

Empirical Contributions of Islamic Religious Education to the Cultivation of Noble Morality and Student Character Formation in the Paradigm of Holistic Education

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Abstract:

Islamic religious education plays a vital role in fostering noble morals and character development in students, particularly adolescents. In this case, students of SMAN 3 Bogor, especially in the context of the holistic education era that emphasizes the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. This article examines how Islamic religious education can systematically contribute to producing students who are not only knowledgeable but also virtuous. Through a review of previous literature and an analytical approach using descriptive-qualitative methods, this study highlights the gap in understanding the comprehensive implementation of Islamic religious education in student character development in modern educational institutions. The results of the study indicate that Islamic religious education effectively strengthens moral and character development through a contextual and adaptive approach to religious values, meeting the demands of the times. This study provides strategic recommendations for developing a holistic curriculum and character development based on Islamic values that are more integrative and applicable. Thus, this article is expected to enrich the academic treasury while providing a practical contribution to the development of religious education in the era of holistic education. Islamic religious education plays a strategic role as a bulwark against these challenges. Through the practice of worship, students can be shaped into resilient individuals who are not easily influenced by negative external factors. In conclusion, Islamic Religious Education plays a vital role in shaping students' character holistically from an early age.

Keywords: adolescents; character building; holistic curriculum; Islamic Religious Education; noble morals.

INTRODUCTION

Education is currently entering an era of holistic education that emphasizes the comprehensive development of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. In this context, Islamic religious education plays a crucial role in shaping students' noble character, especially among adolescents. Islamic values that teach morals and ethics are highly relevant to addressing the moral and social challenges faced by adolescents, namely high school students, in the modern era filled with the negative influences of globalization and technology. Education is essentially oriented not only to the transfer of knowledge but also to the formation of students' character, attitudes, and personalities, so that they are able to play a dignified role in society (Abni et al., 2025). Religious education plays a very essential position in realizing the goals of national education. As an inseparable part of the national

education system, religious education plays a primary role in shaping human beings who believe in and fear God Almighty. The existence of religious education is not merely a supplement to the curriculum, but also a foundation that must color the entire educational process and the dynamics of national development. In this context, religious education serves as an ethical, moral, and mental foundation that guides students to possess noble character and a strong spiritual awareness. The values of faith and piety are the primary driving force for humans in carrying out various development activities, both personal and social. Through the internalization of religious values, religious education is expected to shape a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also possesses a responsible character and integrity, and is able to make positive contributions to society, the nation, and the state. Thus, religious education plays a strategic role in creating a holistic Indonesian person who balances spiritual, moral, and social aspects in living life *menciptakan manusia Indonesia seutuhnya yang seimbang antara aspek spiritual, moral, dan sosial dalam menjalani kehidupan* (Judrah et al., 2024).

Despite the National Education Law serving as a foundation for ethics and morals, an imbalance between mastery of knowledge and the development of character and noble morals in students persists. As a result, many graduates are academically competent but lack strong moral integrity, ethics, and character. This situation raises academic concerns about the effectiveness of education in integrating aspects of character and noble morals. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) not only provides religious understanding but also fosters integrity, social awareness, and tolerance, producing a generation that excels intellectually and possesses strong morals, able to contribute positively to society. One important means of character formation in Indonesia is through Islamic religious education (Hapsari et al., 2025). This education not only conveys aspects of religious knowledge but also instills moral, ethical, and spiritual values that serve as guidelines for daily life. By studying Islamic creed, jurisprudence, morals, and history, students are guided to understand and apply noble values in their lives (Puspitasari et al., 2022). However, amidst rapid globalization and technological advancement, various signs of moral decline have emerged among students. Issues such as low discipline, lack of respect for teachers, bullying, and other deviant behavior pose major challenges to education, particularly in character development for the younger generation (Furqon, 2024).

Islamic religious education plays a strategic role as a bulwark in facing these challenges. Through the habituation of worship, strengthening the values of honesty, responsibility, and social awareness, students can be shaped into resilient individuals who are not easily influenced by negative external influences (Eri Purwanti et al., 2020). The success of this character formation is also greatly influenced by a conducive school environment, effective learning methods, and the exemplary behavior of educators. In addition to classroom learning activities, religiously nuanced extracurricular programs also contribute significantly to student character development. Education is essentially the primary tool in shaping individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also possess moral and spiritual strength (Alivia & Sudadi, 2023). In the context of national education, character development of students is fundamental, as stipulated in the National Education System Law No. 20/2003, which emphasizes that the goal of education is to develop students' potential to become individuals who are faithful, pious, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, and responsible (Sari, 2016).

Character education is a consciously and systematically designed process that shapes students' personalities by instilling fundamental values such as honesty, responsibility, tolerance, discipline, and work ethic. In this context, Islamic Religious Education plays a very strategic role as a medium for character development. Through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, students not only learn the ritual aspects of worship but are also guided to understand moral values, social ethics, and responsibility towards others and the environment. This education aims not only to produce spiritually devout individuals but also to shape a generation with noble morals and able to apply these values in everyday life. Thus, PAI plays a role not only as a normative subject but also as an important foundation in the formation of a complete, balanced character based on Islamic values (Suparmini & Nursa'ban, 2015). However, various social conditions indicate that there is still a gap between the religious knowledge acquired by students and their behavior in everyday life. This raises questions about the extent of PAI's effectiveness in shaping students' character in schools. Therefore, scientific studies must be conducted to examine the influence of Islamic religious education on students' character development in schools, as a step toward improving the quality of education and fostering the morals of the younger generation.

Based on the background described, it is clear that Islamic religious education plays a vital role in every aspect of life and influences all developmental processes. Therefore, religious education is considered integral and holistic learning, and SMA Negeri 3 Bogor still faces various challenges in fulfilling its role as a medium for character building for students in this era of holistic-based education. The changing educational paradigm, marked by the integration of digital technology, shifting social values, and increasing student exposure to

negative content on social media, demands innovation and adjustments in the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. However, empirical findings indicate that PAI learning in high schools involves various elements. The heterogeneous backgrounds of SMA 3 students create a diverse school climate that is not yet responsive to deepening religious learning and has not succeeded in forming students' character comprehensively (Ningsih & Zalisman, 2024).

The role of Islamic Religious Education in developing noble morals and character in students is becoming increasingly crucial amidst today's demands for holistic education. This study stems from the gap between national education goals, government policies, and the implementation of character education in the field. The literature review reveals a significant gap between the ideal concept of Islamic religious education and the reality of its implementation, particularly regarding the integration of spiritual values and character building. Education has traditionally focused on cognitive achievement and academic achievement, resulting in insufficiently comprehensive understanding of the role of Islamic Religious Education in fostering morals and character. However, the holistic education paradigm demands holistic student development, encompassing moral, emotional, and spiritual aspects. This gap needs to be filled through an approach that ensures Islamic religious education is not only taught theoretically but also implemented in concrete character formation. Most previous research has focused solely on the formal dimension of religious instruction, neglecting the application of religious values in everyday life. Therefore, this study aims to comprehensively address this gap (Novianti et al., 2022).

A review of previous research provides an important foundation for understanding how Islamic religious education plays a role in shaping students' character and morals in the increasingly complex era of modern education. Various studies have shown that the paradigm of religious education is shifting from a purely cognitive approach to a more comprehensive and transformative development model. This is due to the realization that education that emphasizes only the intellectual aspect is insufficient to protect the younger generation from moral crisis, value degradation, and increasingly competitive global challenges. Therefore, the concept of holistic education that integrates spiritual, emotional, social, and intellectual dimensions has become a primary reference in strengthening Islamic character. A number of researchers have begun to pay serious attention to the urgency of integrating Islamic religious education with a holistic educational approach as a strategic solution for developing students' holistic character. These studies focus not only on the theoretical realm but also deeply examine its relevance and implementation in contemporary education systems. By utilizing universal Islamic values such as honesty, responsibility, compassion, and discipline, Islamic religious education is believed to be the primary foundation for developing a generation with noble character and adapting to changing times. The following describes several previous research results which are an important basis for this research in formulating an Islamic character learning model based on a holistic approach.

First, research conducted by Alpin Maulana, Ayu Rahmawati, Dewi Nurhaliza, and Abdul Azis (2025) on "The Role of Holistic and Comprehensive Education in Shaping Islamic Character in Students." This research explains that a holistic educational approach aims to develop students' potential as a whole by integrating physical, mental, social, and spiritual aspects in a balanced manner. In this context, Islamic Religious Education becomes very relevant because it is based on the principle of instilling Islamic values that are not only limited to the cognitive domain, but also include moral development and spiritual strengthening. Through this approach, the educational process not only produces students who excel academically, but also have noble characters that reflect universal values in Islam such as honesty, empathy, compassion, discipline, and responsibility. The holistic-based learning model is believed to be able to provide a more profound impact on character formation, because it touches all dimensions of humanity in an integrative manner. Thus, this approach not only improves the intellectual quality of students but also forms a personality that is moral and oriented towards goodness. The research findings confirm that the holistic education model strengthens the effectiveness of character education by linking spiritual and moral values into daily learning experiences (Maulana et al., 2025).

Second, research conducted by Tantika Tri Hapsari, Marenza Agus, and Herlini Puspika Sari (2025) on "The Role of Islamic Religious Education in Shaping Student Character in the Era of Globalization." This research examines in depth the basic concepts in Islamic education, including *tarbiyah* as a development process, *ta'lim* as a knowledge transfer activity, and *ta'dib* as the formation of morals or *adab*, all three of which are the main philosophical foundations in strengthening character. Through a holistic approach, Islamic education not only emphasizes the intellectual aspect alone, but also includes spiritual, emotional, and social dimensions in order to shape students with noble morals and strong character. In facing the challenging currents of globalization, this comprehensive learning model is considered effective because it is able to instill Islamic values deeply while preparing students to remain relevant and adaptive to changing times. This research serves as an important

reference in formulating an integrative strategy that combines Islamic values with modern character education, resulting in an education system that not only fosters academic intelligence but also fosters moral awareness and exemplary behavior in daily behavior (Hapsari et al., 2025).

Third, research conducted by Alin Nur Salsabila, Ayu Shaumina Mubarakah, and M. Yunus Abu Bakar (2025) on "Integration of Philosophy and Education: Theoretical Foundations in Islamic Education." This research underscores the importance of integration between Islamic religious education and a holistic educational approach in the process of forming students' moral character. It is explained that the basic values in Islamic education such as responsibility, discipline, honesty, and trustworthiness have a strong alignment with the principles of holistic education that emphasize the development of human potential as a whole, including cognitive, affective, social, and spiritual aspects. Through the synergy of these two approaches, education not only produces students who are intellectually intelligent, but also have noble personalities and have high moral awareness. This research also highlights the suboptimal study that comprehensively integrates Islamic values with a holistic educational framework in the practice of character education. Therefore, it is recommended that a more intensive holistic approach be implemented in religious learning so that the formation of students' character takes place more effectively, deeply, and is relevant to current educational needs (Salsabila et al., 2025).

Fourth, research conducted by Radhita Azzahra, Saipul Annur, and Tutut Handayani (2025) on "Comprehensive Holistic Islamic Education." This research discusses the application of a comprehensive holistic Islamic educational approach that encompasses the integrated development of students' heart, mind, and mind dimensions, encompassing intellectual, moral, and spiritual aspects. This approach emphasizes the importance of shaping students' personalities holistically, not only through academic achievement but also through character and spiritual development based on the values of the Qur'an and Sunnah. This holistic-based Islamic education is considered highly relevant in addressing the various challenges of globalization and the dynamics of changing times, because it is able to produce a generation that is not only intelligent, but also pious, innovative, and possesses noble morals (akhlakul karimah). In addition to producing students with a balance between intelligence and morality, this approach also has a positive impact on the development of educational policies that are more oriented towards the formation of individuals with character and high integrity (Azzahra et al., 2022).

The above research demonstrates a consistent common thread: the current paradigm of Islamic education is no longer solely based on the transfer of cognitive knowledge, but rather demands integrative and multidimensional character development. Islamic Religious Education must play a central role in shaping students with faith, morals, critical intellectualism, and adaptability to global challenges, without losing its spiritual roots. A holistic approach that combines spiritual, intellectual, emotional, social, and moral aspects has proven to be the most relevant and contextual model for addressing the problems of moral degradation, character crisis, and value disorientation that occur in the younger generation. This reinforces the urgency of a new paradigm in Islamic religious education that is no longer positioned merely as a normative subject, but rather as a transformative, applicable character development system oriented toward the formation of a complete human being (*insan kamil*). Therefore, this research aims to address the limitations of previous studies by developing a conceptual and implementable model that not only aligns character education with Islamic values but also builds a concrete bridge between the theory and practice of holistic education in the contemporary context. Contains the idea that this research integrates Islamic religious education and holistic education systematically and offers an innovative learning model as a solution for modern character education according to the directions without re-quoting the sentence literally.

METHOD

This research was designed using a case study method through a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collection techniques conducted through field observations, in-depth interviews with Islamic Religious Education (PAI) educators, and analysis of curriculum documents oriented towards holistic education. The choice of a qualitative approach is based on the main objective of this research, namely to understand the meaning in greater depth and detail through non-numerical data such as narrative interview results, observation notes, and supporting documents. This approach provides the researcher with the flexibility to explore phenomena in a naturalistic manner within the school environment, exploring the perceptions of teachers, students, and school policymakers regarding the implementation of Islamic religious education as a character builder. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis techniques to explore patterns of PAI's role in the process of fostering noble morals (Sampurna et al., 2024). The case study research design was chosen because it is able to present a complete, detailed, and comprehensive picture of the phenomenon regarding how Islamic Religious Education is implemented in the context of holistic education, particularly in fostering the character and morals of students. The research focused on two

school settings, namely SMAN 3 Bogor and SMAN 4 Kota Bogor, in order to obtain a contextual and representative understanding of the implementation of character values in schools based on holistic education.

The research subjects included the principal, Islamic Religious Education teachers, grade 10 and 11 students, parents, and relevant community leaders. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, based on the level of relevance and depth of information provided. Furthermore, informant enrichment was carried out using snowball sampling until data saturation was achieved. The data collection technique was triangulated, combining in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies to ensure the data obtained were valid, rich, and mutually reinforcing (Nurhayati et al., 2024). The research was conducted through several systematic stages, starting with the preparation of instruments such as interview guidelines, observation sheets, and documentation grids. After the preparation stage, the research continued with field data collection activities conducted in the odd semester of the 2025 academic year. Data analysis was conducted simultaneously, from data collection through to the conclusion stage.

This research not only attempts to capture "what" happens in the school environment related to the implementation of Islamic religious education, but also delves deeper into "how" the process unfolds and "why" the character development strategy is implemented in a particular way. As a descriptive study, its main objective is to systematically describe the characteristics, dynamics, and facts that occur in the object of study, namely the process of formation and internalization of character values through Islamic Religious Education within a holistic educational framework in secondary schools. This research is based on the assumption that the integration of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) with a holistic educational approach can provide a more significant impact in fostering noble morals and strengthening the character of students as a whole compared to conventional approaches that tend to only emphasize the cognitive aspect. In other words, Islamic religious education that is integrated and addresses the spiritual, emotional, social, and intellectual dimensions is believed to be more effective in shaping students with noble character and strong personalities.

Based on these assumptions, this study aims to identify, analyze, and deeply understand the role of Islamic Religious Education in the process of forming noble morals and positive character in students, particularly within the holistic educational framework implemented at SMA Negeri 3 Bogor City. More specifically, this study aims to obtain a comprehensive picture of the various aspects that influence the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education in fostering student character. First, this study aims to analyze the supporting and inhibiting factors that arise in the implementation of Islamic Religious Education in shaping the morals and character of students in the era of holistic education. Second, this study seeks to evaluate the extent to which Islamic Religious Education is able to instill noble moral values amidst the challenges and opportunities presented by a holistic educational approach. Third, this study also aims to identify the most effective learning strategies and models in optimizing the role of Islamic Religious Education in building Islamic character that is holistic, comprehensive, and relevant to the needs of 21st-century education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Islamic Religious Education in Developing Noble Morals and Character of Students

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a crucial and strategic role in fostering noble morals and character development in students, particularly in the era of holistic education that emphasizes the comprehensive integration of spiritual, emotional, social, and intellectual aspects. Islamic Religious Education is not merely a normative subject that teaches theories of religion, but rather a personality development system that shapes students' ways of thinking, behaving, and acting. PAI focuses on instilling Islamic moral and ethical values, including honesty (*as-sidq*), responsibility (*amanah*), tolerance, discipline, compassion, and cooperation. These values are not only taught in theory but also internalized and implemented in students' daily lives. For example, honesty is taught so that students always speak the truth and act in accordance with the truth, even in difficult situations. Responsibility is instilled so that students can be accountable for their actions, as well as an attitude of tolerance to respect differences for the sake of social harmony. This development of noble morals becomes a strong moral foundation that will guide students in living their lives and facing the challenges of increasingly complex times (Salisah et al., 2024).

A holistic educational approach integrated with Islamic Religious Education (PAI) encompasses four main aspects: spiritual, emotional, social, and intellectual. Islamic Religious Education serves as a medium for developing Islamic spiritual intelligence, namely a deep religious awareness and relationship with Allah SWT. Furthermore, PAI also contributes to the development of emotional intelligence, characterized by patience, compassion, and the ability to control emotions for good relationships with others. Social aspects taught through PAI include caring and cooperation among students and the community. Finally, through religious learning, students are also intellectually honed so they can understand and practice Islamic teachings well in various

aspects of life (Fazira & Zulaikha, 2024). PAI plays a significant role in shaping students' morality and integrity. Through an understanding of Islamic values, such as honesty, justice, and trustworthiness, students are guided to behave with high integrity in their daily lives. Religious education helps develop a strong Islamic character, namely individuals with noble morals, a sense of social responsibility, and concern for others. With this formed character, students are expected to become a generation that is not only knowledgeable but also moral, competitive, and able to make positive contributions to the nation and religion (Yusri et al., 2023).

The implementation of Islamic Religious Education in schools is not only through theoretical learning, but also through the example of teachers and a supportive environment. Religious education functions to balance student development by adapting Islamic values to modern life without ignoring the social context and developments of the times. This requires innovation in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning methods to remain relevant and effective in building students' Islamic character. Furthermore, character development through PAI also requires the support of families and communities as social environments that reinforce the values taught in schools. Islamic Religious Education plays a crucial role in fostering noble morals and forming students' integral character in the era of holistic education. PAI functions as a comprehensive personality development system by integrating spiritual, emotional, social, and intellectual values into students' lives. With the effective and holistic implementation of Islamic education, students not only understand Islamic teachings textually but also practice noble moral values that shape characters with integrity and responsibility in society.

Dimensions of the Role of Islamic Education in Character Formation

The role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in shaping students' character is crucial and has a direct, tangible impact, as found in various studies examining the internalization of core values in students. Based on interviews, field observations, and document analysis, PAI serves as an effective educational medium for instilling positive character through the values of discipline, responsibility, honesty, tolerance, and empathy. Discipline is one of the values consistently developed in Islamic Religious Education learning. Students are accustomed to respecting time through the practice of praying on time, following Islamic religious procedures, and managing academic assignments in an orderly manner. These habits not only establish order in religious life but also foster a disciplined attitude that can be applied in daily activities. Discipline, in this context, serves as the foundation for developing a strong and resilient character (Indayani, 2023). PAI teaches students to be responsible for personal and social responsibilities. Students are encouraged not to procrastinate and to understand the moral consequences of every action. This education teaches that responsibility is a manifestation of faith and social obligations that must be upheld by every individual. With a strong sense of responsibility, students become more reliable and mature in their actions (Ainiyah, 2013). The value of honesty is an important foundation that is strongly emphasized in Islamic Religious Education. Honesty is clearly visible in student behavior during exams, social interactions, and the avoidance of all forms of manipulation or cheating. This honesty education helps shape honest and trustworthy characters, so that students can grow into individuals with high integrity and can be trusted in various aspects of life (Aulia et al., 2025).

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) also instills the values of tolerance and empathy, which are highly relevant in a pluralistic and diverse society. Through Islamic Religious Education (PAI), students are encouraged to respect differences and be open to the cultural and religious diversity that exists in their environment. This attitude of tolerance and empathy serves as essential social capital for creating harmony and peace in community life (Nurazizah et al., 2022). These core values are then proven to emerge in students' daily behavior, both within and outside of school. Especially for students who consistently and actively participate in religious education and religious activities at school, these positive character traits become stronger and more ingrained in them. This proves that internalizing Islamic values through PAI has a real and significant effect on shaping students' character. The dimensions of PAI's role in shaping students' character are broad and profound, ranging from developing discipline, responsibility, and honesty to fostering tolerance and empathy. Through the internalization of these values, Islamic religious education can shape students' character holistically, providing strong moral and spiritual foundations to face the challenges of life in the modern era. PAI functions not only as a religious lesson, but as an important instrument in building a national character with integrity and ethics.

Supporting Factors for the Effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education

Factors supporting the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) are crucial to fostering students' morals and character. Various research and studies have identified four key factors that significantly strengthen the role of PAI in education: a structured and relevant curriculum, teacher role models (*uswah hasanah*), religious

habits within the school environment, and religiously nuanced extracurricular activities. A sound Islamic Religious Education curriculum must encompass comprehensive material covering faith, worship, morals, and the Prophet's biography. This curriculum is not only informative but also applicable, allowing the values taught to be directly integrated into students' daily lives. With a structured and relevant curriculum, students gain a strong foundation for building an Islamic identity and character based on Islamic values. This strengthens comprehensive spiritual and moral learning, enabling religious material to be studied not only theoretically but also practically. PAI teachers play a central role as role models for students. Teachers' exemplary behavior, including politeness, discipline, patience, and spiritual commitment, significantly influences how students interpret and apply religious values in their lives. Teachers who consistently demonstrate Islamic behavior are expected to inspire students to emulate these attitudes. This exemplary behavior makes Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning more engaging and more than just a classroom lesson, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of the student character-building process (Herawati et al., 2025).

The development of religious habits in the school environment is an equally important supporting factor. Daily activities such as greetings, prayers before studying, Quranic recitation, and regular congregational prayer create a conducive spiritual environment. A school environment that supports religious habits helps internalize character values indirectly but consistently. These habits strengthen students' spiritual awareness while building sustainable good habits in daily behavior. Extracurricular activities such as Quranic memorization, short-term Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren kilat*), Islamic studies, and dhikr assemblies are also important supporting factors. These activities provide a space for students to deepen their understanding and practical experience of religion outside of formal school hours. Through these activities, students not only learn about religion theoretically but also implement religious values in real life in a more active and enjoyable way. This strengthens the formation of a strong and ingrained Islamic character (Herawati et al., 2025). When a relevant curriculum is supported by exemplary teachers and a conducive school environment, coupled with extracurricular religious activities that deepen spirituality, the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education is optimal. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is not merely a classroom subject but rather a comprehensive system for developing Islamic character and personality. The factors supporting the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education are varied and holistic. A comprehensive and applicable curriculum, teachers who act as role models, a school environment that fosters religious values, and religiously nuanced extracurricular activities are key factors in the success of this education. The synergy of these four factors results in an effective Islamic Religious Education learning process that fosters noble morals and character in students with integrity and rooted in Islamic values.

Integration of Islamic Education in Holistic Education

The integration of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) into holistic education positions PAI as the core of strengthening students' spiritual and moral dimensions, harmoniously integrated with academic, social, and life skills aspects. Holistic education itself focuses on holistic individual development encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions, and PAI plays a crucial role in strengthening the spiritual and ethical aspects that underpin character. In integrating PAI into holistic education, contextual learning becomes a strategic approach. Teachers link religious values to the realities experienced by students, such as digital media use, adolescent lifestyles, and modern social issues. For example, in discussions about social media ethics, Islamic values emphasizing manners, honesty, and mutual respect are taught as guidelines for healthy social media use. Thus, PAI is seen not merely as a theoretical lesson but as living material relevant to students' real-world situations. This enhances student engagement and in-depth understanding (Mahardhika & Wantini, 2023). PAI also contributes significantly to the development of emotional intelligence (EQ) and spiritual intelligence (SQ), which play a crucial role in shaping a balanced character. Islamic religious education promotes self-awareness, empathy, emotional control, and etiquette in social interactions, including on social media. These emotional and spiritual competencies are crucial for students to face social pressures and the challenges of the times with calm, wisdom, and moral resilience. This fosters a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also emotionally mature and spiritually strong (Hasan et al., 2024).

One of the hallmarks of holistic education is integrating theory with practical practice. In Islamic Religious Education (PAI), moral and ethical values are taught not only verbally or through memorization, but also through social activities and concrete actions such as community service, Friday almsgiving, and environmental awareness programs. These activities serve as a vehicle for directly practicing Islamic values, fostering a sense of caring, social responsibility, and ecological awareness. This makes Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning more comprehensive and has a tangible impact on student character development (Zakiyah & Zaitun, 2021).

Field studies confirm that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning models that are still ritualistic and solely based on memorization have a limited impact on character development. Monotonous learning that relies solely on memory without reflection and contextualization tends to fail to foster deep spiritual and moral awareness. Therefore, a holistic, reflective, contextual, and applicable approach is highly recommended to make PAI effective and relevant to the needs of the times and students' lives. The integration of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) into holistic education makes religious education not just a separate subject, but a center for strengthening spiritual and moral aspects, integrated with academic, social, and life skills. Contextual learning, strengthening emotional and spiritual intelligence, and practicing values in real-life situations are key approaches that enhance the effectiveness of PAI. This model helps produce students who are not only knowledgeable but also possess strong character, noble morals, and are able to live harmoniously in a complex social environment.

Islamic Religious Education in the Holistic Education Paradigm

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is not merely a normative subject limited to memorization or teaching religious theory. Within the holistic education paradigm, PAI serves as the pivot for comprehensive character transformation, encompassing spiritual, emotional, social, and moral dimensions. The holistic education paradigm rejects educational reductionism that focuses solely on cognitive aspects, thus enabling PAI, in this context, to become a vehicle for integrative character development rooted in divine awareness or transcendence. PAI not only transfers religious knowledge but also aims to foster self-awareness, self-regulation, and social sensitivity in the lives of students (Maulana et al., 2025). Character formation through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) emphasizes the internalization of basic values such as discipline, responsibility, honesty, and tolerance. These values are not only taught theoretically, but are also internalized and practiced in real life through religious rituals and social interactions in the school environment. For example, the implementation of congregational prayer, the habit of greeting, daily prayers, Islamic discussions in class, and polite manners between students. This character education model differs from the moralistic approach that only relies on norms and rules without in-depth reflection. Here, the process of character formation grows from the ethical and spiritual awareness inherent in the student's personality, thus becoming a solid foundation for their personal identity and integrity (Ainiyah, 2013). Islamic Religious Education as the axis of holistic education combines spiritual aspects that emphasize the individual's relationship with God (taqwa), emotional aspects through the development of self-awareness and self-control, and social aspects by cultivating social sensitivity and tolerance. Holistic education in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) avoids fragmentation of educational dimensions and treats students as whole individuals, not merely as objects of knowledge transfer. This is reflected in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teaching materials, which encompass understanding aqidah (faith) as the foundation of belief, instilling commendable morals practiced in daily life, jurisprudence (fiqh) lessons that guide worship practices, and Islamic history as a source of moral examples (Ningsih & Zalisman, 2024).

The success of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in strengthening character depends not only on the content but also on the learning methods used. A holistic approach to Islamic Religious Education (PAI) demands interactive and reflective methods so that values are not merely memorized but truly embedded and guide students' attitudes and behavior. For example, the implementation of deliberation discussion methods, case studies, and routine religious practices strengthen awareness of responsibility and harmonious social relationships. A supportive school environment with a positive culture also strengthens the process of internalizing Islamic character. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) not only protects students' morality but also forms a sustainable personal identity based on spiritual and ethical values. The integration of religious values into daily life provides students with a strong foundation for facing various moral and social challenges. The ethical awareness that develops from this education makes a person not only ritually obedient but also wise in social relationships and responsible for themselves and their environment. Thus, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) makes a significant contribution to shaping individuals with comprehensive and sustainable integrity (Cahyani & Masyithoh, 2023). Islamic Religious Education within the holistic education paradigm serves as a pivot for character strengthening, integrating spiritual, emotional, social, and moral values in a holistic and comprehensive learning environment. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) not only transfers religious knowledge, but also fosters awareness and internalization of character rooted in divine awareness. Real-life practices such as congregational prayer, Islamic deliberation, and polite interactions between students are effective means of building character traits of discipline, responsibility, honesty, and tolerance. With a reflective learning approach and a supportive school environment, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) serves as a foundation for the formation of a strong personal identity and integrity for students. This paradigm makes PAI a key pillar in shaping a generation that is not only intelligent but also imbued with Islamic morals and a well-rounded personality (Maulana et al., 2025).

Internalization Patterns of Values Through a Combination of Cognition, Role Modeling, and Habituation

The internalization of values through a combination of cognition, role modeling, and habituation is an effective approach in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) to shape students' character holistically. This model emphasizes that strengthening religious values is not sufficient if it is merely understood intellectually or cognitively through lectures and memorization, but must also be directly applied through concrete examples and consistent habits to form a strong and ingrained character (Munif, 2017).

First, the cognitive dimension is the basic foundation for internalizing values, in the form of knowledge and understanding of religious teachings. Teaching and learning activities that emphasize lectures, discussions, or memorization of verses and hadiths enable students to understand religious narratives theoretically. However, without in-depth exploration involving emotions and practical experience, this cognitive understanding will not be sufficient to significantly change students' attitudes and behavior. Second, role models (good deeds) is a very important affective aspect in the internalization of values. Teachers, as authoritative figures in Islamic Religious Education (PAI), have a crucial role in exemplifying the values taught, both in worship, morals, and social interactions. Research shows that students more easily imitate behavior they witness directly than simply absorb abstract theories. For example, teachers who are disciplined in performing prayers on time, speaking politely and courteously, and showing empathy towards students and the surrounding environment, indirectly instill these values in students. Teachers' exemplary behavior helps students feel the meaning of values affectively, making them more alive and applicable. Third, habituation (habit formation) is a psychomotor dimension that emphasizes the importance of repetition or routine as an effort to strengthen values in students' daily lives. Religious habits manifested through school culture are very influential in the process of internalizing values. For example, the routine practice of greeting when meeting, reading the Qur'an together before the start of lessons, literacy on etiquette before class discussions, and social activities such as the Friday Blessing program. With these routines, religious values are not just theory, but become real reflections through repeated and natural actions. In addition, habits are also developed contextually and adaptively to the challenges of the times, such as strengthening digital ethical literacy to face the challenges of social media, teaching about ecological responsibility from an Islamic perspective, and the value of tolerance in interacting with social diversity (Abidin et al., 2025).

The combination of these three aspects—cognition, role modeling, and habituation—creates a holistic and effective pattern of value internalization. This pattern integrates theoretical narratives, emotional experiences, and reinforcement through concrete practices, which together strengthen students' comprehensive character formation. This model is far more relevant than religious learning methods that focus solely on theory without providing practical examples and without involving ongoing habituation. Thus, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) that is adaptive and responsive to today's social and cultural contexts produces not only a textual understanding of religion but also a strong religious character. This internalization model positions religion as a real, integrative, and meaningful life experience for students, thus providing a strong foundation for their future personal and social development.

Islamic Religious Education as a Moral-Spiritual Protection Amidst the Challenges of the Digital Era

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) serves as a crucial moral-spiritual protective mechanism amidst the challenges of the digital era, characterized by the rapid flow of information, globalization, and a fast and complex digital culture. In this context, PAI provides a kind of "spiritual immune system" that serves as a moral bulwark for students, helping them face the temptations and negative pressures of the digital environment, such as plagiarism, verbal aggression online, hate speech, promiscuity, and the instant culture that is vulnerable to the younger generation. One of the main strengths of PAI is the formation of a deep religious awareness accompanied by a sense of fear and spiritual responsibility to God (*murāqabah*). This awareness transcends conventional social control because it originates within the self as faith rather than merely through external mechanisms. This enables students who receive intensive religious education to have stronger moral resilience in navigating a digital life full of temptations and distractions (Hajri, 2023). However, the protective effectiveness of PAI will be reduced if religious education is taught only in a ritualistic or rigid dogmatic manner without reflecting on the context and dynamics of the digital age. Islamic Religious Education that focuses solely on memorizing texts without connecting students to the realities of their digital world will fail to be an effective moral bulwark. Instead, PAI needs to integrate holistic education that does not reject modernity but instead positions Islamic ethical values as a guiding force for modernity itself. In practice, PAI that is responsive to the digital era includes discussions of digital ethics such as the ethics of using chat rooms, managing toxic content, etiquette in global digital collaboration, and protecting against social media addiction. This makes PAI not merely an abstract teaching, but a concrete solution to the moral crisis that arises with technological advances and social change.

Islamic Religious Education also contributes to the development of Islamic-oriented digital literacy, teaching students to critically evaluate and verify information to avoid hoaxes and the spread of online hate speech. Furthermore, PAI fosters digital ethics that prioritize honesty, respect for privacy, and responsibility in online interactions. This religious education provides the foundation for developing a positive digital identity and a sense of pride as modern Muslims who respect diversity. PAI supports strengthening students' psychological resilience in the digital age. Students with a strong foundation of faith and religious understanding are able to face pressures such as internet addiction or cyberbullying with healthy coping mechanisms. Thus, PAI is shaping a generation that is not merely a passive consumer of technology but also a producer of positive, constructive content (Afif & Ningrum, 2024). As a moral-spiritual protective mechanism, PAI plays a strategic role in bridging religious traditions with the demands of digital modernity, making religion a living and relevant primary source of ethics. This model makes PAI a driving force for a healthy and effective Islamic digital culture.

CONCLUSION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) serves as a fundamental foundation for instilling noble morals and building students' character in the era of holistic education. The integration of Islamic values into the curriculum, encompassing not only the cognitive but also the affective and spiritual domains, makes PAI a strategic instrument for shaping a generation with strong personalities, integrity, and social awareness. Therefore, strengthening the role of PAI should be a top priority in implementing national education to create students who are not only intellectually intelligent but also morally and spiritually mature. Research shows that implementing PAI learning has a real and significant impact on student character development, particularly at the elementary school level. The systematic and interactive learning process, combined with the instillation of Islamic values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, empathy, and tolerance, has been proven to foster positive student behavior in various life contexts, both at school, in the family, and in the social environment. The effectiveness of character formation is increasingly visible when supported by a conducive school environment, professional and inspiring teachers, and the active involvement of parents in internalizing moral values at home. However, the study also identified several obstacles, including limited time allocated to religious studies and a lack of integration of Islamic values throughout the school culture. These findings have important implications: Islamic Religious Education (PAI) should not be positioned solely as an academic subject, but as a central driver of comprehensive character development. By strengthening the integration of PAI into the curriculum and all school activities, educational institutions can produce a generation that excels intellectually, possesses noble morals, is religious, and is prepared to become agents of positive change in society.

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