated by cognitive-instructional approaches (Syarnubi et al., 2021). The inculcation of moral values, which relies primarily on conceptual classroom instruction, is often unable to counterbalance the continuous influence of the external environment, particularly social media (Zul et al., 2026). Consequently, a gap emerges between the moral values taught formally and the actual behavior of students in the digital space. This phenomenon demonstrates that the formation of anti-hedonistic character cannot be achieved merely through the transfer of knowledge and moral instruction; rather, it requires a system of habituation and environmental conditioning implemented consistently and sustainably.

Research conducted in modern Islamic boarding schools shows that a hidden curriculum implemented through the 24-hour management of student activities can support holistic leadership character development (Alamin et al., 2024). On the other hand, studies on Tawhid-Based Green Learning demonstrate that monotheistic values can be internalized through a hidden curriculum to develop the character of the *insan kamil* with ecological awareness (Masturin et al., 2022). Other efforts are reflected in the development of a holistic-integrative Islamic Education curriculum, which seeks to eliminate the dichotomy between religious and general sciences by integrating the *tawhid* paradigm, the science-based national curriculum, and 21st-century competencies (Al-Razi et al., 2024). Similar findings are reported in research on Islamic boarding school education, demonstrating that a hidden curriculum implemented through ritual practices, classical Islamic text studies, and daily social interactions contributes to fostering moderate and tolerant character in diverse settings (Salim et al., 2024). The strategic potential of the hidden curriculum in shaping the affective domain is further supported by global educational research, which reports a strong correlation (0.627) between hidden curriculum components and changes in students' affective attitudes. This finding confirms that values transmitted through the hidden curriculum often have a greater capacity for internalization than those delivered through the formal curriculum (Ahvan, 2021).

Nonetheless, a synthesis of these studies indicates that a significant conceptual and methodological gap remains. Although the various models developed have made important contributions to explaining the role of the hidden curriculum in fostering leadership character, ecological piety, Islamic value integration, and religious moderation, their effectiveness in addressing contemporary digital moral challenges such as hedonism and flexing requires further strengthening. One underlying reason is that previous studies have tended to focus more on value integration, institutional culture, and curriculum reconstruction at the structural and academic levels. As a result, relatively little attention has been given to behavioral modification mechanisms based on continuous reinforcement, habituation, and repeated stimuli. In reality, the digital environment operates precisely through these intensive and persuasive mechanisms. This condition indicates that the existing literature has not sufficiently developed an operational and measurable learning psychology framework to explain how values internalized through the hidden curriculum can be transformed into enduring behaviors that are resilient to social media influences. Therefore, a critical research gap remains regarding the integration of Islamic values internalized through the hidden curriculum with systematic behavioral formation mechanisms from the perspective of learning psychology.

This gap becomes even more pronounced when recent efforts to develop character education based on digital literacy through teacher-parent collaboration still face various implementation limitations (Putra et al., 2025). The effectiveness of such models relies heavily on the capacity, time, and involvement of parents in monitoring their children's digital activities in the domestic environment. In practice, this involvement cannot always be optimized, causing behavioral control to encounter obstacles. This finding is reinforced by linear

regression analysis showing that a lack of parental attention, social environmental influences, media exposure, and the drive for self-actualization are factors that significantly contribute to the emergence of character value deviations among students (Wahono et al., 2018).

Concurrently, the holistic-integrative curriculum models developing in various Islamic educational institutions are largely directed toward the integration of science and religion, strengthening academic competence, utilizing educational technology, and developing 21st-century skills (Murniati, 2025). Meanwhile, studies on religious moderation through the hidden curriculum still focus narrowly on reinforcing the internal culture of the *pesantren* (Junaidi et al., 2025). While these contributions are undeniably valuable for the development of Islamic education, they do not specifically offer a behavioral formation mechanism capable of confronting the penetration of hedonism and flexing culture in the digital space. Consequently, an intellectual missing link persists in the literature: the absence of an adequate synthesis between the internalization of Islamic values through the hidden curriculum and a learning psychology mechanism that can explain the process of behavioral change in an operational and measurable manner.

This condition is closely tied to another intellectual missing link within Islamic education studies, namely the limited integration of behaviorist theory into character education development. Historically, since the decline of interest in traditional virtue signaling approaches in the 1970s, behaviorist theories such as B.F. Skinner's operant conditioning and Albert Bandura's social learning theory have been utilized predominantly in the context of instructional management, classroom behavior control, and academic achievement enhancement. This application orientation has contributed to the perception that behaviorism is an approach that emphasizes outward behavior and mechanical learning rather than spiritual and moral dimensions. Within Islamic education, this perception has resulted in behaviorism receiving insufficient attention as a foundation for character education development. Consequently, the potential of behaviorist theory as an instrument for habituation, reinforcement, and environmental engineering remains relatively limited in Islamic character studies. Yet, the digital environment currently influencing students operates through repetitive processes of reinforcement, imitation, and behavioral habituation, which conceptually constitute the primary focus of behaviorist theory. This situation underscores the need to re-examine the relevance of behaviorism as an operational framework that can support the systematic and measurable internalization of Islamic values through the hidden curriculum.

Based on this literature synthesis, this study departs from the assumption that the challenge of digital hedonism cannot be adequately countered through normative and cognitive approaches alone. When parental supervision faces various implementation constraints, and digital media factors combined with self-actualization needs are proven to trigger student character deviations, Islamic educational institutions must develop internal mechanisms capable of shaping behavior more systematically. Therefore, this study views the hidden curriculum as a strategic instrument to engineer the educational environment independently, purposefully, and sustainably. Without intentionally designed environmental engineering, anti-hedonism values delivered through formal instruction are at risk of having limited effectiveness when confronting the persuasive currents of social media.

In light of this critical evaluation of the literature gap, this study offers a conceptual contribution by synthesizing behaviorist behavioral control mechanisms into the hidden curriculum structure of Islamic education. Unlike previous research that generally positions the hidden curriculum as a means of value internalization and institutional culture formation, this study conceptualizes the hidden curriculum as a behavioral formation instrument that can be operationalized through environmental conditioning as formulated by Skinner, and through social modeling as developed by Bandura. Within this framework, behaviorism is not positioned as a paradigm divorced from the goals of Islamic education; rather, it is critically

reinterpreted as a learning psychology tool that supports the value internalization process more systematically. Through this approach, this study seeks to fill the conceptual gap in Islamic educational hidden curriculum studies by offering an integrative framework that connects the value dimension and behavioral formation mechanisms in an operational, structured, and measurable manner. This framework is expected to provide a theoretical foundation for strengthening the profile of *Khalifah Allah* with the moral resilience required to face hedonistic culture and various forms of value disruption in the digital era.

METHOD

Research Design

This study adopted an Integrative Literature Review design, specifically following the methodological framework proposed by Torraco (2005, 2016). This design was selected because the research objective extends beyond a narrative summary; it aims to critique, contrast, and synthesize two distinct paradigms behavioral psychology and Islamic education into a novel conceptual framework. By bridging these two traditions, this review models how behaviorist principles (operant conditioning and social learning) can operationalize and strengthen the hidden curriculum in Islamic schools to build student moral resilience against contemporary digital threats, such as the flexing culture and consumerist hedonism.

Search Strategy and Information Sources

Data collection followed a rigorous and transparent search protocol across four primary academic databases: Scopus, Google Scholar, SINTA (Science and Technology Index), and authoritative digital book repositories. To maximize literature retrieval and precision, we executed advanced search queries using specific Boolean operators (AND, OR). The exact search string deployed across the databases was:

("behaviorism" OR "operant conditioning" OR "social learning theory") AND ("Islamic education" OR "hidden curriculum" OR "Khalifah" OR "character education") AND ("hedonism" OR "flexing" OR "Islamic school")

Eligibility Criteria

To ensure high-quality data extraction, we established strict inclusion and exclusion criteria divided by literature characteristics, timeframes, and thematic focus:

Inclusion Criteria:

1. Foundational literature and primary works by key behaviorist theorists (e.g., B.F. Skinner and Albert Bandura) and classical Islamic education texts, exempt from publication year limits due to their historical and theoretical significance.
2. Peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2016 and 2026 to capture contemporary empirical data regarding social media dynamics, flexing culture, and modern digital hedonism.
3. Official policy and curriculum documents on Islamic character education.
4. Literature written in English, Indonesian, or Arabic available in accessible full-text versions.

Exclusion Criteria:

1. Non-peer-reviewed sources, including popular opinion articles, newspapers, personal blogs, non-indexed conference proceedings, and abstracts without full-text access.
2. Behaviorist studies restricted to clinical, medical, psychiatric, or animal laboratory environments.
3. Islamic education literature focusing solely on jurisprudential rituals (*fiqh*) or history (*tarikh*) without connecting to character development.

4. Hedonism studies limited strictly to macro-economic impacts without addressing youth consumerism or adolescent moral development.

Quality Appraisal and Data Triangulation

Before analysis, all retrieved sources underwent a rigorous quality screening. We adapted the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist to evaluate the clarity of research aims, methodological validity, data quality, and relevance to our conceptual review. Priority was given to papers published in high-tier journals indexed in Scopus or SINTA (Categories 1 and 2).

To minimize interpretive bias and enhance research credibility, we applied source triangulation. We cross-referenced and verified core concepts specifically the *Khalifah Allah* paradigm, moral habituation, and the hidden curriculum across three distinct source types: classical Qur'anic exegeses (*tafsir*), classical Islamic pedagogy books, and contemporary empirical educational research.

Data Extraction and Synthesis

We analyzed the selected literature using Thematic Qualitative Content Analysis, guided by the thematic framework of Braun and Clarke (2006). The analytical procedure followed three structured phases:

1. Thematic Extraction (Open Coding): We thoroughly reviewed the final literature pool to identify and code fundamental units of meaning. From behavioral psychology, we extracted codes such as *stimulus*, *response*, *positive/negative reinforcement*, *habituation*, and *modeling*. From Islamic education, we extracted codes including *moral values*, *spiritual reinforcement*, *exemplary role-modeling* (*uswah hasanah*), and *inner consciousness* (*taqwa*).
2. Matrix Mapping: We organized the extracted codes into an integrative conceptual matrix. This matrix systematically cross-examined behaviorist mechanisms against Islamic hidden curriculum components to map functional congruencies and integration pathways.
3. Reflective Synthesis: In the final phase, we synthesized the intersections and boundaries of both paradigms. This synthesis generated a consolidated conceptual model illustrating how behavioral modification techniques can be internalized through the hidden curriculum, fostering both target behaviors and a deep moral awareness of the student's role as *Khalifah Allah* in the digital era.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Literature Findings on the Formation of Ritual Discipline Through Behavioral Reinforcement

The synthesis of the analyzed literature was conducted using two theoretical frameworks: Skinner's operant conditioning (Palmer, 2010) and Bandura's Social Learning Theory (Rumjaun & Narod, 2020). Both theories serve as a foundation for understanding the patterns of findings across various empirical studies in the field of Islamic education. Generally, the results of the review indicate that the formation of students' ritual discipline is influenced not only by the formal delivery of religious material but also by the processes of habituation, behavioral reinforcement, and a social environment that supports daily religious practices.

Findings by Hady et al. (2025) demonstrate that students' religious behavior in the studied institution was shaped through an educational environment that consistently conditioned the execution of daily rituals. These results indicate that the formation of religious behavior does not rely solely on the mastery of religious knowledge; rather, it depends on the presence of situations that repeatedly provide stimuli and reinforcement for ritual practices. This pattern aligns with the basic assumption of operant conditioning theory, which emphasizes the importance of behavioral consequences in shaping enduring habits.

At the program implementation level, Saidi et al. (2025) reported that structured ritual habituation contributed to the improvement of student discipline in the institution they investigated. This finding is reinforced by the research of Murti and Heryanto, which shows that the routine performance of congregational prayers and forenoon prayers can enhance both the consistency of religious behavior and students' self-regulation capacities (Murti & Heryanto, 2022). Both studies illustrate a pattern of gradual reinforcement, specifically through the provision of verbal praise and social recognition by teachers during the initial stages of habituation. Subsequently, the established ritual behaviors tend to progress toward more internal motivations. However, it should be noted that neither study measured this transitional process longitudinally. Therefore, the conclusion regarding the development of an "internal awareness" must be understood as the researchers' interpretation of cross-sectional data, rather than an empirically verified longitudinal finding.

In addition to positive reinforcement, several studies also indicate the role of negative reinforcement in maintaining religious behavior. Ribeiro et al. (2021) reported that the continuity of religious behavior is influenced by the emergence of discomfort when rituals are neglected, which drives individuals to consistently return to performing their religious practices. This finding is complemented by Ahmed (2025), who showed that the reduction of discomfort following the performance of rituals also plays a role in sustaining that behavior. Although both studies were conducted in different contexts and utilized distinct methods, they exhibit a similar pattern: students' self-regulation is shaped not only by positive reinforcement from the environment but also by mechanisms aimed at avoiding psychological discomfort. This pattern is conceptually congruent with the concept of negative reinforcement within Skinner's operant conditioning framework. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that neither of these two studies was conducted within the context of social media exposure, which is the focus of this paper. Consequently, the connection between these findings and the phenomenon of digital hedonism remains inferential and cannot be viewed as a direct empirical finding from the reviewed literature.

Literature Findings on Character Strengthening Through Non-Material Rewards

Literature findings indicate that rewards oriented toward character strengthening contribute positively to the development of students' prosocial behaviors. Carlo et al. (2022) reported a positive correlation between character-based reward distribution and increases in student responsibility, social care, and discipline. These results suggest that rewards do not function merely as behavioral reinforcers but can also be deliberately directed toward developing character values that support holistic student personality development.

Within the context of Islamic education, Badri and Malik (2024), alongside Maemonah (2026), demonstrated that shifting the form of rewards from material symbols toward granting trust and leadership opportunities is associated with a shift in student orientation. This finding indicates that non-material rewards can encourage students to define success not merely through physical ownership or material gain, but also through responsibility, exemplary role-modeling, and the social roles provided by the educational environment.

This finding is further reinforced by Cotofan (2021), who reported that non-material rewards encourage students to maintain positive behaviors without fostering dependence on economic incentives. These results demonstrate that reinforcement based on social recognition, respect, or trust has the potential to build more sustainable motivation, as positive behavior no longer relies on the presence of tangible gifts as a direct consequence.

When analyzed collectively, these four studies exhibit a consistent pattern: reinforcement grounded in social recognition and trust tends to be associated with more sustainable positive behavior compared to

material reinforcement. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that none of these studies directly investigated the flexing phenomenon or digital hedonism as outlined in the introduction of this paper. Consequently, the argument that non-material rewards can "reduce dependence on symbols of physical luxury" or "shift students' orientation away from the showing-off culture in digital spaces" is a conceptual extrapolation constructed based on the findings of Carlo et al. (2022), Cotofan (2021), Badri and Malik (2024), and Maemonah (2026). Therefore, this argument should be understood as a product of the theoretical interpretation of this study rather than an explicit conclusion drawn by the reviewed literature.

Indirect support for this argument is provided by Sorić et al. (2021) who reported that reinforcement mechanisms can be tailored to educational goals that emphasize responsibility and moral maturity. This finding indicates that the forms and purposes of reinforcement can be modified in accordance with the values an educational system seeks to develop. In the context of Islamic education, these results strengthen the plausibility of adapting the token economy system toward non-material rewards that place greater emphasis on social recognition, trust, and responsibility. Nonetheless, this finding provides only a conceptual foundation and cannot be deemed direct empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of such an approach in confronting the phenomenon of digital hedonism.

Literature Findings on Educator Role-Modeling and Self-Regulation

The reviewed literature demonstrates that educator role-modeling is a critical factor in shaping student character and behavior. Mangal et al. (2024) reported that educator role-modeling consistently emerges as one of the key factors influencing student character development across various studies utilizing the perspective of Social Learning Theory. This finding indicates that the learning process does not occur solely through the delivery of academic content, but also through the observation of behaviors displayed by individuals perceived as role models. In this context, students tend to learn and internalize the values reflected in the actions of educators that they observe repeatedly.

Similar findings were reported by Othman (2026) within the context of Islamic education. The study shows that educator role-modeling is reflected in various aspects of professional and personal life, such as consistency in performing rituals, simplicity in lifestyle, responsibility toward duties, and positive interaction patterns within the school environment. These results indicate that Islamic values are transmitted more effectively when embodied in concrete, observable behaviors, thereby ensuring that the character education process takes place not only at a conceptual level but also in daily life practices.

The role of educator role-modeling in shaping students' self-regulation capacities is further reinforced by the findings of Karaca et al. (2024) and Adigüzel et al. (2023). Both studies reported that students who receive examples of positive behavior from teachers exhibit superior self-regulation capacities, stronger decision-making skills, and greater resilience to environmental pressures. These findings suggest that the presence of positive behavioral models can assist students in developing the capacity to control their actions, consider the consequences of their choices, and maintain their core values when confronting various external influences.

Collectively, the review results indicate a consistent pattern: educator role-modeling contributes significantly to character formation and the reinforcement of student self-regulation. Through the processes of observation and imitation as explained in Social Learning Theory, the behaviors displayed by educators serve as reference points for students in developing attitudes, habits, and self-management skills. Consequently, the effectiveness of character education is determined not only by the curriculum taught but also by the quality of role-modeling demonstrated by educators across various dimensions of school life.

As noted in the preceding discussion, it must be emphasized that the claim regarding the simple lifestyle of educators acting as a living model capable of neutralizing exposure to hedonistic content on social media is a conceptual interpretation developed by this study based on the findings of Othman (2026), Karaca et al. (2024), and Adigüzel et al. (2023). None of these three studies explicitly measured students' social media exposure or the influence of hedonistic content as research variables. Therefore, the argument concerning the role of educator role-modeling in confronting digital hedonism must be understood as a product of theoretical synthesis and development carried out within this research, rather than a direct empirical finding from the reviewed studies. This clarification is essential to maintain a clear boundary between conclusions supported by primary data from previous research and the conceptual interpretations developed through the integration of diverse findings within this literature review.

Critical Synthesis of Behavioral Reinforcement and Social Role-Modeling

The reviewed literature reveals two primary approaches to explaining the formation of students' ritual discipline and character. One body of research grounded in operant conditioning theory emphasizes the crucial role of reinforcement in shaping and maintaining behavior (Palmer, 2010). This perspective is evident in the findings of Hady et al. (2025), Saidi et al. (2025), Murti and Heryanto (2022), Ribeiro et al. (2021), Ahmed (2025), Carlo et al. (2022), and Cotofan (2021), which collectively demonstrate that habituation, rewards, and various forms of reinforcement enhance the consistency of students' religious behaviors and positive character traits. Conversely, research rooted in Social Learning Theory highlights the role of observation and modeling in the social learning process (Rumjaun & Narod, 2020). This viewpoint is reflected in the findings of Mangal et al. (2024), Othman (2026), Karaca et al. (2024), and Adigüzel et al. (2023), which indicate that student character and self-regulation develop through the observation of educators acting as role models. This polarization aligns with the broader review by Sturges (2020), which points out that behaviorism and Islamic education are often studied as two relatively separate domains. Consequently, most existing studies tend to examine reinforcement mechanisms or role-modeling in isolation rather than as interacting processes.

From a methodological standpoint, several limitations remain evident within the current literature. Studies focusing on behavioral reinforcement, such as those conducted by Saidi et al. (2025) and Murti and Heryanto (2022), generally employ descriptive or correlational designs within specific institutional contexts, which limits the generalizability of their findings across different educational levels and institutional environments. On the other hand, research concerning educator role-modeling by Mangal et al. (2024), Karaca et al. (2024), and Adigüzel et al. (2023) focuses heavily on students' perceptions of teachers as behavioral models. However, these studies do not explicitly examine the forms of social reinforcement that may accompany the role-modeling process. As a result, it remains difficult to ascertain whether the influence of role-modeling operates independently or is instead reinforced by other mechanisms, such as praise, recognition, and social rewards that occur during teacher-student interactions.

Despite originating from different theoretical traditions, these findings reveal a critical intersection. The gradual reinforcement patterns reported by Saidi et al. (2025) and Murti and Heryanto (2022) specifically, the shift from external reinforcement to internal motivation, align conceptually with the findings of Karaca et al. (2024) and Adigüzel et al. (2023) regarding the development of student self-regulation through role-modeling. Both sets of findings point toward the eventual formation of behavioral autonomy, albeit through different pathways. From the operant conditioning perspective, behavioral autonomy is formed through consistent environmental conditioning, whereas according to Social Learning Theory, autonomy develops through the processes of observation, identification, and the internalization of values displayed by role models.

Based on these findings, behavioral reinforcement and social role-modeling should not be viewed as competing explanations, but rather as potentially complementary mechanisms. Reinforcement helps establish habits and maintain expected behaviors through consistently administered consequences, while role-modeling provides concrete examples of how those values and behaviors are manifested in daily life. Consequently, students' religious behaviors and positive character traits have the potential to develop more robustly when the educational environment not only provides appropriate reinforcement but also features educators who serve as credible behavioral models. This argument receives theoretical support from Dozier et al. (2020), who demonstrated that successful character development tends to be optimized when environmental mechanisms and social models operate concurrently rather than as isolated pathways.

Nevertheless, this literature synthesis also exposes an unresolved issue. Various studies on behavioral reinforcement and character rewards implicitly assume that these mechanisms remain effective in shaping student behavior even when students confront external stimuli outside the educational environment. However, none of the reviewed studies directly tested the efficacy of these mechanisms in situations where students are extensively exposed to social media and persuasive digital content. In other words, the effectiveness of both behavioral reinforcement and social role-modeling when competing with powerful digital stimuli still lacks adequate empirical support.

Therefore, this synthesis is not intended to prove definitively that behavioral reinforcement and social role-modeling are effective in countering digital hedonism. Instead, it offers a conceptual framework that brings these two approaches together as a foundation for understanding the formation of students' ritual discipline and character. This framework operates on the assumption that habituation processes and behavioral reinforcement will be more effective if supported by consistent social role-modeling. Nonetheless, this relationship still requires further empirical verification, particularly within the context of Islamic education, which is increasingly confronted with high-intensity social media exposure and various forms of digital stimuli, as detailed in the introduction.

The Positioning of This Study Relative to the Literature Gap in the Hidden Curriculum

Literature regarding the hidden curriculum in Islamic education generally demonstrates a significant contribution to student character building; however, most studies still focus heavily on structural and institutional aspects. Alamin et al. (2024) reported that the 24-hour management of student activities can support holistic leadership character development. This finding indicates that a consistently organized educational environment can shape student behaviors and values in a sustainable manner. Nevertheless, the study did not explain in detail the psychological mechanisms underlying the effectiveness of such activity management, particularly concerning the roles of behavioral reinforcement or social modeling in the character-building process.

A similar tendency is also evident in the research by Masturin et al. (2022) and Al-Razi et al. (2024). Masturin et al. (2022) reported that the internalization of *tawhid* values can be achieved through the hidden curriculum within the context of green learning, whereas Al-Razi et al. (2024) demonstrated the integration of the *tawhid* paradigm with the science curriculum and 21st-century competencies. Both studies offer vital contributions to explaining how Islamic values can be integrated into the educational system. Nonetheless, the primary focus of these studies remains centered on curriculum design, educational culture, and instructional structures. Consequently, the psychological processes explaining how these values are translated into individual student behavior have not yet become a central concern of either study.

The focus on the structural level is also apparent in the research by Salim et al. (2024), which reported that ritual practices, classical book studies, and daily social interactions in Islamic boarding schools

contribute to forming moderate and tolerant character. This finding is reinforced by Ahvan (2021), who reported a correlation coefficient of 0.627 between hidden curriculum components and changes in students' affective attitudes within a global education context. Both studies strengthen the argument that the hidden curriculum exerts a tangible influence on character development. However, similar to prior research, their primary attention is directed toward the relationship between the educational environment and the resulting character outcomes, rather than toward the behavioral mechanisms that bridge this relationship.

In this context, the synthesis conducted in this study offers a distinct position. The effectiveness of the hidden curriculum reported by Alamin et al. (2024), Masturin et al. (2022), Al-Razi et al. (2024), Salim et al. (2024), and Ahvan (2021) is conceptualized not merely as a product of a conducive educational culture and structure, but also as a manifestation of two more specific psychological mechanisms: behavioral reinforcement and social modeling. In other words, the influence of the hidden curriculum on character formation can be explained through consistently reinforced habituation and the presence of figures who serve as role models for students. It is crucial to emphasize that this explanation is the result of the conceptual synthesis generated by this study, rather than an explicit conclusion put forward by Alamin et al. (2024), Masturin et al. (2022), Al-Razi et al. (2024), and Salim et al. (2024).

The urgency of this synthesis becomes increasingly apparent when linked to character challenges in the digital era. Rachman et al. (2023) reported a significant relationship between exposure to flexing culture and a decreased gratitude alongside increased social anxiety among madrasah students. This finding demonstrates that digital media does not function merely as a communication tool but can also alter students' value orientations and psychological well-being. Corroborating this, Wahono et al. (2018) reported that a lack of parental attention, social environmental influences, media exposure, and self-actualization needs are factors contributing to deviations in character values. Both studies illustrate those contemporary challenges to character formation stem not only from the formal educational environment but also from increasingly intensive social and digital exposure.

Efforts to address these issues have been pursued through various character education models. Putra et al. (2025) reported that digital literacy-based character education involving collaboration between teachers and parents shows positive potential. However, its implementation still faces numerous obstacles, primarily because its success relies heavily on the capacity, readiness, and time availability of parents to provide direct guidance. The findings of Putra et al. (2025) together with those of Wahono et al. (2018) serve as an important argumentative foundation for this study to concentrate its analysis on the internal mechanisms of educational institutions through the hidden curriculum. This approach is deemed advantageous as it can be implemented systematically within the educational environment without depending directly on the varying levels of family supervision and involvement.

The positioning of this study also differs from the curriculum development model reported by Murniati (2025) as well as the study on religious moderation through the hidden curriculum conducted by Junaidi et al. (2025). Both studies emphasize the importance of strengthening institutional culture and integrating Islamic values within the educational system. However, as observed in the findings of Alamin et al. (2024), Masturin et al. (2022), Al-Razi et al. (2024), and Salim et al. (2024), the focus of their analysis remains confined to the design and implementation of educational programs, rather than to the behavioral mechanisms specifically relevant to addressing the proliferation of hedonism and flexing culture in the digital space.

This gap indicates that studies on the hidden curriculum in Islamic education still require an explanatory framework capable of connecting institutional culture with the process of student behavioral change in greater detail. This condition aligns with the historical development of the utilization of Skinner's

and Bandura's theories since the 1970s, which have been applied more extensively within the contexts of instructional management and classroom control rather than to explain Islamic character formation. Consequently, the potential of both theories as a conceptual foundation for habituation, reinforcement, and environmental engineering in Islamic character education remains relatively under-explored. Therefore, the primary position of this study is to offer a conceptual synthesis that establishes behavioral reinforcement and social modeling as the psychological mechanisms explaining how the hidden curriculum operates in forming students' ritual discipline and character, while simultaneously serving as an initial framework for addressing the challenges of hedonism and flexing culture in the digital era.

Original Research Contributions: Islamic Behaviorism as an Integrative Framework

Based on the critical synthesis of the literature regarding behavioral reinforcement, social role-modeling, and the hidden curriculum, this study proposes the concept of Islamic Behaviorism as an integrative framework to explain the process of developing ritual discipline and character within Islamic education. This concept is not intended as a new theory to replace pre-existing ones; rather, it serves as a conceptual framework that integrates the principles of operant conditioning (Palmer, 2010) and Social Learning Theory (Rumjaun & Narod, 2020) into the context of Islamic education. This integration is undertaken to address the fragmentation in the literature, which has historically tended to discuss behavioral reinforcement and social role-modeling in isolation, while simultaneously providing a more operational explanation of how the hidden curriculum functions to shape students' religious behaviors and character.

The first original contribution of this study lies in its effort to bridge two research traditions that have evolved relatively independently of one another. Various studies on behavioral reinforcement, such as those conducted by Saidi et al. (2025), Murti and Heryanto (2022), Ribeiro et al. (2021), and Ahmed (2025), demonstrate the significance of habituation and reinforcement in shaping religious behavior. Meanwhile, research by Mangal et al. (2024), Othman (2026), Karaca et al. (2024), and Adigüzel et al. (2023) underscores the role of role-modeling as a means of value internalization and self-regulation development. Aligning with Sturges' (2020) observation regarding the separation between behaviorism and Islamic education in the literature, this study offers a synthesis that establishes behavioral reinforcement and social role-modeling as two complementary mechanisms. Within the framework of Islamic Behaviorism, reinforcement functions to build behavioral consistency during the initial stages through structured habituation, whereas role-modeling provides direction, meaning, and a model for value internalization in the subsequent stages. This complementary relationship receives conceptual backing from Dozier et al. (2020), who demonstrated that character development tends to be more effective when environmental support and social models operate concurrently.

The second original contribution pertains to the effort to explain the efficacy of the hidden curriculum through more operational psychological mechanisms. Research by Alamin et al. (2024), Masturin et al. (2022), Al-Razi et al. (2024), Salim et al. (2024), Murniati (2025), and Junaidi et al. (2025) shows that institutional culture, the habituation of daily activities, the integration of Islamic values, and the educational environment contribute to student character formation. However, these studies generally explain the effectiveness of the hidden curriculum at structural and institutional levels. This study complements that perspective by proposing that the effectiveness of the hidden curriculum can be understood through a series of more specific and measurable mechanisms, such as positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, non-material token economies, and social role-modeling by educators. Consequently, Islamic Behaviorism functions as an explanatory layer that links macro-level institutional culture with micro-level individual behavioral modification processes.

The third original contribution relates to the relevance of this framework to the challenges of digital hedonism and flexing culture proliferating among students. Numerous studies indicate that digital media exposure can alter students' value orientations and character. Lubis and Sazali (2023), Rosida et al. (2023), Rachman et al. (2023), Wahono et al. (2018), and Putra et al. (2025) describe various challenges arising from social media exposure, ranging from shifts in value orientation, decreases in gratitude, and increases in social anxiety, to the limitations of character education models based on family-school collaboration. Nonetheless, the reviewed literature has not directly tested the efficacy of behavioral reinforcement or social role-modeling mechanisms in situations where students confront highly intensive digital stimuli. Therefore, the contribution of this study to this particular aspect is conceptual, namely the formulation of a set of theoretical propositions that can serve as a foundation for future empirical research.

Based on these three contributions, Islamic Behaviorism is positioned as a conceptual framework that explains how the hidden curriculum can be operationalized in developing students' religious behaviors and character. This framework unifies the processes of habituation, behavioral reinforcement, non-material rewards, and social role-modeling into a single interconnected system. Through this approach, the objectives of Islamic education, which encompass the development of creed, morals, intellect, physical well-being, and aesthetics can be understood not merely as normative ideals, but as outcomes of an educational process that takes place through concrete and observable psychological mechanisms.

Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that the Islamic Behaviorism framework proposed in this study remains at a conceptual stage. Because this paper is developed based on a literature synthesis and does not involve primary data collection, it cannot provide direct empirical evidence regarding the framework's effectiveness in mitigating the influences of flexing culture or digital hedonism. Therefore, Islamic Behaviorism should be understood as a set of theoretical propositions that offer new directions for the development of Islamic education studies, as well as a framework that still requires empirical validation through subsequent research. Consequently, the primary contribution of this study lies not in proving causality, but in bridging the intellectual missing link between the internalization of Islamic values and the operational psychological mechanisms of learning in educational practice.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the challenges posed by hedonism and flexing culture in the digital era can be systematically countered through the integration of behaviorist theory into the hidden curriculum of Islamic education. This integration is not mechanistic or secular in nature; rather, it is transformative and transcendental, positioning the values of *tawhid* as the primary reinforcer in shaping the behavior and character of students.

Conceptually, this research formulates two primary mechanisms within this integrative framework. The first is the habituation mechanism based on Skinner's operant conditioning, which is applied through positive reinforcement within the dimensions of ritual and professional worship. Devotional discipline and work ethic are cultivated through a consistent and structured design of the educational environment, allowing anti-hedonistic behaviors to evolve into relatively permanent character traits. An orientation toward the pleasure of Allah SWT is positioned as the ultimate reinforcement that transcends material rewards and social validation.

The second mechanism is role-modeling based on Bandura's social learning theory, which is implemented through modeling and vicarious reinforcement processes enacted by educators. Educators who display personal integrity, a modest lifestyle, a professional work ethic, and effective communication skills serve as concrete role models that students can observe and emulate. Through this mechanism, the values of

Islamic hospitality, social politeness, and a simple lifestyle are internalized far more effectively than through a purely verbal instructional approach.

The synthesis of these two mechanisms is applied holistically across the five dimensions of Islamic education: theology, morality, intellect, physical development, and aesthetics. This integration ultimately constructs a well-rounded profile of *Khalifah Allah*, an individual who is intellectually and professionally competent, possesses moral resilience against the disruptions of materialism, and is capable of interpreting all life activities, both social and professional, as forms of worship to Allah SWT. Operating under a paradigm that can be termed Islamic Behaviorism, Islamic education serves not merely as a vehicle for transmitting normative values, but as a robust instrument of social engineering that shapes a generation that is productive, strong in character, humble, and oriented toward the afterlife amidst contemporary cultural challenges.

However, this study has limitations as it remains conceptual and literature-based; thus, the proposed integration model of behaviorism and the hidden curriculum in Islamic education has not been empirically tested in diverse institutional contexts. Additionally, it lacks an in-depth analysis of external factors such as the family environment, social media, digital communities, and individual student characteristics that could affect the internalization of anti-hedonism and anti-flexing values. Future research should therefore conduct empirical testing of the Islamic Behaviorism model through quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods approaches across different levels of Islamic education. Future studies are also encouraged to develop evaluation instruments to assess the efficacy of habituation and role-modeling mechanisms in character building, while examining their integration with Islamic psychology and contemporary educational theories. This will ensure that the model becomes more validated, comprehensive, and adaptive to contemporary digital-era challenges in character education.

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