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## Analyzing the integration of Islamic character values into primary school curricula in Aceh

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the integration of Islamic character values into the primary school curriculum in Pidie Jaya, Aceh, and to propose a conceptual framework for systematically embedding these values within educational practices. A qualitative case study approach was employed, involving in-depth interviews with school principals, teachers, education officers, and students, as well as classroom and school observations, and the analysis of documents such as lesson plans, syllabi, and school programs. The findings show that Islamic values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, religiosity, cooperation, respect, and cleanliness are integrated across subjects, daily routines, and school culture. Teachers play a pivotal role through contextual teaching, role modeling, and practices like prayers and Qur'anic recitation. Strong school leadership, governance, and collaboration with parents and community institutions further support the development of character. However, challenges persist, including variations in teacher competence, limited resources in rural areas, and inconsistent reinforcement at home. The study recommends strengthening teacher professional development, enhancing parental engagement, and integrating digital moral literacy.

### Keywords

Curriculum integration, Islamic character education, primary education, qualitative study, school culture

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## Introduction

Character education has gained significant prominence globally over the past decade as societies increasingly confront challenges related to youth behavior, digital exposure, and shifts in moral values. Once primarily viewed as academic institutions, schools now serve as social environments that impart ethical norms and values. In predominantly Muslim countries such as Indonesia, the integration of Islamic values into character education is not only a moral imperative but also a means of fostering cultural identity. Consequently, numerous educational systems, especially in areas with robust Islamic traditions, have integrated Islamic character values directly into school curricula, particularly at the primary level, where the groundwork for moral development is established.

Recent studies have highlighted the critical importance of the early years of education in shaping prosocial behavior, emotional regulation, empathy, and religious commitment. Specifically, the primary school phase plays a crucial role in fostering the internalization of ethical values, a process that continues into adolescence and adulthood. Several studies have shown that early exposure to values such as honesty, responsibility, and respect fosters the development of positive behaviors in both social and academic settings (Hidayat et al., 2022; Setiawan, 2021). These years provide an opportunity for educators to shape students' behavior through both explicit and implicit instruction, a practice particularly relevant in Muslim-majority contexts, where religious teachings play an integral role in character formation.

In Indonesia, the curriculum has increasingly emphasized the integration of moral and religious values across various learning domains, a shift largely in response to the growing concerns about behavioral issues among students. These issues include the decline in respect for authority, rising school misconduct, and the increasing influence of digital media, which has significantly impacted the moral reasoning processes of children (Kim & Lee, 2023). In this context, Islamic character education has been promoted as a holistic approach that not only aims to enhance cognitive skills but also addresses spiritual, emotional, and ethical development in alignment with Islamic teachings. Furthermore, local regulations in regions like Aceh, which hold special autonomy status, have formalized the inclusion of Islamic character education across all educational levels, mandating the integration of Islamic values in the curriculum (Sulaiman & Yusuf, 2020).

Despite the support for this initiative at the policy level, many schools struggle to effectively integrate Islamic values into their curricula. While some schools have adopted symbolic approaches, such as adding more religious activities or offering additional lessons, the integration of these values into everyday classroom instruction remains inconsistent. Teachers often face difficulties in translating abstract Islamic moral principles into practical teaching strategies that can be applied across subjects such as mathematics, science, and language (Rahmawati & Hasan, 2022). Furthermore, the absence of structured frameworks hinders teachers' ability to integrate Islamic values into lesson plans, assessments, and classroom interactions. This obstacle has led to variations in how Islamic character education is implemented, resulting in inconsistent outcomes for students' moral and behavioral development (Nasir & Azmi, 2023).

Another challenge is the disconnection between national curriculum policies and local efforts aimed at fostering Islamic character development. Although national policies provide flexibility, many local governments and schools lack the technical support necessary to align these moral frameworks with competency-based curricula. Scholars have pointed out that, without an integrated model that connects key curriculum components—such as objectives, content, pedagogy, and evaluation—character education will remain fragmented and largely reliant on individual teacher initiative (Hassan & Abdullah, 2021). This gap necessitates the development of a structured and cohesive model that bridges the divide between policy aspirations and actual classroom practices.

Recent literature offers several important insights into the integration of Islamic character education, though notable gaps remain. Scholars have increasingly focused on the role of Islamic education in shaping student character, strengthening cultural identity, and addressing contemporary societal challenges (Wahyudi & Sholikhah, 2022). Additionally, studies emphasize the importance of integrating moral values across both curricular and extracurricular activities, rather than isolating them within religious subjects alone (Othman & Ali, 2020). Innovative pedagogical approaches, such as project-based Islamic learning, moral role modeling, and digital-based Islamic learning materials, have been introduced to improve the effectiveness of character education (Yuniarti & Putra, 2023). However, there remains a lack of comprehensive models that specifically address the integration of these values within primary school curricula. Much of the existing research focuses on case studies, descriptive narratives, or theoretical discussions, rather than providing replicable frameworks or validated models for curriculum integration.

This research is crucial for several reasons. First, it addresses the need for a systematic and structured framework for integrating Islamic character values into primary school curricula. Second, it contributes to the body of knowledge by proposing a conceptual model that integrates the curricular, pedagogical, and behavioral aspects of character education. Third, the study provides practical guidance for policymakers, school administrators, and teachers involved in implementing Islamic character education policies in primary schools. This research seeks to enhance the discourse on the meaningful, systematic, and sustainable integration of Islamic character education within primary school systems by synthesizing evidence from recent studies and anchoring the proposed model in contemporary curriculum theory.

A conceptual model for integrating Islamic character values into primary school curricula is proposed in this study. This study bases the model on four key components: (1) value identification, (2) curriculum embedding, (3) pedagogical enactment, and (4) behavioral evaluation. These components work together to position Islamic values as foundational elements that are interwoven with curriculum objectives, learning materials, pedagogy, and classroom culture. The model aims to provide a comprehensive approach to integrating character education, emphasizing the need for a holistic and coordinated effort involving teachers, school leadership, and the broader community.

The significance of this study lies not only in its contribution to the academic field but also in its practical implications for improving the implementation of Islamic character education in primary schools. By offering a clear framework for integrating Islamic values into curriculum design, this research provides educators with the tools and insights needed to

enhance character formation in students, fostering a generation that is not only academically competent but also ethically grounded and spiritually aware.

### **Methodology**

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the integration of Islamic character values into the primary school curriculum in Pidie Jaya, Aceh. The choice of qualitative research was based on its ability to provide a profound understanding of social phenomena, educational practices, and value-formation processes within their natural contexts. This approach is particularly suitable for examining character education, as moral values and behaviors are socially constructed and deeply ingrained in cultural, religious, and institutional contexts. Through a qualitative approach, this research aimed to uncover how Islamic character values are conceptualized, translated, and enacted within curriculum planning, classroom practices, and school culture.

### ***Research design***

A case study design was chosen for this research to allow an in-depth, contextually grounded examination of the integration of Islamic character curriculum in real-world school settings. Case study research is a widely used method in educational research, as it enables a comprehensive exploration of educational programs, curriculum implementation, and institutional practices (Creswell & Poth, 2021; Hennink et al., 2020). This design was particularly well-suited to understanding how Islamic character education is implemented across diverse educational contexts and how it interacts with other institutional factors, such as school culture, leadership, and community involvement.

The research was conducted in three primary schools in Pidie Jaya, Aceh: SDN 3 Ulim, SDN 8 Meureudu, and SDN 26 Bandar Baru. These schools were purposefully selected to ensure diverse representation of geographic settings, including urban, semi-urban, and rural contexts. Additionally, the selection was based on the schools' formal mandate to implement Islamic character education, providing relevant context for the study. Purposeful sampling, a technique commonly employed in qualitative research, was utilized to select information-rich cases that could provide comprehensive details about the processes and challenges of integrating Islamic character values into the curriculum (Hennink et al., 2020).

### ***Participants***

The participants in this study included school principals, Islamic character education teachers, classroom teachers, curriculum coordinators, local Education Office officials, and students. This broad selection of participants allowed for multiple perspectives on the implementation of character education. The study included 30 people: 3 school principals, 6 Islamic character teachers, 6 classroom teachers, 3 curriculum coordinators, 3 local Education Office officials, and 9 students.

### *Data collection*

Data were collected using three main qualitative techniques: in-depth interviews, classroom and school observations, and document analysis. These methods were selected to capture a holistic view of the integration process, addressing different layers of educational experience.

### *In-depth interviews*

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with school principals, teachers, and education officers to explore their perceptions, experiences, and strategies for integrating Islamic character values into the curriculum. Semi-structured interviews are particularly effective in qualitative research, as they provide both structure and flexibility, enabling participants to express their views freely while also allowing the researcher to probe emerging issues (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2021). The interview questions focused on several key areas: the role of Islamic character values in curriculum design, teaching strategies for integrating values, challenges encountered during the process, and the involvement of stakeholders, such as parents and the community, in supporting character education. The interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, and participants were encouraged to share personal experiences and reflections on the integration process.

### *Classroom and school observations*

Classroom and school observations were conducted to capture real-time interactions, teaching practices, religious routines, and student behavior related to character education. These observations provided an opportunity to examine how the curriculum was enacted in practice and how Islamic character values were integrated into the school's daily routines. Observations were conducted over a 4-week period, during which the researcher attended various classes, religious activities (e.g., prayers and Qur'anic recitation), and school events (e.g., morning assemblies and community involvement programs). The focus of the observations was to assess how teachers modeled Islamic values, how students engaged with them, and the extent to which they were embedded in the school culture. Observational data were recorded in field notes and analyzed for recurring themes and patterns.

### *Document analysis*

Document analysis was used to examine the curriculum materials and institutional documents related to Islamic character education. These documents included lesson plans (RPP), syllabi, teaching materials, assessment instruments, school regulations, and records of religious programs. Document analysis is particularly useful in educational research, as it reveals the formalized policies and practices that govern teaching and curriculum design (Creswell & Poth, 2021). The analysis aimed to identify how Islamic character values were explicitly articulated in curriculum objectives, lesson planning, and assessment frameworks. By

examining these documents, the researcher gained insight into the extent to which Islamic values were integrated into the formal curriculum and compared the findings to the actual teaching practices observed in the classroom.

### *Data analysis*

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model proposed by Miles et al. (2014), which involves three main steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved transcribing interview recordings, condensing field observation notes, and selecting relevant document excerpts about the integration of Islamic character values. The reduced data were then organized into thematic categories that aligned with the research questions. Data display involved organizing the reduced data into matrices, charts, and narrative patterns to facilitate visualization and interpretation of the findings. Conclusion drawing involved identifying recurring themes, relationships, and theoretical implications connecting curriculum design, teacher behavior, and student character outcomes.

To ensure the rigor and trustworthiness of the analysis, data triangulation was conducted by comparing the findings from interviews, observations, and documents. Triangulation is a widely used qualitative research technique that enhances the credibility of findings by cross-checking data from multiple sources (Creswell & Poth, 2021). Additionally, member checking was conducted with selected participants to verify the accuracy of the findings and ensure that the interpretations reflected the participants' perspectives. Peer debriefing with fellow researchers was also used to assess the validity and reliability of the findings.

### *Ethical considerations*

Ethical considerations were a central aspect of this study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to the commencement of data collection. Participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential and their identities would be anonymized in all reports and publications. All interviews were recorded with the participants' consent, and their data were securely stored to ensure privacy. Additionally, the study adhered to ethical guidelines for conducting research with human subjects, as outlined by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. The research process was transparent, and participants were informed about the study's purpose, how their data would be used, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

While this study provides valuable insights into the integration of Islamic character values in primary schools, it is not without limitations. The study was conducted in three schools in one region (Pidie Jaya, Aceh), and the findings may not be fully generalizable to other regions or countries. Additionally, the sample size was relatively small, limiting the scope of the conclusions. Further research could expand the study to include a larger sample of schools across different regions and educational contexts, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the integration process. Moreover, the study primarily focused on the perspectives of teachers and school leaders; future research could include the views of parents and community members to explore their roles in supporting character education. The methodology employed in this study provides a comprehensive approach to understanding the integration of Islamic character values into the primary school curriculum. By employing

qualitative methods, including interviews, observations, and document analysis, this study offers a comprehensive understanding of the processes, challenges, and outcomes of character education. The findings from this study contribute to the ongoing discourse on the role of education in moral and spiritual development, particularly within Islamic contexts, and provide practical insights for educators and policymakers looking to enhance the effectiveness of character education programs in primary schools.

## Results

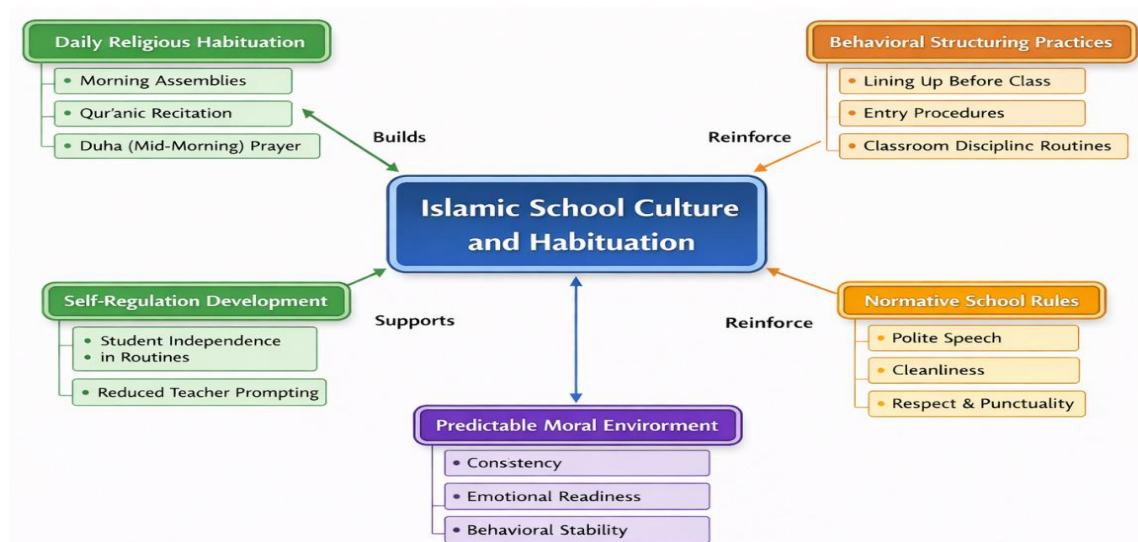
### *Curriculum foundations for Islamic character integration*

The integration of Islamic character values into the primary school curriculum in Pidie Jaya is rooted in both national and regional educational policies, which position character formation as a core educational mandate. Analysis of curriculum documents revealed that Islamic values are presented as cross-cutting competencies to be integrated into all subjects rather than treated as isolated religious content.

Interviews with curriculum coordinators and teachers highlighted that lesson plans consistently incorporate character indicators alongside cognitive learning objectives. One curriculum coordinator emphasized, “Every subject must carry Islamic values; they are not additional elements, but part of the expected learning outcomes.” Consequently, instructional planning systematically incorporates values like honesty, discipline, responsibility, respect, cleanliness, cooperation, gratitude, and social care.

Further document analysis revealed the frequent use of Qur'anic verses and Hadith to contextualize academic content. For instance, science lessons often connect environmental topics to the concept of humans as *khalifah* (stewards of the earth), while mathematics lessons incorporate examples of zakat (almsgiving) and fair distribution. These practices were consistently observed across the three schools, demonstrating a shared curriculum orientation towards the integration of Islamic character values.

**Figure 1.** *Curriculum foundations of Islamic character integration*



The model shown in Figure 1 illustrates the foundational components of integrating Islamic character values, including value identification, curriculum embedding, and pedagogical enactment, which support the development of student character across various subjects.

### *Teacher strategies in embedding Islamic character values*

Teachers utilized various pedagogical strategies to embed Islamic character values in classroom instruction. Observations revealed that most lessons began with greetings, collective prayers (*doa*), and short Qur’anic recitations. Teachers considered these routines integral to their instructional preparation, rather than separate religious activities.

Throughout the learning process, teachers integrated values through storytelling, questioning techniques, contextual examples, and verbal reinforcement. For instance, in language classes, students had to write and discuss prophetic stories that stressed honesty, kindness, and responsibility. Social studies lessons often addressed themes such as mutual assistance, zakat, and social solidarity, directly linking Islamic values to social interactions and community life.

Teacher behavior was a key element in value integration. Observations indicated that teachers consistently modeled punctuality, patience, respectful communication, and fairness. Students were observed to respond positively to such behavior, especially in situations involving discipline and peer interactions. Across all three schools, teachers recognized that their conduct served as an implicit instructional tool for character development, illustrating the value of role modeling in character education.

**Figure 2.** *Teacher pedagogical strategies in embedding Islamic character values*

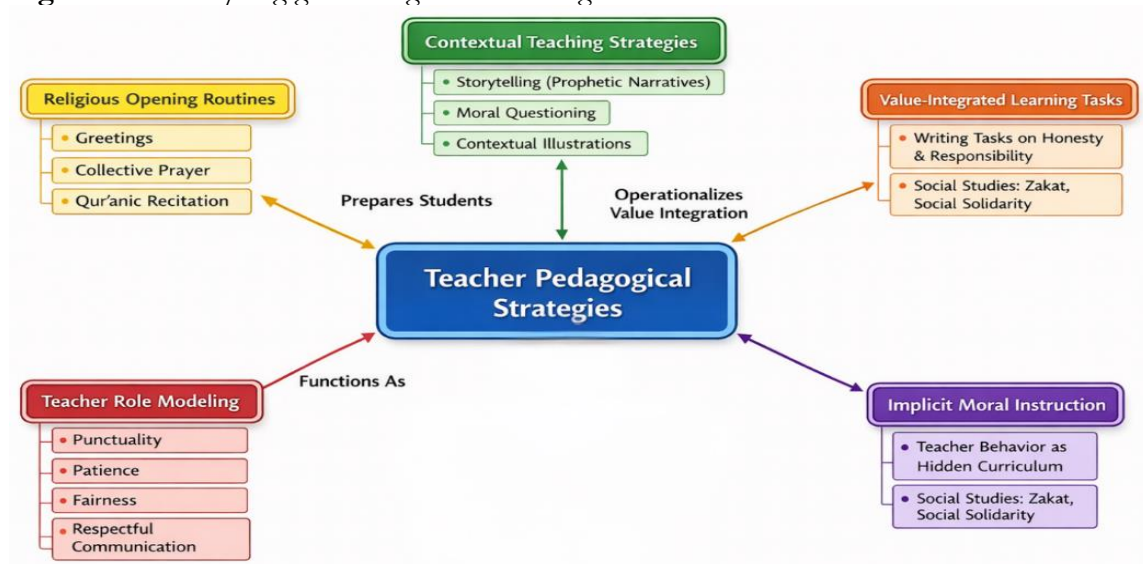


Figure 2 illustrates the key pedagogical strategies teachers employ to embed Islamic values in the classroom, including storytelling, Qur’anic recitation, and behavioral modeling.

### *School culture and daily routines*

School culture played a central role in reinforcing Islamic values of character. It was clear from the observations that all schools followed the same daily religious routines, such as morning assemblies, group Qur'anic recitation, dhuha prayers, and structured ways for students to enter the classroom. Students were observed lining up before entering classrooms and participating in recitation activities without direct teacher prompting, reflecting the habituation of these practices.

School leaders explained that these routines were intentionally designed to regulate students' behavior and emotional readiness before academic instruction. Observational data indicated that students consistently followed established procedures, demonstrating an increase in self-regulation over time.

Clear school rules displayed in classrooms further reinforced behavioral expectations. These rules emphasized the importance of polite speech, respect for teachers and peers, cleanliness, punctuality, and adherence to religious practices. Teachers regularly referenced these expectations during classroom interactions and school activities, fostering a structured, predictable environment conducive to character formation.

**Figure 3.** *School culture and daily routines supporting character formation*

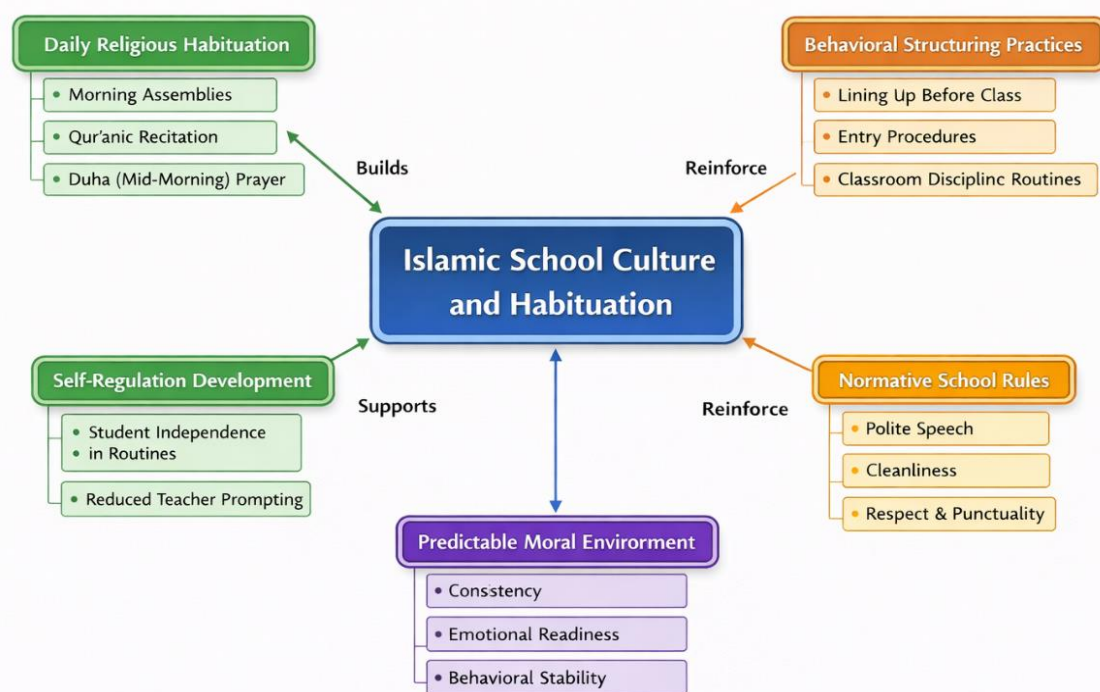


Figure 3 shows how school culture and daily routines support the internalization of Islamic character values. It highlights the importance of daily religious practices and classroom routines in reinforcing these values.

### *Stakeholder roles in supporting curriculum integration*

Multiple stakeholders played a role in supporting the integration of Islamic character values. Teachers served as the primary implementers of the curriculum, while principals acted as supervisors responsible for ensuring alignment between lesson planning, classroom practices, and institutional goals. Principals reported conducting regular briefings and monitoring lesson plans to reinforce the inclusion of character indicators.

Community involvement varied across schools. Local religious leaders contributed through guest lectures, Qur'anic literacy programs, and support for religious routines, particularly in rural schools. In some cases, community elders assisted in supervising morning activities and reinforcing school norms.

Parental involvement, however, was found to be inconsistent. Interviews indicated that some parents actively reinforced religious routines and behavioral expectations at home, while others faced constraints such as work demands or limited time. This variability led to inconsistent reinforcement of character values beyond the school environment.

**Figure 4.** *Stakeholder collaboration in supporting curriculum integration*

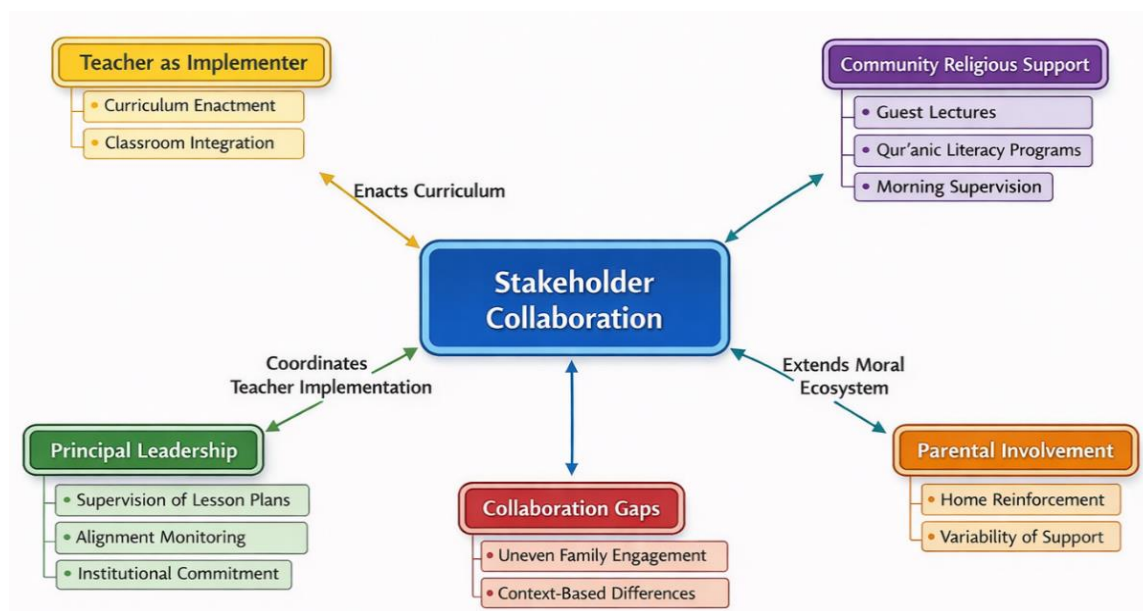


Figure 4 depicts the collaborative roles of various stakeholders in the integration process, including teachers, principals, parents, and community leaders. It emphasizes the importance of a shared effort to strengthen character education both within and beyond the school.

### *Challenges in curriculum integration of Islamic character values*

Despite the systematic incorporation of Islamic values into the curriculum, several challenges were identified. One major challenge was teacher competency. Not all teachers

possessed sufficient pedagogical skills to integrate Islamic values meaningfully across academic subjects. Some teachers relied on general moral statements rather than applying contextualized instructional strategies to embed values within their teaching.

Limited learning resources also constrained the implementation process, particularly in rural schools. Shortages of Qur'anic texts, instructional media, and reference materials reduced opportunities for varied, engaging, value-based instruction.

Another challenge was the influence of digital media on students. Teachers reported that some students' behaviors, influenced by online content, conflicted with the values taught in school. This digital influence made it more challenging to consistently teach Islamic values in the classroom.

Finally, inconsistent reinforcement of values at home caused a major problem. When parents did not actively support religious routines or behavioral expectations, teachers reported difficulties sustaining character development initiatives, leading to fragmented value internalization.

Figure 5. Challenges in the integration of Islamic character values

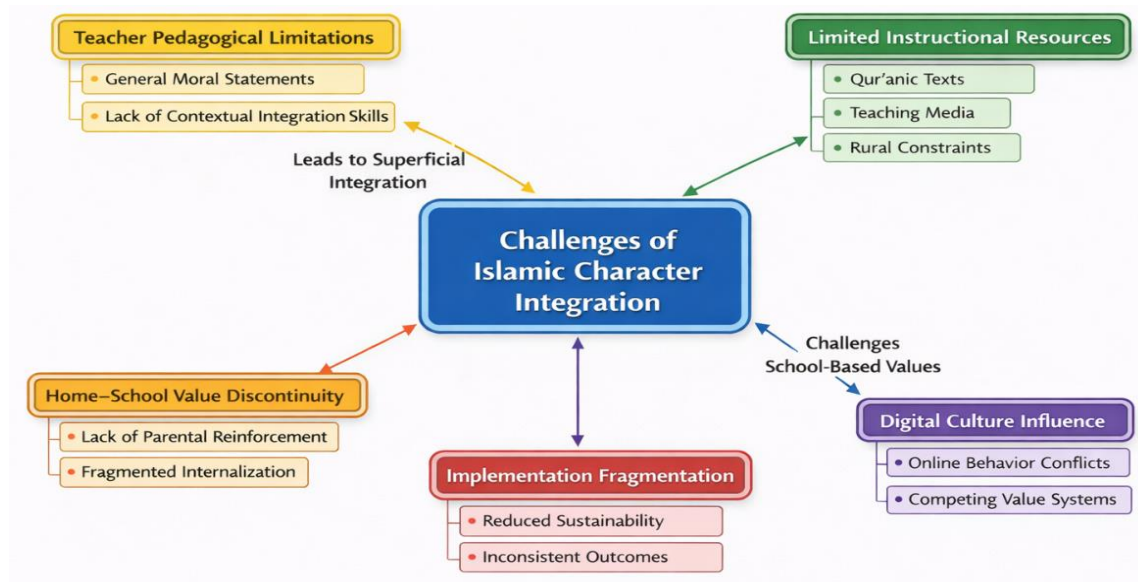


Figure 5 highlights the challenges in integrating Islamic character values, including teacher competency, resource limitations, the influence of digital media, and inconsistent reinforcement in the home environment.

## Discussions

The findings of this study provide substantial evidence that integrating Islamic character values in primary schools is most effective when embedded holistically across curriculum design, instructional practices, school culture, and stakeholder collaboration. Rather than positioning character education as an isolated subject or supplementary activity, the schools in

Pidie Jaya demonstrate an integrated model in which the moral, spiritual, and academic dimensions of learning mutually reinforce one another. This approach aligns with recent scholarship emphasizing that sustainable character education requires systemic integration at both curricular and institutional levels (Alfani et al., 2024; Ayu et al., 2023; Safitri, 2023).

### *Holistic integration of character education*

The incorporation of Islamic character values across all subjects bolsters the assertion that character education ought to be regarded as a collection of interdisciplinary competencies rather than as discrete instructional material. The systematic inclusion of values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, respect, cooperation, and cleanliness within subjects like mathematics, science, language, and social studies reflects a holistic curricular philosophy. This approach not only enhances the learning of moral values but also ensures they are continuously reinforced across different subjects. This finding corroborates Alhamuddin and Murniati (2024), who argue that character integration becomes meaningful only when values are aligned with cognitive learning objectives. Similarly, Alfariy and Iswandi (2023) emphasize that confining character education to religious subjects' risks marginalizing moral learning and reducing its relevance to students' broader academic experiences. By embedding these values across academic disciplines, schools can ensure that character education is an integral part of the overall learning process rather than treated as an isolated aspect of religious instruction.

Furthermore, this study demonstrates the value of curriculum adaptation at the local level. The combination of the national curriculum with a locally developed Islamic character curriculum allows schools to respond to regional sociocultural and religious contexts while maintaining alignment with national educational standards. This adaptability ensures that Islamic character education is not only contextually relevant but also resonates with students' lived religious and cultural realities. This supports Hassan and Abdullah's (2021) assertion that curriculum contextualization strengthens students' moral engagement by linking educational content to their personal and community experiences. In Aceh, where Islamic values are deeply embedded in the social fabric, this alignment enhances the legitimacy and acceptance of character education initiatives. It is evident that integrating local cultural and religious norms within the national framework fosters a more inclusive and effective approach to character education, making it more relevant to the students' daily lives.

### *Teacher agency and role modeling*

A key finding of this study is the central role of teacher agency in the successful integration of Islamic character values. Teachers are not merely implementers of a prescribed curriculum; they are active mediators who interpret and enact character values through both pedagogy and personal conduct. Observational and interview data reveal that teacher role modeling—manifested through behaviors such as punctuality, respectful communication, patience, and moral consistency—functions as an informal yet powerful pedagogical strategy. This finding reinforces Safitri's (2023) conclusion that teacher behavior significantly influences students' internalization of values, especially at the primary level, where imitation remains a dominant mode of learning. Teachers serve as exemplars of the values they seek to instill in

their students, and their behavior sets a powerful example for students to emulate. [Setiawan and Fahyuni \(2024\)](#) similarly highlight that Qur'anic-based pedagogical approaches are most effective when teachers themselves embody the moral principles they teach.

In addition to teacher modeling, the study indicates that structured habituation practices within school culture play a decisive role in character formation. Daily routines such as collective prayers, Qur'anic recitation, polite greetings, and cleanliness duties provide repeated behavioral cues that gradually shape students' dispositions. These practices go beyond episodic moral instruction and instead embed values through consistent, daily routines. This aligns with [Ayu et al. \(2023\)](#), who argue that character education is fundamentally a process of habit formation rather than sporadic moral instruction. Repeated exposure to moral practices within predictable routines allows values to become internalized as part of students' identities. The study's findings are consistent with [Fahrurrozi et al. \(2023\)](#), who found that sustained habituation in Islamic educational settings significantly strengthens discipline and moral awareness. Establishing predictable routines helps students internalize the values being taught, making them integral to their behavioral norms and attitudes.

### *The role of school culture and governance*

School governance and leadership also play a crucial role in the consistency and sustainability of character integration. Schools with strong leadership structures and clear institutional commitments demonstrate more coherent implementation across classrooms and programs. Principals who actively monitor lesson planning, reinforce character objectives, and facilitate coordination among teachers contribute to a shared moral vision within the school. This finding aligns with [Widayati \(2022\)](#), who emphasizes that character education thrives in environments where leadership, policy, and school culture are in alignment. Without such coherence, character education efforts risk becoming fragmented or symbolic. Effective school leadership ensures that character education is not only endorsed but is actively practiced, with consistent reinforcement across all aspects of the school environment.

Additionally, the involvement of multiple stakeholders—teachers, school leaders, parents, community members, and religious leaders—emerges as a critical factor in supporting the integration of Islamic character values. Parental involvement, community participation, and engagement with religious leaders enhance the contextual relevance and social legitimacy of school-based character education. The study suggests that when parents and community members actively participate in religious activities and school programs, character education extends beyond the school walls and becomes a shared social responsibility. This supports [Ayu et al.'s \(2023\)](#) holistic governance model, which positions character education as an ecosystem involving schools, families, and communities rather than being confined to the school alone. By extending character education beyond the classroom, schools can create a broader, more supportive environment that reinforces the values taught in formal education.

### *Challenges to integration*

Despite these strengths, the study identifies several persistent challenges that complicate the integration of Islamic character education. One major issue is teacher competency,

particularly in integrating values into non-religious subjects through pedagogical strategies. While teachers demonstrate strong commitment to character education, not all possess sufficient training or resources to connect subject content with Islamic ethical principles in meaningful ways. This finding echoes Basril's (2024) critique that character-oriented curricula often lack concrete pedagogical guidance, leading to superficial or symbolic integration of values. Addressing this gap requires targeted professional development focused on value-based pedagogy rather than simply reinforcing doctrinal knowledge. By providing teachers with the necessary training, they can better integrate character values into all subjects, thus fostering a more cohesive approach to character education.

Another challenge identified in the study was resource limitations, particularly in rural and under-resourced schools. The lack of Qur'anic literacy materials, instructional media, and appropriate teaching resources hinders the depth and quality of character education. As noted by Fahrurrozi et al. (2023) and Widayati (2022), insufficient resources can reduce character education to formal routines without fostering deeper reflective engagement with the material. Investment in instructional materials and infrastructure is critical for guaranteeing the substantive integration of Islamic values. Schools require additional resources to improve the quality of character education and guarantee its effective and engaging implementation.

The growing influence of digital media presents an emerging challenge to the integration of Islamic character values. Teachers reported that students increasingly encounter conflicting values through social media and digital entertainment, which may contradict the values taught in school. This finding aligns with Suriana's (2023) observation that digital culture significantly influences youth behavior and moral reasoning. Nasution et al. (2024) contend that Islamic character education must evolve to the digital era by integrating media literacy and ethical digital participation into the curriculum. Schools must formulate strategies to confront the moral dilemmas presented by digital media and ensure the continued significance of character education in contemporary society.

A final challenge is the inconsistent reinforcement of values between school and home environments. While some parents actively support religious routines and behavioral expectations at home, others face constraints that limit their involvement. This inconsistency weakens the sustainability of character development, as moral learning requires continuity across settings. Empirical studies from pesantren-based and madrasah-integrated schools suggest that consistent reinforcement across both institutional and domestic contexts significantly strengthens students' moral discipline and social responsibility (Priatmoko & Rahman, 2023; Fahrurrozi et al., 2023). This issue highlights the need for stronger school-family partnerships to reinforce character values at both school and home.

### ***Assessment and monitoring challenges***

Lastly, the study highlights the lack of systematic assessment and monitoring mechanisms for character education outcomes. Although behavioral changes are observed informally, schools lack structured tools for evaluating the success of character integration. This gap reflects broader critiques that character education policies often focus on normative objectives without providing clear assessment frameworks (Alhamuddin & Murniati, 2024; Iqbal et al., 2025). Developing measurable indicators and reflective assessment tools is

essential for ensuring accountability and continuous improvement. Schools need to establish robust evaluation mechanisms to assess character development over time.

In conclusion, this study reinforces the view that the effective integration of Islamic character values requires a holistic, context-sensitive, and collaborative approach. The integration of values into curriculum design, pedagogical practices, school culture, and stakeholder engagement forms an interconnected system that fosters students' moral, social, and spiritual development. While challenges remain, particularly in areas such as teacher training, resource limitations, digital media influence, and inconsistent reinforcement at home, addressing them offers a pathway toward more sustainable and meaningful character education. By moving beyond superficial compliance with policy and striving for the genuine internalization of values, Islamic character education can significantly contribute to the development of ethically responsible, spiritually grounded, and socially aware students.

### **Conclusion**

This study concludes that the integration of Islamic character values into the primary school curriculum in Pidie Jaya has been systematically and effectively implemented, demonstrating a holistic approach across curriculum planning, classroom instruction, school culture, and daily religious practices. The incorporation of values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, respect, cooperation, cleanliness, and religiosity is not relegated to isolated subjects but is embedded within various disciplines and reinforced through both structured routines and teacher role modeling. Teachers play a pivotal role in translating curriculum objectives into meaningful learning experiences, thus fostering students' moral and spiritual development.

Moreover, the integration of Islamic character values is further strengthened by strong school leadership, institutional support, and active collaboration with parents and the community. Daily religious practices, such as congregational prayers, Qur'anic recitation, and adherence to Islamic etiquette, serve as effective tools for character formation, gradually shaping students' behavior and emotional discipline. This study finds that when curriculum integration is supported by a robust school culture and clear institutional commitment, there is a noticeable improvement in students' behavior, respect for teachers, peer interactions, and religious awareness.

Despite the successes, the study highlights several challenges that hinder the optimal implementation of the Islamic character-based curriculum. Key challenges include teacher competency gaps, particularly in integrating values across non-religious subjects, limited resources, especially in rural schools, the influence of digital media that often conflicts with Islamic teachings, and inconsistent reinforcement of values within the home environment. These barriers suggest that character education cannot rely solely on school-based initiatives but requires continuous reinforcement from the family and the wider community.

The findings of this study reinforce the importance of a coordinated, integrated approach to Islamic character education, where curriculum design, teacher practice, school culture, and community involvement work together to foster ethical and moral development. Although challenges persist, addressing issues such as teacher training, resource availability, digital media influence, and school-family partnerships can significantly enhance the

sustainability and effectiveness of character education. Moving beyond mere policy compliance to genuine value internalization will ensure that Islamic character education contributes meaningfully to the moral, social, and spiritual growth of primary school students.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed. Policymakers should develop structured technical guidelines and clear assessment frameworks to monitor the outcomes of character education, ensuring that the integration of Islamic values is continuously evaluated and improved. Teacher professional development programs should be enhanced, particularly focusing on value-based pedagogy and strategies for integrating Islamic character values across different subjects. Teachers should receive practical training to connect Islamic ethical principles with academic content, ensuring meaningful integration of values.

Schools should strengthen collaboration with parents and the community by organizing regular communication forums, parenting programs, and joint religious activities. A strong school-family partnership is essential to reinforce values consistently across both the school and home environments. Digital literacy should be integrated into the curriculum to help students navigate digital media responsibly. Schools need to adapt to the challenges posed by digital culture by incorporating media literacy and ethical digital engagement into character education.

Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of Islamic character education on students' moral and academic development. Comparative studies across different regions and school types would provide further insights into best practices in character-based education. Through these efforts, Islamic character values can be more effectively integrated into the primary school curriculum, fostering the development of ethically responsible, spiritually grounded, and socially aware future generations.

### **Disclosure Statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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