



Internalization of Moral Values for Stateless Children in SB North Gombak Dictionary Kuala Lumpur Malaysia

Khairul Fahmi¹, Abd. Mukti¹, Azizah Hanum¹

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara Medan, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: Khairul Fahmi

Email: jagustaruna@magister.ciputra.ac.id



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Abstract

This study analyzes the internalization of moral values (Akhlaq) among stateless children at Sanggar Bimbingan KAMUS, a community-based learning center in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and constructs a conceptual model from an Islamic education perspective. Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The findings reveal that the internalized values encompass communication ethics, respect for authority, social empathy, spiritual devotion, and personal integrity. These values are instilled through role modeling, habituation, empathetic advice, academic integration, and personalized approaches. Crucially, the study constructs a novel theoretical framework: the Theory of Moral Identity Formation of Stateless Children through Humanistic Educational Relationships. This model posits that humanistic and empathetic educator-student relationships foster psychological safety, serving as a fundamental prerequisite for deep moral internalization. Ultimately, this process transcends mere behavioral compliance, cultivating a resilient moral identity that empowers marginalized children to navigate their socio-legal vulnerabilities with dignity and build a positive sense of self despite systemic exclusion.

Introduction

The migration of Indonesian workers to Malaysia has created a complex demographic reality, notably the emergence of stateless children. Due to Malaysia's *jus sanguinis* citizenship policy and the undocumented status of many migrant parents, children born in Malaysia often lack legal recognition from both their parents' home country and their country of birth (Ngeow & Shukri, 2023). This legal invisibility strips them of fundamental rights, placing them in a precarious position within the socio-legal landscape of Southeast Asia and perpetuating a cycle of intergenerational poverty and marginalization (Indonesia, 2023).

The stateless status of these children severely restricts their access to formal education and essential public services. Malaysian educational policies require official documentation for school enrollment, effectively marginalizing undocumented children from the national system and limiting their future socioeconomic mobility (Kamaruzaman & Asnarulkhadi, 2021). Beyond educational deprivation, this legal limbo inflicts profound psychosocial trauma, fostering feelings of alienation, discrimination, and a persistent sense of insecurity that severely hinders their holistic development (Ahmad & Ismail, 2024; Malaysia, 2024).

In response to this systemic exclusion, community-based non-formal education centers have emerged as critical sanctuaries for stateless children. These grassroots institutions provide basic literacy and numeracy, serving as a protective buffer against child labor, exploitation, and radicalization (Rahman & Abdullah, 2024; Sas et al., 2020). However, these learning centers

operate under severe structural constraints, including chronic underfunding, lack of legal recognition, high teacher turnover, and the absence of standardized curricula, which collectively threaten their sustainability and educational quality (Andersson & Andersson, 2024; Mendenhall et al., 2025; Yun et al., 2020).

Given the profound vulnerabilities faced by these children, education in these non-formal settings must transcend basic academic instruction to include the intentional internalization of moral values (*Akhlak*). In the context of Islamic education, the internalization of *Akhlak* is not merely about behavioral compliance, but about building a resilient moral identity that empowers marginalized individuals to navigate life's adversities with dignity (Hidayat & Machali, 2024; Jamilnur & Sarip, 2025; Mubarak, 2025; Shavir et al., 2024; Wijaksono et al., 2024). For stateless children, moral education serves as a vital psychological anchor, fostering resilience and a sense of self-worth amidst systemic marginalization (Cowling et al., 2025; Yusuf & Hassan, 2024).

Despite the critical importance of this issue, existing literature predominantly focuses on macro-level policy barriers, legal frameworks, and the psychosocial impacts of statelessness (A. Loganathan et al., 2023; Ngeow & Shukri, 2023). There is a conspicuous gap in empirical research regarding the micro-level pedagogical processes of moral internalization within non-formal educational settings for stateless children. Specifically, how educators navigate structural limitations to instill moral values and construct moral identities in this highly vulnerable demographic remains underexplored.

This study addresses this gap by examining the internalization of *Akhlak* values at Sanggar Bimbingan KAMUS, a community-based learning center in Gombak Utara, Kuala Lumpur, managed by Indonesian student volunteers. Unlike formal institutions, this center relies heavily on humanistic, empathetic educational relationships to compensate for the lack of formal resources and the complex psychosocial backgrounds of its students. The center prioritizes moral formation alongside basic education, recognizing that character building is essential for the survival and dignity of stateless children.

Therefore, this research aims to analyze the process, strategies, and dynamics of *Akhlak* internalization among stateless children at Sanggar Bimbingan KAMUS. By exploring the interplay between humanistic educational relationships and moral identity formation, this study proposes a novel conceptual model: the *Theory of Moral Identity Formation of Stateless Children through Humanistic Educational Relationships*. The findings offer significant theoretical contributions to Islamic non-formal education and provide practical frameworks for educators and policymakers working with marginalized and stateless youth.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative instrumental case study design to examine how moral values (*Akhlak*) were internalized within a naturally occurring and bounded educational setting (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). The case was Sanggar Bimbingan KAMUS, a community-based non-formal learning center in North Gombak, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, initiated and managed by Indonesian student volunteers. The broader case period extended from July 2024 to May 2026, while intensive field data collection was conducted from October 2025 to May 2026. This design enabled the study to investigate the moral values emphasized at the center, the strategies and stages through which they were internalized, and the contextual factors that supported or inhibited the process.

The participants comprised stateless children enrolled at the center, supported by key informants from the management team and volunteer educators. Purposive sampling was used to select participants who were directly involved in or had first-hand knowledge of the center's moral education practices (Patton, 2015). Selection considered participants' involvement in daily learning activities, experience in implementing or receiving moral guidance, and ability and willingness to provide information relevant to the research questions. Recruitment and data collection continued until additional data no longer produced substantively new information.

Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and document analysis, with a reflexive journal used to maintain analytical distance and researcher reflexivity (Denzin, 1978; Ortlipp, 2008). Observations focused on daily routines, educator–child interactions, worship activities, language use, disciplinary practices, and other behaviors through which moral values were modeled or habituated. Interviews explored the values prioritized by the center, the strategies used to instill them, the perceived stages and outcomes of internalization, and the supporting and inhibiting factors. Relevant institutional and learning documents were examined to corroborate the interview and observational evidence. Evidence from these sources was compared throughout data collection as part of methodological triangulation.

Data collection and analysis proceeded iteratively using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Interview, observation, and documentary data were organized and coded to identify recurring meanings and patterns. Related codes were subsequently grouped into four analytical categories corresponding to the reported findings: (1) internalized moral values, (2) strategies for moral internalization, (3) the process linking humanistic educational relationships, psychological safety, and moral identity formation, and (4) inhibiting and supporting factors. Matrices, summary tables, and conceptual diagrams were used to compare patterns across participants and data sources. Interpretations and the resulting conceptual model were refined through repeated comparison with the empirical data and verification of convergent and divergent evidence.

Results and Discussion

Internalized Moral Values for Marginalized Youth

The empirical findings reveal that the specific moral values internalized at the community learning center are meticulously selected and adapted to address the profound psychosocial vulnerabilities experienced by stateless children. Educators heavily prioritize the ethics of speech and communication to correct the harsh, unmonitored language habits many children acquired from their immediate, unregulated environments. Simultaneously, a deep sense of respect for parents and teachers is actively instilled to rebuild a foundational reverence that is frequently absent in their daily lives. The center manager explicitly noted that initially, many students used highly inappropriate words, making communication ethics the absolute primary focus of early moral coaching. This deliberate, foundational approach ensures that children first learn how to interact respectfully before they are expected to engage in more complex social behaviors.

Beyond basic interpersonal respect, the educational curriculum heavily emphasizes ethical treatment toward peers and the broader community to foster essential social cohesion among marginalized youth. Devotion to God through routine, structured worship is also central to the program, providing the children with spiritual comfort and a profound sense of divine equality despite their severe legal exclusion. Honesty and personal integrity are rigorously taught to

build mutual trust and internal self-worth among students who frequently face intense societal stigma. A religious education teacher emphasized that they continuously train children to practice good morals in daily life, ensuring that good communication and worship become natural, unforced habits. Together, these five core values form a comprehensive, highly contextual moral framework tailored specifically to the complex psychosocial needs of the learners.

Table 1. Summary of the Internalization of Moral Values

No.	Moral Value Category	Concrete Aspects Taught
1	Ethics of Speech and Communication	Polite word choice, voice volume control, avoiding harsh language, respectful gestures
2	Respect for Parents and Teachers	Obedience, polite responses when questioned, avoiding rude interruptions, showing physical reverence
3	Ethics Toward Peers and Society	Mutual respect, anti-bullying, tolerance, peaceful conflict resolution, social empathy
4	Devotion to God	Routine prayers, daily supplications, short Quranic memorization, starting activities with holy words
5	Honesty and Personal Integrity	Speaking the truth, keeping promises, taking responsibility, aligning words with actions

The provided table systematically categorizes the five core moral values targeted by the dedicated educators at the learning center. It illustrates the concrete aspects of each value, ranging from polite communication and respect for authority to social empathy and spiritual devotion. The data highlights that moral education is not treated as an abstract theoretical concept, but rather as a set of practical, observable behaviors. By mapping these values to specific daily interactions, the center ensures that character building remains highly relevant to the students' immediate social realities.

The conceptual mind map visually organizes the five primary dimensions of moral values internalized within the educational setting. It demonstrates how ethical communication and respect for authority form the foundational layer of students' interpersonal conduct. The diagram further illustrates how social ethics, spiritual devotion, and personal integrity expand outward to shape the children's broader relationships with society and the divine. These dimensions are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, indicating that moral development occurs through both daily interactions and structured educational practices. This visualization confirms that the moral curriculum is holistic, addressing the internal spiritual state and external social behavior of stateless children while supporting the development of responsible, respectful, and ethically aware individuals.

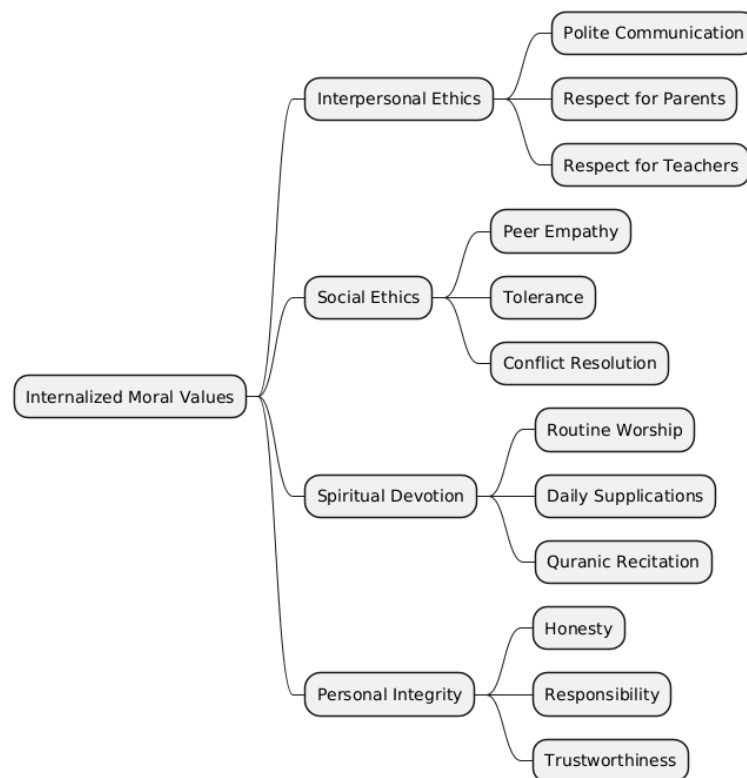


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Internalized Moral Values

Strategic Approaches to Moral Internalization

The internalization process relies heavily on the strategy of role modeling, where educators consciously demonstrate the exact moral behaviors they wish to instill in their students. Teachers consistently use polite language, arrive on time, and show immense patience, providing a living example of Islamic ethics for the students to observe and emulate. Complementing this visible modeling is the strategy of habituation, which involves the repetitive practice of positive actions until they become deeply ingrained character traits. Students are strictly required to greet teachers, recite daily prayers, and perform morning prayers together, transforming abstract moral concepts into tangible daily routines. This powerful combination of visible leadership and structured repetition creates an optimal environment for profound behavioral transformation.

Educators also employ gentle advice and motivation to touch the students' hearts, ensuring that moral rules are understood internally rather than merely obeyed out of fear. Furthermore, moral values are seamlessly integrated into all academic subjects, ensuring that character building is not isolated to religious classes alone but permeates the entire educational experience. A deeply empathetic and personal approach is utilized to address the diverse psychological backgrounds and hidden traumas of the stateless children. The center manager highlighted that they guide students individually, recognizing that each child's unique background significantly influences their moral development and receptiveness to advice. These interconnected strategies ensure that moral education is holistic, highly adaptive, and deeply rooted in the emotional realities of the learners.

Table 2. Summary of Strategies for Internalizing Moral Values

No.	Strategy	Concrete Implementation	Targeted Moral Outcome
1	Role Modeling	Teachers demonstrate polite speech, discipline, and patience	Politeness, discipline, responsibility
2	Habituation	Greetings, prayers, Quran reading, respectful routines	Religiosity, discipline, reverence
3	Advice and Motivation	Moral reinforcement, gentle guidance, emotional support	Moral awareness, responsibility
4	Academic Integration	Embedding values across all subjects	Honesty, discipline, cooperation
5	Personal Approach	Individual mentoring, empathetic communication	Empathy, self-worth, trust

This table outlines the five primary strategies utilized by educators to facilitate the deep internalization of moral values. It details the concrete implementation of each strategy, demonstrating how abstract Islamic educational concepts are translated into daily pedagogical practices. The data reveals that the center employs a multi-sensory approach, combining visual role modeling, repetitive habituation, and emotional motivation. By integrating these strategies across all academic disciplines, the educators ensure that moral development is treated as a continuous, omnipresent educational objective.

Conceptual Model of Moral Internalization

The research constructs a novel conceptual framework that explains how moral values are successfully internalized in highly marginalized and legally ambiguous contexts. The absolute foundation of this model is the humanistic educational relationship, where teachers provide unconditional acceptance, empathy, and respect to children who are routinely rejected by mainstream society. This profound relational dynamic generates a critical condition known as psychological safety, allowing students to lower their defensive barriers and trust their educators. When stateless children feel genuinely valued and secure within the learning center, they become emotionally open to receiving moral guidance. Consequently, the humanistic bond acts as the essential, non-negotiable prerequisite for any meaningful moral instruction to take place.

Within this safe psychological space, the internalization process unfolds through three progressive stages of value transformation, transaction, and transinternalization. Students first learn the moral concepts cognitively, then actively practice them through social interactions, and ultimately embody them as spontaneous, unforced behaviors. The ultimate outcome of this rigorous process is the formation of a strong moral identity that completely transcends their lack of legal citizenship. This moral identity provides the children with an internal compass and social resilience, empowering them to navigate their liminal social status with dignity and purpose. Thus, the model demonstrates that moral education for stateless children is not merely about behavioral compliance, but about constructing a resilient, unshakeable sense of self.

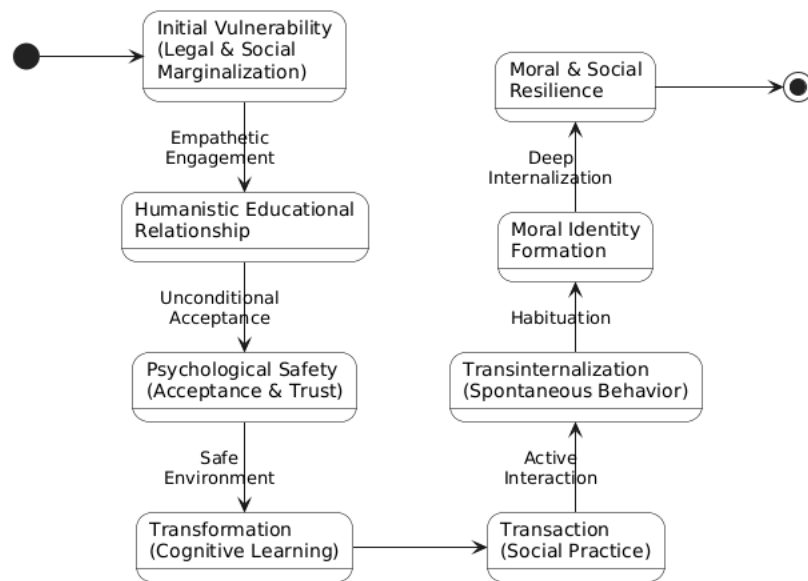


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of Humanistic Education for Moral Identity Formation and Social Resilience

The flowchart illustrates the sequential mechanism of the newly constructed model for moral internalization among stateless children. It begins with the establishment of a humanistic educational relationship, which directly cultivates a safe psychological environment for the marginalized learners. This secure foundation enables the three critical stages of value processing, ultimately culminating in the formation of a robust moral identity. The diagram clearly depicts that without the initial relational and psychological prerequisites, the subsequent stages of moral transinternalization cannot be effectively achieved.

Inhibiting and Supporting Factors in Moral Education

The moral internalization process faces significant structural and environmental hurdles that constantly complicate the educators' efforts. Many students arrive with complex psychological traumas and severe behavioral issues stemming from a lack of prior formal education and unmonitored exposure to negative social media content. Additionally, the demanding, exhausting work schedules of migrant parents severely limit their involvement in reinforcing moral values at home. The learning center also struggles with chronic financial constraints, inadequate contextual teaching materials, and the constant anxiety surrounding the children's undefined legal status. These compounding external pressures create a highly challenging ecosystem where moral lessons must constantly compete with negative environmental influences.

Despite these formidable obstacles, the internalization process is sustained by powerful internal and institutional support systems. The sheer dedication and sincere devotion of the volunteer educators serve as the primary driving force behind the center's moral programs. Institutional backing from the Indonesian Embassy and the Indonesian School in Kuala Lumpur provides crucial academic legitimacy and curriculum guidance. A warm, family-like atmosphere permeates the center, while the students' own enthusiastic desire to learn and improve their character fuels the daily educational activities. A teacher noted that they remain hopeful and committed to their mission, relying on this strong communal spirit to overcome the lack of formal funding.

Table 3. Summary of Inhibiting and Supporting Factors

Category	Inhibiting Factors	Supporting Factors
Internal / Student	Psychological trauma, negative social media influence, lack of prior schooling	High enthusiasm for learning, openness to guidance, active participation
External / Family	Minimal parental involvement due to long working hours, lack of home reinforcement	N/A
External / Institutional	Chronic financial constraints, lack of contextual moral teaching materials, legal uncertainty	Dedicated volunteer educators, family-like atmosphere, Embassy and School support

The final table synthesizes the complex ecosystem of inhibiting and supporting factors that influence the moral education of stateless children. It categorizes the challenges into internal student conditions and external structural limitations, contrasting them with the internal and institutional support mechanisms. The data highlights that while the students face severe psychosocial and legal vulnerabilities, the center's success relies heavily on non-material assets like teacher dedication and communal warmth. This synthesis underscores the necessity of a holistic support system to counteract the multifaceted barriers inherent in marginalized educational contexts.

The findings of this study reveal that Sanggar Bimbingan KAMUS functions as a critical educational sanctuary for stateless children who are systematically excluded from Malaysia's formal education system. This aligns with the recent findings of Loganathan, Haque et al (2025) and T. Loganathan et al (2021, 2022, 2023), who identified the lack of legal documentation, economic constraints, and systemic discrimination as primary barriers preventing non-citizen children from accessing formal schooling in Malaysia. Furthermore, Lwin et al (2025), Oyman Bozkurt (2025), and Yu (2025) emphasized the indispensable role of non-governmental and community-based organizations in bridging the educational gap for migrant children. However, while previous studies have predominantly focused on basic literacy and access, the current study extends this discourse by demonstrating that community learning centers like SB KAMUS go beyond academic remediation; they serve as vital spaces for profound moral and character formation, addressing the holistic developmental needs of marginalized youth in protracted displacement contexts (Mendenhall et al., 2025).

Regarding the specific moral values internalized such as polite communication, respect for authority, and honesty this study establishes that moral education acts as a vital mechanism for building resilience among stateless children. This finding strongly supports Pejic et al (2025) and Zhao & Brodsky (2025), who argued that education plays a pivotal role in constructing a positive self-identity and psychological resilience for stateless children facing systemic marginalization. Similarly, Farzana et al (2020) and Kok et al (2022) highlighted the severe psychosocial trauma, discrimination, and feelings of alienation experienced by stateless children in Malaysia. The current study advances this conversation by showing that the intentional internalization of Islamic moral values (*Akhlak*) directly counteracts these psychosocial vulnerabilities. By fostering a strong moral identity, the educational process provides these children with a sense of dignity and spiritual grounding that transcends their legal limbo, corroborating Ungar et al (2021) assertion that spirituality and moral frameworks are crucial for youth resilience in contexts of adversity.

The strategies employed by educators at SB KAMUS, particularly role modeling (*uswah hasanah*) and habituation (*ta'wid*), are central to the successful internalization of these moral values, a finding that is highly consistent with recent studies on Islamic character education. For instance, Nursobah et al (2025), Trisnantari et al (2026), and Wardati et al (2025) demonstrated that continuous habituation and teacher modeling are the most effective methods for developing Islamic character values among students. Similarly, Nursalim (2023) found that the internalization of religious character values relies heavily on exemplary behavior from educators and the reinforcement of a positive moral culture. The current study confirms the applicability of these Islamic pedagogical strategies even within a highly constrained, non-formal setting. However, it adds a nuanced layer by showing that in the context of stateless children, these strategies must be heavily supplemented by a deeply empathetic approach, as the students often lack consistent moral reinforcement at home due to their parents' demanding socioeconomic survival (Nurjanah et al., 2025).

A distinct and novel contribution of this research is the construction of a conceptual model where a humanistic educational relationship and psychological safety act as the absolute prerequisites for moral internalization. This finding diverges from conventional moral education models that often assume cognitive readiness or standard disciplinary compliance. Instead, it aligns closely with Sullivan & Simonson's (2024) systematic review on trauma-informed educational practices, which asserts that marginalized and displaced children require a foundation of psychological safety and empathetic relational trust before any effective moral or cognitive learning can occur. Furthermore, Manzano-Arrondo & Suárez-Guerrero (2023) highlighted that empathetic pedagogy in non-formal education empowers marginalized children by validating their lived experiences. The current study synthesizes these perspectives, proving that for stateless children, the teacher-student bond is not merely a pedagogical tool but a critical psychological anchor that transforms abstract moral rules into an internalized moral identity.

Finally, the inhibiting factors identified in this study such as minimal parental involvement, negative social media influence, and chronic financial instability reflect the broader structural vulnerabilities of migrant communities in Malaysia. These findings strongly corroborate Ganz (2025) and Park (2026), who critiqued the rigid citizenship laws and the resulting socioeconomic precarity that traps stateless and undocumented families in a cycle of marginalization. Additionally, Kaur & Arumugam (2023) noted that the implementation of inclusive education policies in Malaysia is severely hindered by systemic resistance and a lack of targeted support for undocumented migrants. The current study adds a micro-level pedagogical perspective to these macro-level policy critiques, illustrating how these structural deficits manifest directly in the classroom. The lack of parental supervision due to grueling work hours and the unregulated exposure to digital media create a constant tug-of-war for educators, proving that moral internalization in non-formal settings is not just an educational endeavor, but a continuous negotiation against profound systemic inequities (Kamaruzaman & Asnarulkhadi, 2021).

Conclusion

This study concludes that the internalization of moral values among stateless children at Sanggar Bimbingan KAMUS transcends basic behavioral conditioning, functioning instead as a vital mechanism for building moral identity and social resilience in the face of systemic marginalization. Through a synergistic combination of role modeling, habituation, empathetic advice, and academic integration, educators successfully instill core Islamic moral values specifically tailored to the psychosocial vulnerabilities of these children. Crucially, the

research constructs a novel theoretical framework—the *Theory of Moral Identity Formation of Stateless Children through Humanistic Educational Relationships*—which posits that a humanistic and empathetic educator-student bond is the fundamental prerequisite for establishing psychological safety. This secure environment enables the deep cognitive and affective internalization of moral values, ultimately empowering stateless children to forge a resilient moral identity that compensates for their lack of legal recognition and social liminality.

Based on these findings, it is strongly suggested that the Indonesian government, particularly the Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, streamline civil documentation for migrant children and formally integrate community-based learning centers into national educational protection programs to ensure their sustainability. Concurrently, the Malaysian government is urged to adopt more inclusive educational policies that guarantee basic educational rights for undocumented and stateless children, thereby mitigating the structural barriers that force them into the margins. For educators and non-governmental organizations, it is recommended to develop systematic, context-specific moral education modules and to actively foster collaborative partnerships with parents to ensure the continuity of moral reinforcement at home. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to conduct longitudinal or comparative studies across diverse non-formal educational settings to further validate the proposed theoretical model and explore the long-term impacts of moral identity formation on the life trajectories of stateless youth.

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