
THE ROLE OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN SHAPING STUDENT CHARACTER

¹Citra Aulia Uzliva

²Hasan Maulana

³Ade Adriadi

⁴Almaydza Pratama Abnisa

⁵Irfan Kuncoro

¹Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Publisistik Thawalib, Jakarta, Indonesia; citr4206@gmail.com * Corresponden

²Sekolah tinggi Pesantren Darunna'im (STPDN) Lebak Banten, Indonesia; hasan.maulana5512@gmail.com

³Sekolah tinggi Pesantren Darunna'im (STPDN) Lebak Banten, Indonesia; adeadriadi@stpdnrangkasbitung.ac.id

⁴Institut Asy-Syukriyyah, Tangerang, Indonesia; almaydzapratamaabnisa@gmail.com

⁵Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Publisistik Thawalib, Jakarta, Indonesia; irfan_kuncoro@staitthalib.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Many Islamic education programs in higher education have not yet optimally developed students' character in an adaptive and reflective manner, particularly in facing the challenges of the digital era and modern multicultural society. This study aims to develop effective Islamic educational strategies to cultivate students who are adaptive, tolerant, and morally upright. The research employs a qualitative approach through literature review and document analysis. Findings indicate that integrating Islamic values into higher education significantly enhances students' character formation. Islamic education instructors, the campus environment, and effective learning strategies including reflective methods and project-based learning support the internalization of religious, moral, and ethical values. Academic and extracurricular activities, such as mentoring, halaqah sessions, and pesantren-style programs, contribute to developing students who are disciplined, responsible, and tolerant. A consistent religious culture and habituation of positive behaviors facilitate the development of morally virtuous personalities and social competencies to navigate the dynamics of modern society. Conclusion: Integrated Islamic education effectively shapes students to be religious, morally upright, adaptive, and socially responsible. This study provides practical strategies for Islamic higher education institutions to enhance the effectiveness of character education in an adaptive and contextual manner.

Keyword: Character Education, Islam, Students

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INTRODUCTION

Students are individuals enrolled in higher education institutions, such as universities or institutes, and officially registered in a particular study program. As learners at the tertiary level, students hold responsibilities not only for their academic achievements but also for character development and social contribution (Siswoyo et al., 2018). In this context, students are expected to serve as agents of change with moral integrity, ethical awareness, and active participation in national development through academic activities, research, innovation, and community service. Therefore, character formation becomes a critical aspect of higher education. Student character encompasses not only an understanding of humanistic and national values but also the consistent application of these values in daily life beyond academic settings (Zahir et al., 2016). Furthermore, the implementation of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education, which includes education, research, and community service, plays a pivotal role in shaping student character (Nurpratiwi, 2021). Islamic educational values, such as honesty, patience, and responsibility, provide a foundational framework for developing students of integrity (Daheri et al., 2023; Nurazizah et al., 2022; Wicaksono & Meidianto, 2021).

Islamic character education emphasizes the development of three core components: moral knowledge, moral feeling, and moral action, all grounded in Islamic teachings. These components serve as the foundation for nurturing students' ability to understand, internalize, and practice moral values in everyday life. In practice, Islamic values are often integrated into the curriculum through various subjects, habituation activities, and assessment systems that support character development. For instance, the Indonesian Madrasah Competency Assessment (AKMI) evaluates not only academic skills but also students' character development as part of the educational objectives (Yusriani & Nurmawati, 2022). Conceptually, Islamic character education aims to cultivate holistic individuals across spiritual, intellectual, social, and moral dimensions, emphasizing values such as honesty, responsibility, and social care (Choiriyah et al., 2023; Umar et al., 2025; Cinantya et al., 2019).

The implementation of Islamic character education involves strategies that integrate spiritual values with learning processes and school culture. One approach is the Sufism-based learning model, which emphasizes spiritual awareness, self-regulation, and internalization of ethical behavior in students' daily lives (Rahmat et al., 2016). Islamic organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah promote moderate Islamic values, including *tawasuth* (moderation), *tawazun* (balance), and *i'tidal* (justice), to develop inclusive and balanced Muslim character (Umar et al., 2024). However, the implementation faces challenges, including limitations in educators' capacity to develop effective character curricula and external influences such as digital distractions and materialistic culture in the modern era (Syafri & Bin Budin, 2025; Mawardi et al., 2025). To strengthen character education, institutions such as the modern pesantren in Gontor have developed models based on Islamic pluralism, emphasizing religiosity, independence, integrity, cooperation, and nationalism in shaping students' character (Muhajir, 2022).

Islamic education plays a crucial role in shaping students into individuals who are faithful, God-conscious, and morally upright, capable of fulfilling their responsibilities in society (Somad, 2021). It views humans as beings with spiritual and intellectual potential that must be developed in balance to form a complete personality (Ramdani, 2022). Therefore, the learning process in Islamic education emphasizes not only knowledge acquisition but also the internalization of moral values, fostering students' religious, disciplined, and socially responsible character (Yusri et al., 2024).

The effectiveness of Islamic education in character formation is influenced by teachers, educational environments, and instructional strategies. Islamic education teachers play a key role in instilling character values through exemplary behavior, habituation, and continuous guidance (Imamah et al., 2021). In the digital era, adaptive and contextually relevant approaches are needed to address new challenges in character formation (Kulsum & Muhid, 2022). Character education through Islamic education can be implemented by integrating moral values into the curriculum, strengthening a religious school culture, and encouraging positive behaviors in daily student life (Al-Baihaqi et al., 2024). Hence, Islamic education functions not only as knowledge transfer but also as a personality development process aimed at producing morally upright, integrity-driven individuals who contribute positively to society (Sa'diyah, 2022).

Islamic education progressively instills faith, knowledge, and ethics in students, guiding them to recognize and acknowledge Allah as the Creator. According to Al-Attas, Islamic education is a structured value-instillation process designed to cultivate spiritual and intellectual awareness leading to devotion to Allah (Hakim & Fahyuni, 2020). Through Islamic education, students develop faith, understanding, and practical application of religious teachings, resulting in individuals who are God-conscious and morally upright (Turmuzi, 2021). It also fosters tolerance, appreciation for diversity, and harmonious communication across multicultural contexts (Nurpratiwi, 2021). Students' character shaped through Islamic education manifests in openness, honesty, truthfulness, and responsibility as moral foundations in both academic and social life (Yuangga, 2016).

Despite extensive research on the importance of Islamic education in character formation, gaps remain regarding the integration of religious practices with adaptive approaches suitable for the digital era and multicultural contexts. Previous studies highlight the critical role of teachers, educational environments, and learning strategies in internalizing character values but often remain limited to formal curricula or specific campus activities. This study's novelty lies in developing a character education management model that combines moral value integration, habituation of positive behaviors, and the use of educational technology. The aim is to formulate effective strategies for shaping students' character through adaptive Islamic education. The expected outcomes include the development of students who are faithful, tolerant, responsible, and ready to contribute positively to society, while the study contributes a practical conceptual framework for Islamic educational institutions to enhance character education effectiveness.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design using a library research (literature review) approach. The qualitative approach was adopted to examine various concepts and perspectives regarding the role of Islamic education in shaping student character. The primary method for data collection was library research, which involved reviewing relevant literature sources, including scholarly articles, academic journals, books, and other documents related to Islamic education and student character development. Sources were selected based on their relevance to the research focus and their credibility as scientific references.

Data collection was carried out through document analysis. This method involved gathering and analyzing written documents pertinent to the research topic. The documents used in this study included scientific articles discussing Islamic education, student character, and the role of Islamic education in character formation. These documents were systematically reviewed to

extract information relevant to the research objectives. Data were sourced from academic journal databases and other trusted literature repositories to ensure validity and reliability.

Data processing and analysis were conducted in several stages. The first stage was data reduction, which involved selecting, sorting, and focusing on data relevant to the research topic. Collected literature was screened based on its alignment with the study's focus: Islamic education, student character, and the role of Islamic education in shaping character. The next stage was data organization, where the selected information was categorized to facilitate systematic analysis. Finally, the data were analyzed descriptively to identify key concepts, ideas, and findings related to the research topic. The results of the analysis were presented in a concise, clear, and systematic manner, enabling readers to understand the content and conclusions drawn from the literature review.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Literature Review Findings

| Author | Objective | Findings |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Alharbi (2025) | To analyze educators' perspectives in Saudi Arabia regarding the integration of Islamic values into the science curriculum in line with Vision 2030. | Findings indicate no significant conceptual understanding differences based on demographics. However, female and more experienced teachers rated the importance of integration higher. Interviews confirmed that integration links science, Islamic ethics, cultural identity, and enhances learning engagement. |
| Djannah et al. (2025) | To examine the integration of Islamic values in mathematics learning to strengthen students' character through a systematic literature review. | Results show that mathematics learning can integrate Islamic values via various pedagogical approaches and contextualized materials, potentially strengthening character education, fostering religiosity, discipline, responsibility, and enhancing the meaning of mathematics learning. |
| Purwanto et al. (2021) | To assess the optimization of character education and religious understanding of students at Islamic boarding schools of Universitas Islam Indonesia. | Findings reveal that Universitas Islam Indonesia optimizes character education through structured classroom instruction, religious guidance, and incidental spiritual education, worship, lectures, and community service, forming students with open-minded and tolerant religious understanding. |
| Kurniawan et al. (2025) | To investigate the role of Islamic education in cognitive development and the internalization of Islamic values through expressive writing. | Results show that students at Madrasah Tsanawiyah deeply engage with Islamic concepts and express the religious values reflectively, while general students only express Islamic values when guided. Islamic education strengthens students' cognitive and emotional reflection abilities. |
| Pratama et al. (2025) | To analyze the influence of religious culture on the practice of Islamic education values among students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar. | Findings indicate a strong correlation between religious culture and Islamic education practices ($r = 0.8426$), with 70.99% of variation explained by religious culture. Programs such as Student Pesantren and weekly studies effectively support value internalization, despite daily implementation challenges. |

| Author | Objective | Findings |
|------------------|---|--|
| Muzayaroh (2021) | To analyze the implementation of Islamic education and character development. | Findings indicate that Islamic education and student character formation are implemented from preparation (curriculum, competencies, admissions system), implementation (teaching methods, habituation, supervision), to evaluation (curriculum, performance, learning outcomes), fostering comprehensive moral development. |

Integration of Islamic Values in Science at Universities

The integration of Islam and science in Islamic higher education has become a major focus in recent decades. Research indicates that Islamic universities, such as the Universitas Islam Indonesia and the Universitas Islam Internasional Malaysia, strive to align religious values with the advancement of modern scientific knowledge (Achmad, 2021; Husin et al., 2025). This approach not only emphasizes the development of an integrated curriculum but also fosters an academic culture that encourages students to understand science through an Islamic perspective (Sofianto & Irawati, 2025). The implementation of this integration encompasses ethical, environmental, health, and social responsibility dimensions, ensuring that graduates are not only scientifically competent but also possess strong religious character (Hasibuan, 2025). Thus, the integration of science and religion is not merely theoretical but a practical framework that prepares a generation of scholars capable of addressing global challenges based on Islamic principles.

Other studies highlight integration models implemented at UIN Malang and other PTKIN, which focus on harmonizing scientific education with spiritual values (Zaman & Fahrudin, 2023; Sobirin & Salam, 2025). These models emphasize coherence in teaching, research, and campus activities, ensuring that every academic program reflects a synergy between scientific knowledge and religious principles (Mutholingah, 2024). Such approaches are expected to cultivate modern centers of Islamic civilization that are innovative, producing graduates who can apply scientific knowledge for societal welfare without compromising Islamic values (Sufratman, 2022). Overall, the integration of Islam and science offers strategic opportunities for Islamic universities to establish a unique academic identity while remaining relevant in the modern era.

Islamic Character Formation Programs for Students

Islamic education plays a crucial role in shaping the character of students in higher education. Research indicates that religious education programs integrated with academic activities can foster Islamic values such as honesty, discipline, and social responsibility (Ibrahim & Andriyadi, 2022; Rudini, 2020). For instance, the implementation of learning in fiqh, Islamic history, and hadith is not merely theoretical but serves as a practical guide for students' daily lives, helping them balance academic demands with religious conduct. This approach has been shown to be effective in producing students who are not only intellectually competent but also morally and spiritually sensitive (Dimiyati, 2018). Programs such as mentoring, halaqah sessions, or pesantren-style activities provide practical avenues for the sustainable internalization of Islamic character values (Samudera, 2018; Mevia, 2023).

Moreover, faith-based student activities, such as the Unit Kegiatan Mahasiswa Kerohanian Islam (UKM-KI), provide students with opportunities to practice Islamic principles outside the classroom (Adawiah, 2023; Yunarman, 2017). This strategy emphasizes character development through real-life experiences, such as leadership, collaboration, and social responsibility, allowing

students to learn through practice rather than theory alone. As a result, students develop greater personal maturity, strong ethical foundations, and the ability to serve as agents of change in society. Therefore, Islamic education plays a strategic role in cultivating a generation of students who are both character-driven and equipped to face modern challenges.

Reflective Internalization of Islamic Values

Islamic education plays a strategic role in instilling values of moderation and morality among university students. Recent studies emphasize that integrating moderate Islamic values into curricula and campus activities can reduce students' acceptance of intolerant ideologies while enhancing reflective thinking skills (Lartutul & Fahrany, 2026; Sutarto, 2022). The methods employed are diverse, ranging from interactive online learning and discussion forums to spiritual activities such as Baitul Arqam and i'tikaf, which allow students to internalize the principles of Tawhid and Islamic ethics in a practical manner (Fitriana et al., 2025; Wahidah, 2025). This approach not only cultivates religious character but also encourages students to become critical, independent, and socially responsible individuals (Tirta, 2025).

Furthermore, reflective strategies and project-based learning (PjBL) have proven effective in internalizing moderate character values through real-world experiences (Suaidi et al., 2024). By combining theory and practice, students learn to apply values of moderation both within the campus environment and in wider society. Consequently, they develop into a generation capable of critical thinking, tolerance, and adaptability, while maintaining a moderate and inclusive Islamic identity (Biantoro & Rahmatullah, 2025). This approach underscores the importance of Islamic education as a medium for character formation and a bulwark against radicalism.

Strong Religious Culture Among Students

Culture plays a significant role in shaping the religious disposition of university students. Research indicates that local culture embedded in daily life can strengthen religious identity while guiding students to internalize Islamic values (Cahyarani et al., 2025; Almu'tasim, 2016). Islamic higher education institutions strive to cultivate a religious culture through both academic and non-academic activities, such as discussion forums, religious events, and value-based learning, enabling students to routinely practice Islamic norms in real-life contexts (Zulfan & Suniarti, 2025; Sobari et al., 2025). Consequently, students not only comprehend religious theory but also develop ethical behavior, responsibility, and consistent religious practice.

Moreover, the influence of both popular and academic culture presents both challenges and opportunities. Islamic-oriented popular culture, for instance, can fulfill students' spiritual needs in the modern era, while a positive academic culture reinforces religious awareness and consistent practice (Wahyuningsih & Badiana, 2025; Mujayapura et al., 2025; Wahidin & Rozikan, 2022). This combination produces students who are religious, critical, and adaptive to social change, positioning universities as agents for character formation grounded in Islamic values while remaining responsive to contemporary cultural dynamics.

Character Education Management Among Students

The management of character education in higher education serves as a foundational mechanism for producing students who are not only academically excellent but also morally and ethically mature. Universities need to design systematic programs encompassing planning, implementation, and continuous evaluation to ensure that character values are effectively internalized (Kasanah, 2025; Yunanto & Kasanova, 2023). Implementation takes varied forms, including formal classroom learning, extracurricular activities, mentoring, and leadership training that integrate religious and social values (Rachman et al., 2017). Furthermore, character

management encourages students to actively participate in campus activities, transforming learning into meaningful experiences that foster discipline, responsibility, and consistent ethical behavior (Hasanah & Husnul, 2021). Through these strategies, students not only grasp moral theory but also habitually apply character values in daily life.

Integration of campus culture and local wisdom serves as a critical supporting factor in character education management. Character-based programs, such as apprenticeships (padepokan), social projects, mentoring, and practical student activities, enable students to internalize moral values through lived experiences rather than theory alone (Fadillah et al., 2022). A positive academic culture and reinforcement of social norms further strengthen students' religious awareness (Almu'tasim, 2016). Simultaneously, character development based on local and religious values produces students who are critical, adaptive, and ethical in navigating social and professional dynamics (Zulfan & Suniarti, 2025). This combination highlights the role of universities as platforms for cultivating individuals with strong character, critical thinking skills, and the ability to uphold both national values and religiosity in the modern era (Mujayapura et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

The integration of Islamic values in higher education plays a crucial role in shaping students' character and religious understanding. Such integration not only enhances learning engagement but also connects the mastery of knowledge with ethics, cultural identity, and spiritual values. The implementation of Islamic values across various subjects, including science and mathematics, fosters religiosity, discipline, and responsibility while imbuing learning with deeper meaning. A holistic approach, combining formal education, religious guidance, spiritual activities, and community service, cultivates students who are open-minded, tolerant, and morally upright. Reflective methods, expressive writing, and Islamic value-based student activities support the internalization of moderate values, critical thinking skills, and adaptability to social change. Additionally, a consistent religious campus culture strengthens the practice of Islamic values and equips students to face daily life challenges and contemporary social dynamics.

The impact of structured character education management demonstrates that students not only excel academically but also develop moral maturity, responsibility, and ethical conduct. Experience-based programs, such as mentoring, social projects, and pesantren-style activities, effectively shape character and enhance students' social awareness. For future research, it is recommended to explore the use of reflective methods and digital technologies in character education and examine their application across different disciplines. Further studies should also investigate the role of local and international cultures in reinforcing the internalization of Islamic values, as well as innovative strategies to address implementation challenges. Through this approach, character education in higher education can become more adaptive, relevant, and sustainable in cultivating a generation of students who are religious, ethical, and socially responsible.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Alhamdulillah, I express my sincere gratitude to Allah SWT for His guidance and blessings throughout this research. I am deeply thankful to my supervisors and mentors for their invaluable guidance, constructive feedback, and continuous encouragement. I also extend my appreciation to the lecturers, staff, and students who participated in this study, providing crucial insights that enriched the findings. This research demonstrates that integrating Islamic values in higher

education positively impacts students' character, ethical behavior, critical thinking, and social responsibility. For future research, it is recommended to explore digital and reflective learning methods in character education, as well as the role of local and international culture in strengthening the internalization of Islamic values. Finally, I sincerely thank all who contributed to the completion of this study.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

- Author 1 : Library research reviewing Islamic education literature to analyze its influence on student character and moral-religious development.
- Author 2 : Literature-based study examining curricula integration of ethical values, identifying effective strategies fostering discipline, honesty, and social responsibility.
- Author 3 : Library research synthesizing studies on spiritual activities to explore internalization of Islamic ethics among students.
- Author 4 : Literature review analyzing project-based learning and reflective methods to enhance moderate character, critical thinking, and student adaptability.
- Author 5 : Library research evaluating campus culture and local wisdom's role in shaping ethical, moral, and religious student behavior.

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