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RECONCEPTUALIZING HOLISTIC CHARACTER EDUCATION IN ISLAMIC SCHOOLS THROUGH CURRICULUM INTEGRATION IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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ABSTRACT
Rapid digital transformation has reshaped educational practices worldwide, creating new challenges for character education in Islamic schools. Although previous studies have explored digital learning, curriculum reform, and character education separately, limited attention has been given to how curriculum integration can reconstruct holistic character education in digitally mediated learning environments. This study examines how Islamic schools integrate the Independent Curriculum and the Love Curriculum to strengthen holistic character education. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and curriculum document analysis, which were then analyzed thematically. The findings reveal that digital transformation not only reshapes teacher–student relationships but also complicates the cultivation of moral values within increasingly technology-mediated learning environments. In response to these developments, Islamic schools integrate the pedagogical flexibility of the Independent Curriculum with the value-oriented principles of the Love Curriculum through coordinated curriculum design, teacher collaboration, school culture, and community engagement. As a result, this integration produces a holistic model of character education that combines academic learning, Islamic values, compassion, ethical digital citizenship, and the cultivation of *adab*. Overall, the study contributes to Islamic education scholarship by extending Biesta's theory of educational purpose into Islamic contexts, broadening Beane's curriculum integration theory through the inclusion of academic learning, Islamic values, and school culture, and operationalizing Al-Attas' philosophy of *ta'dib* as a practical framework for holistic Islamic character education in the digital era.

Keywords: Character Education, Curriculum Integration, Digital Transformation, Islamic Education, *Ta'dib*, The Love Curriculum

INTRODUCTION
Rapid digital transformation has fundamentally reshaped educational practices worldwide, creating unprecedented opportunities for pedagogical innovation while simultaneously challenging the broader educational purposes traditionally associated with schooling. Advances in digital technologies have expanded personalized learning, flexible curriculum delivery, and collaborative knowledge construction, yet they have also generated growing concerns regarding the diminishing emphasis on learners' moral, social, and character development (Armila et al., 2024; Bartulis, 2024; Holvikivi, 2024; Huang & Pan, 2024). Rather than merely representing a technological shift, digitalization has transformed teacher–student relationships, learning interactions, and curriculum priorities, creating new tensions among academic achievement, technological competence, and the holistic development of learners (Ivanenko et al., 2024). These tensions are particularly significant within Islamic schools, where education is expected not only to develop intellectual competence but also to cultivate ethical responsibility, religious identity, and moral integrity. Consequently, reconstructing holistic character education has

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become an increasingly important challenge for Islamic educational institutions seeking to remain responsive to digital transformation while preserving their distinctive educational mission.

Within this broader context, curriculum reform has become a central strategy for responding to educational change. Indonesia's Independent Curriculum (*Kurikulum Merdeka*) exemplifies this movement by promoting learner autonomy, differentiated instruction, project-based learning, and curriculum flexibility to prepare students for the demands of the twenty-first century (Ananda Rizki & Fahkrunisa, 2022; Asrifan et al., 2023; Muthoharoh, 2023; Ndari et al., 2023). Although these reforms have been widely recognized for enhancing learning innovation, they have also introduced an enduring pedagogical challenge: how can schools sustain systematic character formation within increasingly personalized and technology-mediated learning environments? Recent studies indicate that while the Independent Curriculum encourages creativity and learner agency, teachers frequently encounter difficulties in integrating religious values, moral education, and meaningful teacher–student interaction into digitally supported learning (Adiyono et al., 2024; Fathoni et al., 2024; Rachmadtullah et al., 2024; Yuliani et al., 2024). Similar concerns have been identified internationally, where scholars argue that digital transformation may inadvertently privilege technological efficiency over moral, emotional, and social development unless curriculum reform deliberately integrates value-based educational principles (Armila et al., 2024; Hamamra & Qabaha, 2023; Peterson, 2020).

Despite growing scholarship on digital learning, curriculum reform, and character education, three important gaps remain. First, previous studies have largely examined these issues independently, yielding a limited understanding of how curriculum integration can simultaneously address digital transformation and strengthen character education within Islamic schools. Second, research on the Independent Curriculum has predominantly focused on implementation, technological readiness, or instructional effectiveness, while offering limited theoretical explanation of how curriculum flexibility can be integrated with value-based Islamic education (Amiq et al., 2025; Inayah et al., 2025; Laili, 2024; Naswa & Muthoifin, 2025). Third, although the recently introduced Love Curriculum (Kurikulum Cinta) has attracted growing scholarly attention, existing studies primarily describe its educational values and implementation without examining its conceptual relationship to broader curriculum reform or its potential contribution to the reconstruction of holistic character education. Consequently, an important theoretical gap remains concerning how curriculum integration can provide a coherent educational response to the changing purposes of Islamic education in the digital era.

Addressing these gaps, this study investigates how Islamic schools reconstruct holistic character education through the integration of the Independent Curriculum and the Love Curriculum in the context of digital transformation. Rather than viewing the two curricula as competing educational models, the study conceptualizes them as complementary approaches that integrate pedagogical innovation with value-based Islamic education. It develops an empirically grounded conceptual model explaining how curriculum integration strengthens holistic character education through curriculum design, teacher collaboration, school culture, and community engagement. To interpret this process, the study adopts an integrated framework combining Biesta's theory of educational purpose (Biesta, 2020), Beane's curriculum integration theory (Beane, 1997), and Al-Attas' philosophy of *ta'dib* (Al-Attas, 1980, 1991), which collectively explain the changing purposes of education, the pedagogical processes of curriculum integration, and the philosophical foundations of Islamic character formation. By integrating these perspectives, the study contributes to international scholarship by proposing a theoretically informed model of holistic character education that responds to the educational opportunities and challenges of the digital era.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design to examine how holistic character education is reconstructed in Islamic schools through the integration of the Independent Curriculum and the Love Curriculum within the context of digital transformation. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to understand participants' experiences, perceptions, and educational practices within their natural settings rather than measure predetermined variables. Therefore, data were collected over a four-month period through semi-structured interviews, non-participant classroom and school observations, and document analysis. Participants comprised teachers, school leaders, parents, and students who were purposively selected based on their direct involvement in curriculum implementation and character education practices. To delve deeper, interviews explored participants' perceptions of curriculum reform, digital learning, and character education. At the same time, classroom observations focused on teacher–student interactions, learning activities, and the enactment of character education in technology-mediated learning environments. Moreover, documentary evidence included curriculum implementation documents, lesson plans, school policies, and character education guidelines, which enabled triangulation between participants' perspectives and institutional practices, thereby strengthening the study's validity and comprehensive understanding.

Data were then analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis through six iterative stages: familiarization with the data, initial coding, theme generation, theme review, theme definition, and report writing. Themes were generated inductively from interviews, observations, and documentary evidence, and then interpreted through an integrated conceptual framework comprising Biesta's (2020) theory of educational purpose, Beane's (1997) curriculum integration theory, and Al-Attas' (1980, 1991) philosophy of *ta'dīb*. This analytical strategy enabled the interpretation of how digital transformation reshaped the purposes of character education, how curriculum integration functioned as a pedagogical response, and how *adab* emerged as the foundation of holistic character education within Islamic schools. The credibility and trustworthiness of the findings were enhanced through methodological triangulation across multiple data sources, member checking with selected participants, and continuous comparison of emerging codes and themes to ensure analytical consistency throughout the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Digital Transformation and the Changing Landscape of Character Education

The findings indicate that digital transformation has substantially reshaped educational practices and character education in Islamic schools. Analysis of interviews, classroom observations, and curriculum documents revealed three interrelated patterns: the transformation of classroom interaction through digital learning, teachers' perceptions of changing student character development, and parents' observations of students' behavioral changes beyond the school environment. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that digital technologies have altered not only instructional practices but also the social and moral interactions through which character education has traditionally been cultivated in Islamic schools.

Building on these insights, teachers consistently reported that implementing digitally supported learning under the Independent Curriculum transformed classroom interaction. Specifically, this shift moved their roles from direct facilitators of interpersonal learning to managers of digital learning environments. A school principal elaborated on this point, explaining that although digital technologies expanded learning opportunities, they simultaneously reduced opportunities for direct moral interaction between teachers and students, making character guidance more difficult to sustain (IW, personal communication,

December 2024). Furthermore, similar views were expressed by teachers, who observed that students increasingly relied on digital devices to complete learning tasks. Hence, this reliance limited opportunities for face-to-face dialogue, collaborative reflection, and spontaneous moral mentoring. Classroom observations corroborated these perceptions, revealing that teacher–student communication frequently centered on technical learning support rather than value-based interaction. Meanwhile, lesson plans and school guidelines consistently prioritized digital literacy, project-based learning, and technology-assisted instruction. Taken together, these findings suggest that digital transformation has reconfigured classroom interaction; it has expanded instructional innovation while, at the same time, reducing the informal interpersonal engagement through which character education has traditionally been reinforced.

Subsequently, teachers consistently perceived that the increasing integration of digital learning had gradually influenced students' character development despite its educational benefits. Interview participants reported declining learning discipline, reduced empathy during peer interactions, shorter attention spans, and greater dependence on digital devices in both academic and non-academic settings (Teacher A, personal communication, January 2025; Teacher C, personal communication, January 2025). These perceptions were supported by classroom observations showing reduced participation in collaborative discussions, increased individual engagement with digital media, and frequent teacher reminders regarding responsible technology use. Documentary evidence further reinforced these findings, as school policies increasingly incorporated regulations on digital learning, gadget use, and character-strengthening programmes to balance technological innovation with moral and religious education. Together, these findings indicate that while digital transformation enhances learning opportunities, it also requires deliberate institutional strategies to sustain character formation within Islamic schools.

Parents similarly reported that the increasing use of digital technology for learning had altered students' behaviour beyond the school environment. Although digital learning enhanced access to educational resources and technological competence, many parents observed that prolonged use of devices reduced children's participation in household responsibilities, face-to-face communication, and family religious activities (Parent B, personal communication, February 2025; Parent D, personal communication, February 2025). These perceptions were consistent with observations during school–parent activities, where teachers emphasized the importance of parental supervision in managing students' digital behaviour. Furthermore, these concerns were echoed in school partnership documents encouraging continuous collaboration between families and schools to reinforce character education. Collectively, the findings indicate that digital transformation has reshaped classroom interaction, influenced students' behavioural development, and extended responsibility for character education beyond schools into the family. As such, this highlights the need for coordinated educational responses to sustain holistic character formation in digitally mediated learning environments.

Character Education Challenges under the Independent Curriculum

Teachers consistently expressed uncertainty about integrating character education into student-centred and digitally supported learning while fulfilling the pedagogical expectations of the Independent Curriculum. Although they valued the curriculum's flexibility, participants explained that professional development emphasized instructional innovation, project-based learning, and assessment more than practical approaches to embedding Islamic values and character formation in everyday teaching (Teacher A, personal communication, January 2025; Teacher D, personal communication, January 2025). Classroom observations revealed that opportunities for structured moral reflection varied considerably across lessons, while curriculum documents and lesson plans generally framed character education as broad educational objectives rather than integrated instructional practices. Together, these findings

indicate that schools differed in their readiness to translate curricular flexibility into coherent and systematic character education.

Moreover, teachers frequently indicated confusion regarding the incorporation of character education within student-focused, technology-enhanced learning environments, all while striving to align with the pedagogical standards set by the Independent Curriculum. Although they valued the curriculum's flexibility, participants explained that professional development focused primarily on instructional innovation, project-based learning, and assessment rather than practical strategies for embedding Islamic values and character formation in everyday teaching (Teacher A, personal communication, January 2025; Teacher D, personal communication, January 2025). Classroom observations supported these perceptions, showing that opportunities for structured moral reflection varied considerably across lessons. In contrast, curriculum documents and lesson plans generally presented character education as broad educational objectives rather than integrated instructional practices. Collectively, these findings suggest that schools differed in their readiness to translate curricular flexibility into coherent and consistent character education.

Particularly important, teachers acknowledged that the Independent Curriculum promoted learner autonomy and contextualized learning. However, it also reduced the consistency of routine character-building practices that had previously been embedded in daily school activities (School Principal, personal communication, December 2024; Teacher B, personal communication, January 2025). Observations showed that, while classrooms encouraged collaboration, inquiry, and active participation, opportunities to reinforce discipline, responsibility, empathy, and religious reflection depended largely on individual teachers' instructional approaches. Similarly, lesson plans clearly articulated academic competencies but, at the same time, provided less consistent guidance for sustaining character habituation through continuous classroom practice. These findings therefore suggest that greater curricular flexibility not only enhanced instructional innovation but also created variation in the implementation of character education across schools.

Likewise, teachers, parents, and students consistently reported that technology-mediated learning increased the complexity of supervising students' moral behaviour. Teachers observed that digital devices, while essential for learning, made it more difficult to monitor students' attention and online activities during lessons (Teacher C, personal communication, January 2025). Parents similarly noted that educational technology frequently extended into excessive recreational screen time at home, while students acknowledged that digital learning required greater self-regulation than traditional classroom instruction (Parent B, personal communication, February 2025; Parent D, personal communication, February 2025; Student A, personal communication, February 2025). Classroom observations corroborated these accounts, with teachers frequently redirecting students' attention and reinforcing responsible use of technology. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that digital learning simultaneously expands educational opportunities and increases the demands of guiding students' moral behaviour and self-discipline.

Overall, the triangulated findings suggest that the primary challenges associated with implementing the Independent Curriculum arise not from the curriculum itself but from the complexities of translating its pedagogical flexibility into coherent and sustained character education within digitally mediated learning environments. These challenges, therefore, provide the empirical foundation for the following section, which examines how Islamic schools addressed them through the integration of the Independent Curriculum and the Love Curriculum.

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Curriculum Integration as an Emerging Educational Response

The findings indicate that Islamic schools responded to the challenges of digital transformation by integrating the Independent Curriculum with the Love Curriculum rather than treating them as competing educational models. Furthermore, analysis of interviews, observations, curriculum documents, lesson plans, and school programmes revealed four complementary strategies: balancing academic flexibility with moral formation, integrating Islamic values across subjects, strengthening teacher collaboration, and embedding compassion within everyday school culture. These strategies collectively demonstrate that curriculum integration became the principal educational response for sustaining holistic character education, while simultaneously preserving the pedagogical flexibility of the Independent Curriculum.

In addition, teachers consistently reported that they adapted the flexibility of the Independent Curriculum without abandoning the moral objectives of Islamic education. For instance, project-based learning, differentiated instruction, and student-centred activities were intentionally linked with core values such as responsibility, honesty, cooperation, empathy, and religious commitment. This approach allowed academic learning and character formation to develop simultaneously, as noted by the School Principal and teachers (personal communication, December 2024; January 2025). Classroom observations further confirmed that collaborative inquiry was frequently accompanied by reflective discussions on students' responsibilities. Moreover, lesson plans increasingly combined academic competencies with explicit character outcomes. These findings collectively indicate that curriculum flexibility was interpreted not as a means to diminish moral education but rather as an opportunity to contextualize moral formation within the learning process.

Teachers further described embedding Islamic values such as *ṣidq* (honesty), *amānah* (trustworthiness), compassion, mutual respect, and social responsibility across science, language, social studies, and project-based learning instead of confining them to Islamic Religious Education classes (Teacher C, personal communication, January 2025). Not only that, observations showed that ethical reflection and responsible digital behaviour were routinely incorporated into classroom discussions, while curriculum documents explicitly integrated religious values, student reflection, and community-based learning across subjects. These findings suggest that character education became more meaningful when Islamic values were embedded within authentic learning experiences rather than delivered as separate moral instruction.

Curriculum integration also strengthened collaboration among teachers by positioning character education as a shared institutional responsibility rather than the exclusive domain of Islamic Religious Education teachers. Participants reported collaborative curriculum planning, interdisciplinary projects, and coordinated school programmes designed to align academic learning with character development (Teacher B, personal communication, January 2025). These practices were consistently observed through project-based learning, community service, and religious activities. Moreover, curriculum planning documents confirmed systematic collaboration across subject areas. In this regard, the findings indicate that this form of collaborative curriculum design enhanced consistency in implementing character education throughout the school.

Beyond classroom instruction, participating schools integrated the principles of the Love Curriculum into everyday school culture. This was achieved by promoting compassion through various activities such as collective prayers, peer mentoring, community service, charitable activities, conflict mediation, and respectful daily interactions (Teacher D, personal communication, January 2025; School Principal, personal communication, December 2024). Observations demonstrated that teachers consistently modelled empathy, cooperation, and

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mutual respect. In addition, school policies reinforced these values through both curricular and extracurricular programmes. Taken together, these findings suggest that curriculum integration extended beyond instructional planning, actively contributing to the creation of a value-rich educational environment where compassion became an intrinsic part of students' daily experiences. Figure 1 illustrates the Curriculum Integration Process in Islamic Schools.

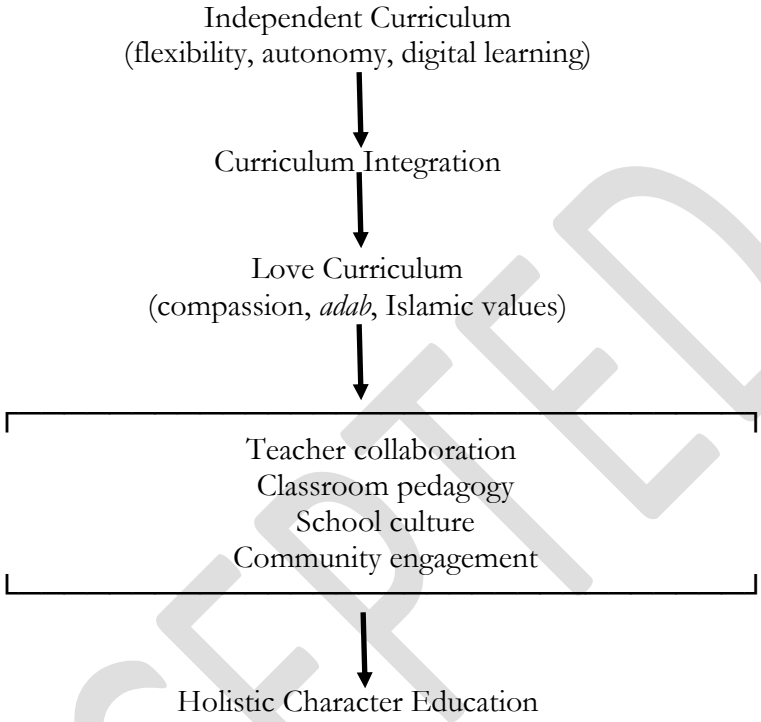


Figure 1. Curriculum Integration Process in Islamic Schools

Figure 1 synthesizes the empirical findings by illustrating how Islamic schools integrated the Independent Curriculum and the Love Curriculum to respond to the challenges of digital transformation. Rather than functioning as separate educational frameworks, the two curricula complemented one another by combining pedagogical flexibility, learner autonomy, and digital learning with compassion, *adab*, and Islamic values. This integration was operationalized through teacher collaboration, classroom pedagogy, school culture, and community engagement, creating interconnected learning experiences that reinforced students' academic, moral, social, and spiritual development. The figure demonstrates that curriculum integration served as the central institutional mechanism through which holistic character education was reconstructed within contemporary Islamic schools.

Reconstructing Character Education in Islamic Schools

The findings reveal that curriculum integration not only reshaped character education beyond merely implementing instructional innovation, but it also generated a holistic educational model grounded in five interconnected dimensions: cultivating adab through curriculum, compassion as an educational practice, teacher role modelling, ethical digital citizenship, and school–community partnership. Furthermore, in addition to these core elements, analysis of interviews, observations, school culture, religious activities, and institutional documents indicates that these dimensions collectively reconstruct character

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education as an integrated educational process. This approach contrasts with viewing character education as a series of isolated moral programmes; instead, it highlights the interconnected and continuous nature of character development within the educational framework.

Participants consistently described character education as the cultivation of adab across students' intellectual, spiritual, and social development. Importantly, they emphasized that this was not merely about promoting behavioural discipline. Teachers, for instance, highlighted respectful learning, responsibility, honesty, and ethical interaction as integral elements of classroom practice (Teacher A, personal communication, January 2025). These perceptions were further corroborated by classroom observations, which documented reflective dialogue, collaborative learning, and value-based discussions. Additionally, religious activities and school documents consistently reinforced adab as a foundational principle guiding both academic learning and everyday school life. Collectively, these findings suggest that curriculum implementation intentionally integrated moral formation with cognitive development, ensuring a comprehensive approach to character education.

Compassion emerged as a lived educational practice embedded throughout daily school activities rather than as an abstract moral value. Teachers and school leaders described peer mentoring, cooperative learning, charitable initiatives, conflict mediation, and community service as practical expressions of character education (School Principal, personal communication, December 2024). Furthermore, classroom observations confirmed that students were routinely encouraged to support one another through collaborative learning. Additionally, school programmes institutionalized compassion through social service, religious celebrations, and charity activities. These findings, therefore, suggest that students developed character primarily through authentic social participation rather than through formal moral instruction alone.

Moreover, participants consistently identified teachers as the primary exemplars of character education. They emphasized that students learned values through observing teachers' everyday behaviour as much as through formal instruction. In particular, teachers highlighted honesty, fairness, patience, discipline, and respectful communication as essential professional responsibilities (Teacher C, personal communication, January 2025). Classroom observations supported these perceptions by documenting teachers modeling respectful dialogue, constructive conflict resolution, and consistent ethical conduct. Meanwhile, institutional policies and teacher codes of conduct reinforced exemplary behaviour as a core expectation. Consequently, these findings demonstrate that teacher modelling remained central to sustaining character education within digitally mediated learning environments.

The findings further reveal that digital transformation expanded character education to include ethical digital citizenship. Teachers and students emphasized responsible technology use, respectful online communication, academic integrity, information literacy, and digital self-regulation as increasingly important dimensions of students' moral development (Teacher D, personal communication, January 2025; Student A, personal communication, February 2025). Classroom observations showed teachers consistently reinforcing responsible digital behaviour, while school policies governing gadget use and digital learning established clear ethical expectations for technology-mediated education. These findings, therefore, indicate that digital ethics has become an essential component of contemporary Islamic character education.

Furthermore, character education also emerged as a shared responsibility extending beyond the school into families and the wider community. Teachers and parents emphasized that sustained moral development required continuous collaboration to reinforce students' character formation, supervise technology use, and strengthen religious practices within both school and home environments (Parent B, personal communication, February 2025). Supporting these perceptions, observations of parent meetings, community religious

programmes, and school outreach initiatives, as well as institutional policies promoting active family involvement in character education, substantiate this view. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that holistic character formation depends upon sustained partnerships among schools, families, and communities rather than classroom instruction.

In conclusion, the triangulated findings indicate that character education in Islamic schools has been reconstructed through the integration of curriculum, school culture, teacher practice, ethical digital citizenship, and community participation. Consequently, rather than relying solely on isolated moral instruction, participating schools increasingly conceptualize character formation as a holistic educational process that integrates intellectual development, ethical responsibility, spiritual values, and social engagement. This emerging empirical model thus provides the foundation for the integrated conceptual interpretation presented in the discussion section that follows.

Toward a Holistic Model of Character Education

The preceding findings collectively demonstrate that Islamic schools responded to the challenges of digital transformation by reconstructing character education through curriculum integration rather than curriculum replacement. Digital technologies, in turn, reshaped classroom interaction, teacher–student relationships, and learning practices, thereby creating new challenges for sustaining moral formation within increasingly flexible and technology-mediated learning environments. In response, participating schools integrated the Independent Curriculum with the Love Curriculum by combining learner-centred pedagogy with the systematic cultivation of Islamic values through curriculum design, teacher collaboration, school culture, and community engagement. These interconnected practices, therefore, illustrate that curriculum integration functioned as the principal institutional mechanism for balancing pedagogical innovation with value-based education.

Taken together, the findings indicate that holistic character education emerged not from isolated moral instruction but from the interaction of curriculum implementation, teacher role modelling, ethical digital citizenship, compassionate school culture, and school–community partnerships. Consequently, character formation was embedded across academic learning, religious activities, and everyday educational experiences, which allowed intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social development to reinforce one another. This empirically derived model thus provides the foundation for the following discussion, which interprets the findings through the integrated perspectives of educational purpose, curriculum integration, and *ta'dīb*.

The findings demonstrate that digital transformation reshapes not only instructional practices but also the educational purposes through which character formation is achieved in Islamic schools. As teachers increasingly facilitate technology-mediated learning and students rely more heavily on digital platforms, opportunities for direct interpersonal interaction, moral guidance, and character habituation become less frequent. Interpreted through Biesta's (2020) theory of educational purpose, these findings suggest that while digitalization strengthens the qualification dimension by expanding technological competence and independent learning, it simultaneously requires more intentional efforts to sustain socialization and subjectification. Character formation can no longer be assumed to emerge naturally through classroom interaction but must be deliberately embedded within pedagogical design, teacher–student relationships, and school culture.

These findings underscore prior research indicating that educational digitalization transforms learning relationships while introducing new challenges for students' moral and social development (Armila et al., 2024; Holvikivi, 2024; Huang & Pan, 2024). Likewise, Hamamra and Qabaha (2023) argue that technology-mediated learning may weaken

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interpersonal engagement when educational interactions become increasingly digital. Extending this literature, the present study demonstrates that these challenges are particularly significant in Islamic schools, where character formation constitutes a core educational purpose rather than a complementary learning outcome. Thus, the findings suggest that the central issue is not the adoption of digital technologies themselves but ensuring that technological innovation remains aligned with the broader purposes of Islamic education, thereby providing the rationale for curriculum integration as a strategic response to digital transformation (Arnensi & Elhefni, 2023; Minarti et al., 2025).

The findings further indicate that curriculum integration offers the most appropriate pedagogical response to the challenges posed by digital transformation in Islamic schools. Rather than replacing the Independent Curriculum, participating schools integrated it into the Love Curriculum, combining learner autonomy and instructional flexibility with the systematic cultivation of Islamic values through classroom learning, teacher collaboration, and school culture. This finding shares a similar vein with previous studies showing that the Independent Curriculum promotes contextual and student-centred learning but requires stronger strategies for integrating character education (Asrifan et al., 2023; Muthoharoh, 2023; Ndari et al., 2023), while the Love Curriculum emphasizes compassion, tolerance, and harmonious relationships as core educational values (Amiq et al., 2025; Laili, 2024). Interpreted through Beane's (1997) curriculum integration theory, the findings demonstrate that meaningful curriculum integration extends beyond interdisciplinary learning to connect academic knowledge, Islamic values, authentic learning experiences, and institutional culture into a coherent educational system. Consequently, this study extends Beane's theory to the context of Islamic education by showing that sustainable curriculum reform depends on integrating pedagogical innovation with moral and religious formation rather than replacing one curriculum with another.

In addition, the reconstructed model of character education emerging from this study demonstrates that Islamic schools increasingly understand character formation as a holistic educational process rather than a collection of behavioural interventions. The findings reveal that the integration of curriculum, school culture, teacher role modelling, compassion, ethical digital practices, and school–community partnerships collectively reshapes how students develop moral responsibility within digitally mediated learning environments. These dimensions suggest that character education is embedded in the entire educational ecosystem instead of being confined to formal moral instruction or isolated religious activities. This finding is consistent with recent studies emphasizing that Islamic character education requires the integration of ethical values into everyday educational practice rather than treating character formation as an additional curricular component (Adiyono et al., 2024; Mulang & Putra, 2023). Similarly, Naswa and Muthoifin (2025) argue that responding to contemporary moral challenges requires educational strategies that integrate religious values with the realities of the digital era, while Ramadhan et al. (2025) highlight that Islamic Religious Education should cultivate Islamic character through authentic educational experiences that extend beyond classroom instruction. The present findings reinforce these perspectives by demonstrating that sustainable character education emerges from the interaction of curriculum, pedagogy, institutional culture, and community participation (Ningsih, 2024; Rintoni et al., 2025).

These findings can be interpreted through Al-Attas' (1980, 1991) philosophy of *ta'dīb*, which conceptualizes education as the cultivation of *adab* through the harmonious integration of intellectual, moral, and spiritual development. From this perspective, education is not primarily concerned with producing externally compliant behaviour but with forming individuals who recognize the proper place of knowledge, human relationships, and ethical responsibility in accordance with Islamic values. The reconstructed model identified in this study reflects this educational orientation by positioning teacher role modelling, compassion,

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ethical digital citizenship, and school–community collaboration as interconnected processes through which *adab* is cultivated in everyday educational practice. Ultimately, the study extends contemporary discussions of Islamic character education by demonstrating that curriculum integration provides an operational mechanism through which *ta'dīb* can be enacted within modern Islamic schools. This represents a significant conceptual shift from behaviour-oriented character education toward the formation of ethical personhood, where moral conduct develops through continuous participation in value-rich educational environments rather than through moral instruction alone. In doing so, the study contributes to Islamic education scholarship by illustrating how the philosophical principles of ta'dīb remain relevant for reconstructing character education amid the challenges of digital transformation.

The findings further demonstrate that the reconstructed model of character education in Islamic schools extends beyond behaviour-oriented moral instruction toward the holistic cultivation of *adab* through curriculum, school culture, teacher role modelling, ethical digital citizenship, compassion, and school–community partnerships. This finding supports previous studies emphasizing that Islamic character education should be embedded in everyday educational practice rather than treated as a separate curricular component (Adiyono et al., 2024; Mulang & Putra, 2023), while reinforcing arguments that responding to contemporary moral challenges requires integrating religious values with the realities of the digital era (Naswa & Muthoifin, 2025; Ramadhan et al., 2025). Interpreted through Al-Attas' (1980, 1991) philosophy of ta'dīb, the findings suggest that character education is fundamentally concerned with cultivating *adab* through the balanced development of intellectual, moral, and spiritual capacities rather than merely regulating behaviour. Accordingly, this study extends contemporary Islamic education scholarship by demonstrating that curriculum integration provides a practical mechanism for operationalizing *ta'dīb* within digitally mediated learning environments, thereby shifting the focus of character education from behavioural compliance to the formation of ethical personhood grounded in Islamic values (Sappaile et al, 2024; Zendrato & Agatha, 2023).

The integrated model proposed in this study demonstrates that holistic character education in Islamic schools emerges through the interaction of educational purpose, curriculum integration, and *ta'dīb* within digitally mediated learning environments. Consistent with international studies emphasizing that effective character education depends on coherent educational ecosystems integrating curriculum, pedagogy, school culture, and interpersonal relationships (Bierman et al., 2010; Coelho et al., 2015; Crossan et al., 2023; Peterson, 2020), the present findings further show that these dimensions are strengthened in Islamic schools through the systematic integration of Islamic values across curriculum, classroom practice, and institutional culture. Viewed through the integrated framework adopted in this study, Biesta's (2020) theory explains why digital transformation requires schools to rebalance the educational purposes of qualification, socialization, and subjectification; Beane's (1997) curriculum integration theory provides the pedagogical mechanism for connecting academic learning with authentic value formation; and Al-Attas' (1980, 1991) philosophy of *ta'dīb* explains how these integrated learning experiences cultivate *adab* as the foundation of holistic character education. Accordingly, this study makes three theoretical contributions by extending Biesta's educational purpose into Islamic education, broadening Beane's curriculum integration theory to encompass the integration of academic learning, Islamic values, and school culture, and operationalizing *ta'dīb* through curriculum integration rather than religious instruction alone. In practical terms, the findings suggest that curriculum developers, teachers, school leaders, and policymakers should approach curriculum reform as the reconstruction of educational purposes and learning experiences, ensuring that technological innovation and character formation develop simultaneously within contemporary Islamic education.

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CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that holistic character education in Islamic schools can be reconstructed through curriculum integration as a strategic response to digital transformation. While digitalization reshapes educational relationships and creates new challenges for moral formation, the findings show that integrating the Independent Curriculum with the Love Curriculum enables schools to balance pedagogical innovation with the cultivation of Islamic values. As a result, this integration results in a holistic model of character education that is embedded across curriculum, classroom practice, school culture, ethical digital citizenship, and community partnerships. By integrating the perspectives of educational purpose, curriculum integration, and ta'dīb, the study further advances a conceptual framework that explains how Islamic schools can sustain character formation within digitally mediated learning environments. Consequently, this contributes to broader discussions on curriculum reform and value-based education. Practically speaking, the findings encourage curriculum developers, teachers, school leaders, and policymakers to view character education as a whole-school responsibility that is integrated into all aspects of educational practice, rather than as a separate instructional programme. Although the study is limited by its qualitative design and its focus on Indonesian Islamic schools, the proposed model provides a solid foundation for future research. Specifically, it invites comparative, mixed-methods, and longitudinal studies to examine its applicability across diverse educational contexts and to explore its potential to inform sustainable curriculum reform in Islamic education.

AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

A: conceptualization, writing original draft, review, interpretation of results and discussion, final revision of the manuscript. NHS: methodology, writing review, editing. SA: data collection, data analysis. AAS: investigation, data validation, editing.

CONFLICT INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest related to the research, authorship, or publication of this manuscript.

GENERATIVE AI STATEMENT

The authors reviewed and edited all AI-assisted content and take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the final manuscript.

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