

Islamic Religious Education Teachers' Strategies in Integrating Islamic Character Values into the Learning Process

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ABSTRACT

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) plays a strategic role in shaping students' moral and spiritual character in formal education. However, the integration of Islamic character values into daily learning practices often faces various pedagogical and contextual challenges. This study aims to analyze the strategies employed by Islamic Religious Education teachers in integrating Islamic character values into the learning process. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews with IRE teachers, and documentation analysis. The findings reveal that teachers apply several key strategies, including the integration of character values into lesson planning, the use of exemplary behavior (*uswah hasanah*), habituation through religious routines, contextual learning methods, and reflective evaluation of students' attitudes and behaviors. These strategies are supported by interactive learning models and a positive school culture that reinforces Islamic values both inside and outside the classroom. The study also identifies inhibiting factors, such as limited instructional time and diverse student backgrounds, as well as supporting factors, including teacher commitment and institutional support. Overall, the integration of Islamic character values through systematic and contextual strategies contributes significantly to the development of students' religious attitudes and moral behavior. This study is expected to provide practical insights for educators in strengthening character-based Islamic education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education in essence does not only aim to transfer knowledge, but also to form the character and personality of students as a whole (Susanto, Ali, & Hidayat, 2024). In

the context of Indonesian national education, character building is one of the primary objectives, as stated in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which emphasizes that education functions to develop abilities and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation. This general fact demonstrates that character education is a fundamental element in the education system, not merely an addition to the learning process **(Syahrudin, Susanto, Ummah, Musyafa, & Isa, 2025)**. Amidst rapid globalization and technological advancements, education is required to produce a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also possesses strong moral, spiritual, and social strength. In the context of Islamic education, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a strategic role in instilling Islamic character values in students. These values include honesty, responsibility, discipline, tolerance, hard work, humility, and obedience to Allah SWT **(Qomarudin & Zuhri, 2025; Sukring, 2016; Susanto & Kiftiyah, 2025)**. Islamic Religious Education is not solely oriented toward mastering cognitive religious material, but also emphasizes the process of internalizing and actualizing Islamic values in everyday life. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning should ideally serve as the primary vehicle for developing students' Islamic character in a sustainable and contextual manner.

However, social facts on the ground demonstrate a gap between the ideal goals of Islamic Religious Education and the reality of its implementation in schools. Various social phenomena such as declining politeness, increasing intolerant behavior, low academic honesty, and weak social responsibility among students are still common. Many students possess theoretical religious knowledge but are unable to implement these values in real-life behavior. This situation indicates that the Islamic Religious Education learning process has not fully succeeded in effectively integrating Islamic character values into students' lives **(Safitri, Alnedral, Gusril, Sujana Wahyuri, & Ockta, 2024; Wahyu, Susanto, & Nur, 2023)**. One important factor influencing the successful integration of Islamic character values into learning is the role and strategies of Islamic Religious Education teachers. Islamic Religious Education teachers function not only as conveyors of material but also as role models (*uswah hasanah*), guides, and facilitators in the character-building process. The learning strategies used by teachers significantly determine the extent to which Islamic values can be internalized by students. Field evidence indicates that some teachers still tend to use a learning approach that is solely lecture-oriented and cognitively assessed, resulting in character values not being optimally integrated into the learning process.

The main issue that arises is how Islamic Religious Education teachers integrate Islamic character values into the learning process in a systematic, contextual, and sustainable manner. Other challenges faced by teachers include limited learning time,

heterogeneous student backgrounds, lack of school support, and the negative influence of digital media and promiscuity. If these issues are not addressed appropriately, it is feared that the goal of Islamic Religious Education as a means of developing Islamic character will not be optimally achieved (**Fatimah, Eliyanto, & Huda, 2022; Rahmad & Kibtiyah, 2022**). Therefore, a solution is needed in the form of strengthening Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning strategies oriented toward integrating Islamic character values. Teachers need to develop strategies that focus not only on delivering material but also on linking Islamic values to the real-life context of students. This strategy can be realized through character-based learning planning, the application of active and reflective learning methods, the habituation of religious behavior, teacher role models, and evaluations that encompass both affective and psychomotor aspects. With the right strategy, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is expected to be an effective instrument in shaping students' Islamic character.

Based on this background, this study uses a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach (**Huberman & Jhonny, 2014**). This method was chosen because it was considered capable of deeply exploring the strategies of Islamic Religious Education teachers in integrating Islamic character values into the learning process. Research data were collected through learning observations, in-depth interviews with Islamic Religious Education teachers, and analysis of documentation such as Lesson Implementation Plans (RPP) and evaluation tools. This approach allowed researchers to understand the actual practice of Islamic Religious Education learning as well as the supporting and inhibiting factors in the integration of Islamic character values. The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze the strategies used by Islamic Religious Education teachers in integrating Islamic character values into the learning process, identify supporting and inhibiting factors in their implementation, and evaluate the implications of these strategies for the formation of student character. The results of this study are expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of character-based Islamic Religious Education studies, as well as practical contributions for teachers and educational institutions in improving the quality of Islamic Religious Education learning.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus, which places Islamic Religious Education teachers' strategies at the center of the analysis of the integration of Islamic character values into the holistic learning process. This research not only examines aspects of planning and learning methods but also highlights the practice of role models, habituation, and character evaluation, which have often received less attention in previous research. Therefore, this research is expected to provide a new

perspective and an applicable strategic model for strengthening Islamic character education in schools.

2. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type, which aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the strategies of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in integrating Islamic character values into the learning process (**Huberman & Jhonny, 2014**). A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the meanings, patterns, and actual practices of teachers in everyday learning contexts. The subjects of this study were Islamic Religious Education teachers, while the object of the study focused on the learning strategies used to integrate Islamic character values (**Creswell, 2018**). Data collection techniques included observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were used to directly observe the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning process and the implementation of character values in the classroom. Interviews were conducted to obtain in-depth information regarding the views, experiences, and strategies of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers. Documentation included analysis of Lesson Implementation Plans (RPPs), teaching materials, and evaluation instruments.

The data analysis technique uses the Miles and Huberman interactive model which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (**Mattehew B. Miles, A Michael Huberman, 2014**). Data validity was maintained through source and technique triangulation. With this method, the research is expected to produce valid and comprehensive findings related to strategies for integrating Islamic character values into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The research results show that the integration of Islamic character values into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is carried out in a planned, contextual, and sustainable manner. PAI teachers integrate character values from the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages of learning. Furthermore, the success of the integration of Islamic character values is influenced by supporting and inhibiting factors originating from within the teacher, the school environment, and the students. The research findings are summarized in Table 1 below.

No	Aspects of Findings	Description of Findings
1	Learning Planning	Islamic Religious Education teachers integrate Islamic character values from the planning stage by including spiritual and social aspects in learning objectives. The values of religiosity, honesty, responsibility, discipline, and tolerance are explicitly outlined in the lesson plans.
2	Implementation of Learning	Character values are integrated through contextual learning, role models (uswah hasanah), the practice of worship, and the reinforcement of values through discussion and reflection. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) material is linked to the realities of students' lives.
3	Learning Evaluation	Evaluation not only emphasizes cognitive aspects, but also assessment of student attitudes and behavior through direct observation and attitude journals.
4	Supporting Factors	Commitment of Islamic Education teachers, school religious culture, and support for school policies and programs that support strengthening Islamic character.
5	Inhibiting Factors	Limited learning time, heterogeneity of character and background of students, and the influence of the social environment and digital media.

Discussion

Islamic Religious Education Teachers' Strategies in Integrating Islamic Character Values in the Learning Planning and Implementation Stages

The results of the study show that the learning planning stage has a very fundamental role in the success of integrating Islamic character values in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects (**Mujahid, 2021**). Learning planning is not merely understood as an administrative activity, but rather as a strategic foundation for determining the direction, goals, and process of internalizing values in students. Islamic Religious Education teachers consciously and systematically incorporate Islamic character values into the components of learning planning, particularly in the formulation of learning objectives, the selection of materials, methods, and learning activities (**Muhyani, Yusup, & Yono, 2022**). Values such as religiosity, honesty, responsibility, discipline, tolerance, and social awareness are designed to be directly integrated with the core competencies and basic competencies that students must achieve. The integration of Islamic character values in the planning stage is

reflected in the development of Learning Implementation Plans (RPPs) that explicitly include spiritual and social dimensions. Teachers not only determine cognitive outcomes but also design success indicators related to changes in student attitudes and behavior. This type of planning demonstrates that character education is not positioned as additional content, but rather as an inherent part of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning process (**Kartiwan, Alkarimah, & Ulfah, 2023**). This finding is in line with the views of character education experts who emphasize that character formation must be designed systematically from the start so that it can be implemented consistently and sustainably in learning practices.

During the implementation phase of learning, Islamic Religious Education teachers employ various contextual and participatory strategies. Learning is not only oriented toward delivering religious material in a normative manner, but also connecting Islamic values to the realities of students' lives (**Achmat, 2018; Akbar & Barni, 2022**). Teachers use concrete examples relevant to students' daily experiences, such as practicing honesty in the school environment, being responsible in completing assignments, and being tolerant when interacting with friends from different backgrounds. This contextual approach helps students understand that Islamic values are not merely abstract concepts but rather relevant and applicable guidelines for life (**Mujahid, 2021; Roni Susanto, 2024**).

In addition to the contextual approach, participatory learning is also an important strategy for integrating Islamic character values. Teachers provide space for students to discuss, ask questions, and reflect on the values they are learning. Through discussion and reflection, students are encouraged to think critically and assess their own behavior based on Islamic values. This process encourages active student involvement and strengthens internal awareness of the importance of Islamic character in their lives. Thus, Islamic Religious Education learning is no longer one-way but becomes a dialogical process that encourages deeper internalization of values.

Teachers' exemplary behavior (*uswah hasanah*) is the most dominant and effective strategy in implementing learning. Islamic Religious Education teachers not only act as instructors but also as role models for students. Discipline in starting and ending lessons, polite speech, honesty in actions, and consistency in practicing Islamic teachings are concrete examples directly observed by students (**DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Siswanto & Soeharno, 2024**). This role model has a strong influence because students tend to imitate the behavior they see directly, especially from teachers who possess moral and religious authority. The role model strategy also strengthens the integration of Islamic character values in the affective and

psychomotor domains. Students not only understand Islamic values cognitively but also experience them emotionally and practice them in real life. For example, teachers' habits of patience and respect for students' opinions encourage the creation of a conducive learning atmosphere full of noble moral values. In this context, teachers function as living and authentic models of character learning.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that the integration of Islamic character values in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning cannot be separated from the quality of planning and consistency of learning implementation. Thorough planning enables teachers to design learning oriented toward character building, while contextual, participatory implementation, supported by teacher role models, strengthens the process of internalizing values in students. The comprehensive integration of Islamic character values during the planning and implementation stages of learning makes Islamic Religious Education not only a means of transferring religious knowledge, but also a strategic instrument in shaping students' Islamic character holistically and sustainably.

Habituation and Evaluation as Instruments for Strengthening Islamic Character Values

Research results show that religious habituation is one of the most effective instruments in strengthening the integration of Islamic character values in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. Habituation is understood as an educational process carried out repeatedly, planned, and consistently so that the values instilled are not only cognitively understood but also embedded in the attitudes and behavior of students (**Neuman, 2014; Syahrudin & Gunawan, 2025**). The practice of religious habits carried out by Islamic Religious Education teachers, such as reading prayers before and after learning, reading and memorizing verses of the Qur'an, saying greetings, and implementing an attitude of mutual respect, are routine activities that create a religious atmosphere in the classroom environment.

This religious habituation serves as a means of internalizing Islamic character values through direct experience. Students not only hear explanations about the importance of religious values but also actively engage in daily religious practices. Through repeated and continuous practice, values such as discipline, responsibility, politeness, and social awareness gradually shape students' behavioral patterns. These findings confirm that the formation of Islamic character cannot be achieved instantly or through a purely theoretical approach, but rather requires a long process that is carried out consistently and continuously (**Ohy, Kawung, & Zakarias, 2020; Susanto, 2025**).

In addition to habituation, learning evaluation is an important instrument in strengthening Islamic character values. Research results show that Islamic Religious Education teachers conducted evaluations that were not only oriented towards cognitive aspects but also included assessments of student attitudes and behavior. Attitude assessments were conducted through direct observation of student behavior during the learning process, social interactions in the classroom, and participation in religious activities. Teachers also used attitude journals and reflective notes to continuously record student character development.

This attitude-based evaluation provides a more comprehensive picture of the success of integrating Islamic character values into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. Through this evaluation, teachers can identify changes in students' attitudes, both positive and those requiring further development. Furthermore, attitude evaluation also serves as a means of reflection for teachers in assessing the effectiveness of the learning strategies implemented. Thus, evaluation serves not only as a tool for measuring learning outcomes but also as an instrument for strengthening and continuous improvement in the process of Islamic character formation (Islam, 2022).

Overall, consistent religious practices and comprehensive learning evaluation complement each other in strengthening the integration of Islamic character values. Practice shapes character through repeated, concrete practices, while evaluation ensures that the process aligns with educational objectives. With this approach, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning can optimally serve as a means of strengthening students' Islamic character, which is reflected in their daily attitudes and behavior.

Supporting Factors, Inhibitors, and Implications of Islamic Character Values Integration Strategy

The results of this study indicate that the success of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers' strategies in integrating Islamic character values does not stand alone, but is influenced by various interrelated internal and external factors. The main supporting factors come from within the teacher, particularly the commitment and professional awareness of PAI teachers in carrying out their roles not only as teachers but also as character educators. Teachers who have a strong understanding of the urgency of Islamic character education tend to be more consistent in integrating these values into every stage of learning, including planning, implementation, and evaluation (Kharirah, 2012; Rakhman & Fatima, 2025).

In addition to teacher commitment, a school's religious culture is a significant supporting factor. A school environment that fosters religious practices, such as the habituation of worship, the application of Islamic ethics in social interactions, and the reinforcement of moral values in various school activities, provides a conducive space for the internalization of Islamic character. This religious culture reinforces the moral messages conveyed in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, as students experience consistency between what is taught in the classroom and what they practice in their daily school life. Institutional policy support, such as character-based school programs and regulations that encourage the development of religious attitudes, also plays a crucial role in strengthening the implementation of PAI teacher strategies (Yahuda, Susanto, Widodo, & Kolis, 2024).

However, this study also revealed a number of inhibiting factors that influence the effectiveness of integrating Islamic character values. Limited time for Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is a major challenge, as teachers must balance the demands of achieving curriculum material with the process of internalizing character values, which requires time and consistency. Furthermore, the heterogeneity of student backgrounds, including family environment, religious understanding, and social customs, also influences the success of Islamic character formation. These differences in background require teachers to implement more adaptive and contextual strategies so that Islamic values can be accepted by all students.

Another inhibiting factor stems from the influence of the social environment and digital media outside of school. Students' uncontrolled access to digital media often introduces values that conflict with Islamic teachings, such as consumerism, individualism, and impolite behavior. This situation can undermine the internalization of Islamic character values that have been developed in schools. Therefore, the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers is becoming increasingly complex, not only as educators in the classroom but also as moral guides who help students address the moral challenges of the digital age.

The implications of this research's findings indicate that the integration of Islamic character values requires strong synergy between various parties. Teachers, schools, parents, and the community must work together to build an educational ecosystem that supports the sustainable strengthening of Islamic character. Schools need to strengthen religious policies and culture, parents play a role in providing role models and supervision within the family environment, and the community supports the creation of a social environment aligned with Islamic values. With this synergy, the strategy of integrating Islamic character values into Islamic Religious

Education (PAI) learning can be implemented more effectively and sustainably, and have a tangible impact on the development of students' Islamic character.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussion, it can be concluded that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers have a strategic role in integrating Islamic character values into the learning process. This integration is carried out systematically from the planning stage, through implementation, and through evaluation. During the planning stage, Islamic character values are explicitly formulated in learning objectives and activities. During the implementation stage, teachers apply a contextual, participatory approach, and exemplary behavior (*uswah hasanah*) that enables students to internalize Islamic values cognitively, affectively, and psychomotorically. Consistent religious habits and learning evaluations that include attitude assessment have proven to be important instruments in strengthening the formation of students' Islamic character. The success of this strategy is supported by teacher commitment, the school's religious culture, and institutional policy support, but also faces challenges such as time constraints, student heterogeneity, and the influence of the environment and digital media. Therefore, the integration of Islamic character values requires ongoing synergy between teachers, schools, parents, and the community to optimally achieve the goals of Islamic education.

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