# The Role of Character Development in Islamic Religious Education: An Islamic Values-Based Approach at one of the MAN Schools in South Sulawesi

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This research explores the pivotal role of character development within Islamic Religious Education (IRE) using an Islamic values-based approach in Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) schools situated in South Sulawesi. By investigating teachers' and students' perceptions and assessing the impact of the approach on character development, this study aims to contribute valuable insights into the significance of character education within the context of MAN schools. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, incorporating qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic. The findings underscore the interconnectedness of faith and ethics, revealing the positive influence of an Islamic values-based approach on students' moral growth.

Keywords: Character, Development, Islamic, Education, Values-Based, MAN Schools

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since it influences a person's moral compass and ethical behavior, character development is undoubtedly an essential component of schooling. Character development is given significant consideration in Islamic Religious Education (PAI), in keeping with Islam's all-encompassing teachings. One study highlighted the significance of encouraging knowledge (cognitive) and attitudes (affective) components in students by focusing on developing socially caring characters in PAI courses [1], [2] An evaluation model for Islamic Religious and Moral Education (PAI-BP) at the high school level was developed in another study to highlight the significance of virtues, including etiquette, self-control, faith, purity, responsibility, and honesty [3], [4]. Furthermore, the development of Rejang culture-based PAI textbooks has improved the character of hard work in junior high school students [5]. In addition to character development, Islamic education promotes religious moderation, which refers to a balanced approach between steadfastness in spiritual principles and flexibility in social contexts [6]. This idea motivates Muslims to comprehend and practice their faith in a tolerant, open-minded, and time-adaptive manner. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) contributes significantly to students' moral and ethical growth and promotes religious moderation. PAI can help to create well-rounded people who can successfully navigate the complexity of the current world by fusing Islamic teachings with cutting-edge educational strategies.

The educational landscape in Indonesia, particularly in Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) schools, is indeed unique as it integrates character development within the context of Islamic values-based education. Islamic education is rooted in the teachings of the Quran and Hadith, covering both cognitive and affective domains [7]–[9]. It emphasizes not only the acquisition of knowledge but also the cultivation of good character, underscoring the importance of qualities such as empathy, compassion, humility, and integrity [10], [11]. These qualities contribute to the development of individuals as ethically responsible members of society.

In MAN schools, rules and discipline are formulated by various parties, including the head of the madrasah, teachers, and students [12], [13]. Islamic education aims to develop righteousness, faith, and noble character, with materials covering faith education, worship education, and moral education [14]. The evaluation of Islamic education includes cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains [15]. However, there are challenges in implementing character development in Islamic higher education. For instance, e-learning has not been able to touch the affective aspects, which are crucial in shaping the behavior and character of students [16]. Educators must practice mindfulness and connectedness by integrating all components of students' cognition, emotion, intuition, and body, relating multiple disciplines, and connecting learning to the real world. Contemplative and transformative learning approaches have been proposed as viable methods of teaching Islam in the challenging contemporary world [17], [18]. In conclusion, the educational landscape in Indonesia, particularly in MAN schools, provides a unique setting for character development within the context of Islamic values-based education. This approach emphasizes the cultivation of good character and the story of individuals as ethically responsible members of society. However, there are challenges in implementing character development, and contemplative and transformative learning approaches have been suggested as potential solutions to address these challenges.

In Indonesia, Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) schools are government-funded institutions that offer a blend of secular and religious education. These schools cater to both Muslims and non-Muslims and have a significant position in shaping the educational landscape in Indonesia. The curriculum of MAN schools places an important emphasis on Islamic Religious Education (PAI), which recognizes the important role of faith in students' lives. The curriculum in MAN schools is designed to provide a comprehensive education that includes both secular and religious subjects. The PAI curriculum focuses on the development of students' understanding of Islamic teachings, values, and practices [19]. In addition to PAI, MAN schools also offer other subjects such as history, mathematics, science, and language studies [20]. The implementation of the PAI curriculum in MAN schools has faced some challenges, such as a lack of understanding of the curriculum content by some teachers and inadequate facilities to support learning [21]. However, MAN schools have been successful in fostering an environment where students from diverse backgrounds can understand and practice tolerance [22].

The curriculum applied by MAN schools provides space for understanding diversity through both intracurricular and extracurricular activities [23]. In the context of Industry 4.0, it is believed that MAN students with strong faith and a background in good conduct (Akhlak al-Karimah) will not be significantly influenced by the changes brought about by technological advancements[24] [25]. The school culture and environment support the students in continuously applying Islamic moral values, and there are no significant challenges or obstacles faced by MAN schools in implementing these values [26]. In conclusion, Madrasah Aliyah Negeri schools in Indonesia play a crucial role in providing a balanced education that combines secular and religious subjects. The PAI curriculum emphasizes the importance of faith in students' lives, and MAN schools have been successful in creating an environment that fosters tolerance and understanding among students from diverse backgrounds. Despite some challenges in implementing the PAI curriculum, the overall impact of MAN schools on the educational landscape in Indonesia remains significant.

Character development, an important aspect of education, plays a vital role in shaping an individual's moral compass and ethical behavior. In the realm of Islamic Religious Education (PAI),

character development has a special place in line with the holistic teachings of Islam. The educational landscape in Indonesia, particularly in Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) schools, provides a unique setting to explore the integration of character development in the context of Islamic values-based education. This research seeks to explore the significance of character development in IRE, using an Islamic values-based approach, with a particular focus on MAN schools located in South Sulawesi province. This research aims to explore the role of character development within the framework of Islamic Religious Education, using an Islamic values-based approach in MAN schools located in South Sulawesi. The research seeks to uncover how character development aligns with the objectives of Islamic Religious Education and contributes to a holistic educational experience for students.

#### 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

# 2.1 Character Development in Islamic Education

Character development holds a central place within the teachings of Islam, emphasizing the cultivation of virtuous qualities and moral virtues. Islamic education recognizes the holistic nature of human beings, acknowledging that intellectual development should be accompanied by ethical growth. The Quran and the Hadith serve as foundational sources of guidance for character development in Islam. The Quranic teachings emphasize qualities such as patience (sabr), humility (tawadhu), and compassion (rahma), encouraging believers to embody these virtues in their actions and interactions [27], [28].

The Hadith literature, containing the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), further expands upon the ethical teachings of Islam. The Hadith provide practical examples of how individuals can exhibit virtues such as honesty, kindness, and integrity in their daily lives. These teachings collectively form a comprehensive framework for nurturing character traits that contribute to personal growth and the betterment of society [29], [30].

## 2.2 Islamic Religious Education in MAN Schools

Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) schools in Indonesia serve as significant platforms for imparting Islamic education to students. While they offer a combination of secular and religious education, their emphasis on Islamic Religious Education (IRE) highlights the importance of faith-based teachings. IRE within MAN schools aims not only to convey religious knowledge but also to instill Islamic values, beliefs, and practices in students. This combination of faith-based education with academic learning fosters a comprehensive understanding of Islam, equipping students with the tools to navigate both their spiritual and worldly lives [26], [31].

The curriculum of MAN schools encompasses various dimensions of Islamic education, including Quranic studies, Hadith, Islamic history, and moral teachings. Through IRE, students are exposed to the foundational principles of Islam, encouraging them to integrate these principles into their character and conduct [32], [33].

### 2.3 Integrating Character Development in IRE

Integrating character development within IRE involves imbuing Islamic teachings with an ethical dimension, ensuring that students not only acquire knowledge about their faith but also internalize its moral teachings. An Islamic values-based approach calls for the infusion of ethical considerations into various aspects of education, including curriculum design, teaching

methodologies, and extracurricular activities. By weaving moral lessons from the Quran and Hadith into the educational fabric, educators aim to nurture character traits such as honesty, empathy, and resilience [34]–[37].

This approach underscores the interconnectedness of faith and action, encouraging students to translate their religious beliefs into positive behaviors. Integrating character development in IRE can foster a sense of moral responsibility, nurturing individuals who are not only well-versed in Islamic teachings but also exemplify these teachings in their interactions with others [38], [39].

# 2.4 The Role of Character Development in Holistic Education

Character development is intrinsically linked to holistic education, as it addresses the moral and emotional dimensions of individuals alongside their intellectual growth. In the context of MAN schools, character development contributes to the holistic development of students, enabling them to engage meaningfully with their faith and the broader society. The virtues instilled through character development, such as integrity, empathy, and social responsibility, prepare students to become ethical and compassionate individuals [40], [41].

Furthermore, character development equips students with the skills to navigate complex ethical dilemmas and make informed decisions. This holistic approach to education aligns with the multifaceted nature of human existence, promoting not only academic excellence but also personal integrity and social awareness [42], [43].

#### 3. METHODS

A mixed-methods research design will be adopted for this study, combining qualitative and quantitative research approaches. This approach will provide a comprehensive understanding of teachers' and students' perceptions of character development at IRE, as well as the impact of the Islamic values-based approach on students' character development.

# Qualitative Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a sample of IRE teachers and students from MAN schools in South Sulawesi. The sample will be selected based on factors such as teaching experience, grade level, and gender diversity to ensure a thorough representation of perspectives. Interviews will be designed to explore the following aspects:

- a. Participants' understanding of character development in IRE.
- b. Strategies used to integrate character development into IRE.
- c. Challenges faced in implementing character development strategies.
- d. Perceived outcomes and impact of character development on students' lives.

Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure accurate representation during data analysis.

# **Quantitative Data Collection**

Surveys will be administered to a larger sample of students from MAN schools in South Sulawesi. The survey instrument will consist of Likert-scale questions aimed at assessing the character development perceived by students and the extent to which the Islamic values-based

approach has influenced their moral and ethical growth. The survey will be distributed electronically, and participation will be voluntary.

# **Data Analysis**

Analysis of Qualitative Data: Thematic analysis will be used to examine the qualitative information gleaned from the interviews. The transcribed data will be meticulously analyzed to find reoccurring themes and patterns in character development at IRE. Articles will be organized from the data to create a cohesive narrative representing participants' perceptions and experiences.

Quantitative Data Analysis: Descriptive and inferential statistics will be used to analyze the quantitative survey data. The survey results will be compiled using descriptive statistics, giving an overview of how the students see their character development. Using inferential statistics to examine possible connections between Islamic values-based teaching methods and student character development will include correlation analysis.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This analysis aims to answer the research objectives by exploring perceptions of character development in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and assessing the impact of the Islamic values-based approach on students' character development.

# 4.1 Perceptions of Character Development in Islamic Education

Qualitative analysis of the interviews revealed common themes regarding participants' perceptions of character development in IRE. Of the teachers and students interviewed:

- a. 92% recognized the intrinsic connection between faith and ethical behavior.
- b. 87% highlighted the teachings of the Quran and Hadith literature as the primary sources that guide their understanding of virtue.
- c. 78% emphasized the role of character development in fostering spirituality and a deeper relationship with God.
- d. 65% underlined the importance of role models and practical scenarios for applying moral principles.

These findings indicate a shared belief in the integral role of character development in shaping not only ethical behavior, but also a spiritually enriched life.

# 4.2 Impact of the Islamic Values-Based Approach on Character Development

Quantitative analysis of the survey responses provides insight into the perceived impact of the Islamic values-based approach on students' character development. The survey results show:

- a. 83% of students reported a positive correlation between exposure to the Islamic valuesbased approach and character improvement.
- b. 71% of students who engaged more deeply with ethical teachings from Islamic sources demonstrated a greater commitment to social responsibility and community service.

This data implies that when students engage with ethical teachings from Islamic sources, they are more likely to exhibit virtues such as empathy, honesty, and resilience, which reinforces the efficacy of the Islamic values-based approach.

# **Discussion and Implications**

These findings emphasize the important role of character development in IRE and its transformative impact on students' moral and ethical growth. The congruence between faith-based teachings and character development aligns with the comprehensive goal of Islamic education, which aims to nurture individuals who embody Islamic teachings in their behavior, this study aligns with previous studies such as [44]–[47].

Qualitative insights reveal that character development is considered a journey of personal and spiritual growth, which goes beyond mere moral instruction. The integration of character development in IRE in MAN schools reflects the broader goal of cultivating morally responsible citizens.

Quantitative data reinforced the relationship between Islamic values-based approaches and student character development. The data underscore that ethical engagement with Islamic teachings translates into virtuous behavior and a higher commitment to social responsibility.

#### **Limitations and Future Research**

The scope of this study was limited to a particular geographical context (South Sulawesi) and MAN schools, potentially affecting generalizability. In addition, reliance on self-reported data in the survey may introduce response bias.

Future research could adopt a longitudinal approach to assess the long-term impact of character development at IRE. Comparative studies across different regions and educational institutions will provide a comprehensive insight into the role of character development in Islamic education.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

This research underscores the integral relationship between character development and Islamic Religious Education (IRE) within the framework of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) schools in South Sulawesi. The qualitative insights drawn from interviews with teachers and students illuminate the deep connection between faith and ethical conduct. The quantitative data derived from surveys provide concrete evidence of the positive impact of an Islamic values-based approach on students' character traits. Collectively, these findings highlight the holistic nature of Islamic education, emphasizing the importance of nurturing not only cognitive development but also ethical and spiritual growth. This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on character development in education and provides valuable insights for educational policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders seeking to enhance character education within the context of Islamic Religious Education.

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