



## Integration of Islamic education and character education: Strategies to build moral integrity in madrasah institutions

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### ARTICLE INFO

*This article has undergone peer review and was presented at the Islam in World Perspectives Symposium 2024 on August 14, 2024*

#### Keywords

Islamic Education,  
Character Education,  
Moral Integrity,  
Madrasah Aliyah,  
Educational Strategies

### ABSTRACT

This study explores the integration strategies of Islamic Education and Character Education in several Madrasah Aliyah in Ponorogo, East Java, and its implications for the development of students' moral integrity. Using qualitative methods, data were collected through interviews with various informants, including principals, teachers, and students. The findings indicate that madrasahs have successfully developed effective strategies, including the implementation of an integrated curriculum, habituation of Islamic behaviour, and active involvement of teachers as role models. These strategies have significantly positively impacted the formation of students' moral integrity, as reflected in increased honesty, responsibility, and discipline. Comparative analysis with curriculum integration and moral development theories supports these findings, emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach in education to shape students' character. However, the study also identifies challenges, including consistency in strategy implementation across madrasahs and social environment support. Recommendations for further research include comparative and longitudinal studies to expand understanding of the long-term effectiveness of this integration.

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### Introduction

Along with the current era of globalization and modernization, the challenges in moral education are increasingly complex (Al-Qurtubi, 2020). Islamic education and character education play an important role in shaping the moral integrity and ethical behaviour of students. Islamic religious education has great potential to shape students' character through the teaching of moral values, ethics, and Islamic teachings that support leadership, integrity, and ethical behaviour (Hidayat, 2023). Character education requires seriousness, habituation, and inculcation of values (Muhsinin, 2013). However, the effective implementation of moral education is often hampered by the lack of integration between these two aspects of education in madrasah institutions. This

integration is important to ensure that Islamic values can be aligned with the principles of good character in the context of modern education.

Islamic education is a learning process that aims to instill Islamic teachings in daily life, including morals, worship, and sharia laws. According to Saleh, Islamic education aims to form a good Muslim character through the teaching of religious values (Saleh, 2010). Islamic educational values must be instilled in order to provide outputs for education that are in accordance with the expectations and goals of Islamic education. "The values of Islamic education in the book *al-Mawa'iz al-'Usfuriyyah* include three aspects, namely the value of morality (morality to Allah, to other creatures, to society, and to oneself), the value of faith (faith in Allah and the Messenger) and the value of worship (Ghayru mahdah)" (Muhtarudin & Muhsin, 2019). Meanwhile, character education is defined as the process of individual change from family, school, and social life (Muhtar & Dallyono, 2020). Character education also refers to a systematic effort to instill moral and ethical values in students, as explained by Lickona, who emphasizes the importance of character development in the context of education. The integration of these two concepts aims to create a holistic learning environment, where religious and ethical values can reinforce each other. (Lickona, 1991)

Many madrasah institutions face challenges in integrating Islamic education and character education effectively. Islamic education faces multidimensional and complex challenges such as technology, ideology, social, culture, economy, and politics. Other challenges are professionalism, integrity, solidarity, and vision (Ahdar & Musyarif, 2019). Challenges of character education in the era of artificial intelligence (AI) include the risk of reduced human interaction, negative influences on the development of students' empathy and social skills, and imbalances in the use of technology (Aziz et al., 2023).

The lack of understanding of how these two aspects can support each other and the often separate approaches lead to gaps in the formation of students' morals. This issue requires in-depth research to identify strategies that can facilitate better integration and increase their impact on student character development. Previous research shows that the integration of Islamic education and character education can improve students' behaviour and morals. For example, research by Ibrahim found that the implementation of character education programs based on Islamic values in madrasahs can increase students' moral awareness. However, this study also shows that challenges in curriculum integration still exist (Ibrahim, 2015). Other research by Amin shows that despite integration efforts, lack of training for educators and inadequate teaching materials hinder the success of the program. (Amin, 2018)

This study aims to identify and analyse effective strategies in integrating Islamic education and character education in madrasah institutions. The specific goal is to develop a practical implementation integration model and evaluate its impact on students' moral integrity. The

contribution of this research is expected to provide guidance for madrasah institutions in designing and implementing comprehensive educational programs, as well as provide recommendations for better education policies in the context of the integration of moral and religious values.

## **Method**

This research focuses on the integration of Islamic Education and Character Education in Madrasah Aliyah in Ponorogo, East Java, with the aim of exploring the strategies implemented and their impact on students' moral integrity. This research is a qualitative descriptive research. A qualitative approach is a research procedure that functions to produce descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from observable people and behaviours' (Moleong, 2017). The research subjects include several madrasahs selected based on the diversity of teaching methods and representativeness.

Data was collected using interview, observation, and documentation methods (Hardani, 2023). Collection through direct observation, interviews with madrasah heads, teachers, and students, as well as documentation such as curriculum and activity reports. Observations and interviews aim to understand the implementation and perception of integration, while documentation provides additional information related to implementation in the field.

Data analysis using interactive model analysis data components (Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, 2014). Data analysis includes the condensation stage to filter important data and simplify relevant information, display data to present data that has been condensed into images and tables and then narrate, and draw conclusions to understand the effects of the integration strategy. Primary and secondary data are combined to provide in-depth insights into the effectiveness of the integration of Islamic Education and Character Education and their impact on students' moral integrity. This method is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of educational practices in madrasahs.

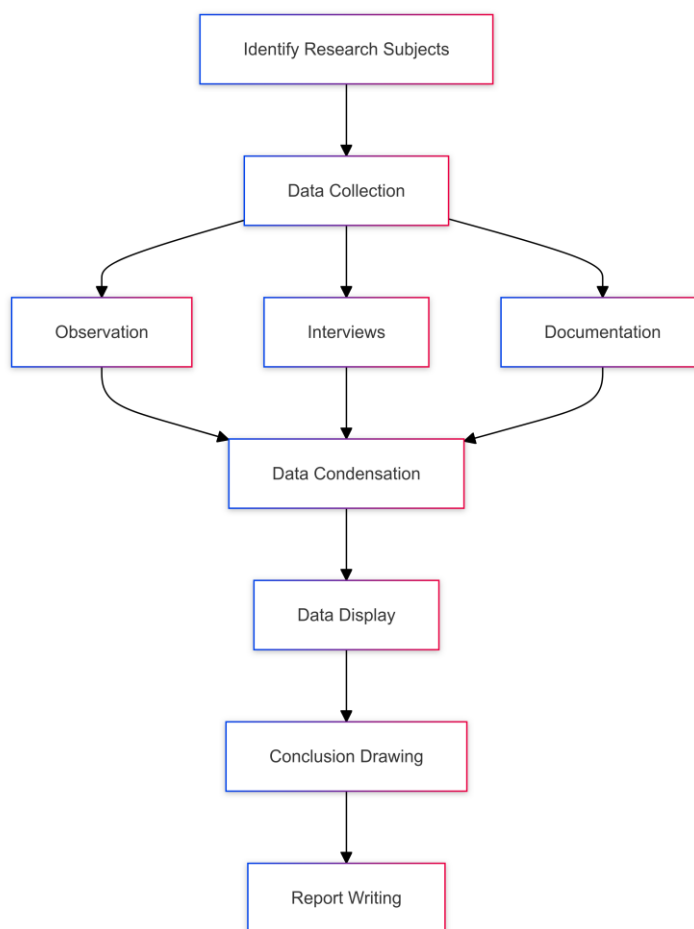


Figure 1. Research Flowchart

## Result and Discussion

### 1. Madrasah strategy in integrating Islamic Education and Character Education

As a result of interviews conducted with various informants in several Aliyah Madrasahs, there are several strategies that are commonly applied in integrating Islamic Education and Character Education. First, the implementation of a curriculum that combines Islamic values with character education. Many madrasahs have included Islamic Religious Education subjects that specifically emphasize the formation of noble morals and Islamic character. In addition, extracurricular programs such as halaqah, religious activities, and learning the Qur'an are routinely part of the integration effort.

In addition to the formal curriculum, madrasahs also implement habituation of behaviour based on Islamic values. For example, there are programs that encourage students to perform congregational prayers, recite every morning before classes start, and take part in Islamic studies.

Teachers also play an active role as role models in showing Islamic character through daily behaviour at school, so that students can emulate and apply these values in their lives.

Oliver and Shaver's theory of curriculum integration shows that in order to achieve effective educational outcomes, academic materials and moral values must be brought together in an integrated approach (Oliver & Shaver, 1966). The strategy found in this study is in line with this theory, where madrasas use an integrated approach in combining Islamic values with character education. This process involves not only cognitive but also affective and psychomotor learning, all of which are necessary to build a strong character.

The theory of character education by Thomas Lickona also supports this finding, where he states that character education must include three main components: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. The approach applied by madrasas in integrating Islamic Education with Character Education includes these three components, where students are not only taught about Islamic values, but also encouraged to feel and internalize those values, as well as apply them in daily actions. (Lickona, 1991)

The results of Yenni's research support this finding, namely that character education in children should be carried out from an early age, because a person's character arises from a habit that is repeated for a long time and there is an example from the surrounding environment (Yeni Hartanti, 2021). Another research result from Ani, Madrasah Diniyah Ali Maksum also participated in forming students who have five main characters determined by the Ministry of Education and Culture which include: religious, nationalism, integrity, independence and mutual cooperation as the basic characters achieved in the Strengthening Character Education program (Muzayaroh, 2021). In addition, physical education teachers define character education as individual changes that occur from family, school, and social life (Muhtar & Dallyono, 2020).

The findings of this interview show that madrasas have succeeded in developing effective strategies in integrating Islamic Education with Character Education. The use of an integrated curriculum approach and the habit of Islamic behaviour consistently have helped students in forming a character that is in accordance with Islamic teachings. These findings support the theory of integration of curriculum and character education that emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach in education, where cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects must be brought together to achieve optimal outcomes.

This is in accordance with the meaning of holistic education is education that develops all student potentials in harmony, including intellectual, emotional, physical, social, aesthetic, and spiritual potential (Widyastono, 2012). In addition, in accordance with holistic theory, it is a system that focuses on the overall teaching and learning situation and uses varied strategies in teaching and learning to meet the needs of students, teachers, and situations in an effort to achieve maximum

educational outcomes (Miller, 2005). In accordance with the results of research on holistic evaluation in the three domains, namely cognitive, affective, and psychomotor, Islamic education can ensure that students not only have theoretical knowledge, but also develop positive attitudes and practical skills that are in accordance with Islamic teachings (Nurhasanah et al., 2023).

## **2. Implications of the integration of Islamic Education and character education on the formation of moral integrity**

Informants from various madrasahs revealed that the integration of Islamic Education and Character Education has a significant impact on the formation of students' moral integrity. Students who have gone through this education show improvement in terms of honesty, responsibility, discipline, and respect for others. Madrasah heads and teachers noted that students become more consistent in showing behaviour in accordance with Islamic values, both inside and outside the school environment.

In addition, there is a recognition that the moral integrity of students is also influenced by the family and community environment. Madrasah strives to work closely with parents and the surrounding community to ensure that the values taught in the school are also applied in the students' homes and social environments. Thus, the character education received by students in madrasahs is strengthened by support from family and society.

Kohlberg's theory of moral development states that education and the social environment play an important role in the moral development of individuals. Based on this theory, character education integrated with Islamic Education can be considered as one of the factors influencing the moral development of students, especially in the early to intermediate stages of Kohlberg's theory of moral development, where individuals begin to understand more complex moral concepts and internalize those values (Kohlberg, 1984). Moral integrity from a deontological point of view, in the sense of coherence of moral principles, the aspect of self-remorse plays a major role in real actions over time (Band, 2020).

Furthermore, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of habitus is also relevant in understanding how the social environment, including schools, families, and communities, plays a role in the formation of an individual's character and morals. This theory emphasizes that structured and consistent social practices can form habitus, or habits, that underlie individual behaviour. The findings of this study show that through educational and habituation practices in madrasahs, students develop habitus that reflects strong moral integrity. (Bourdieu, 1977)

These findings indicate that the integration of Islamic Education and Character Education is not only effective in increasing students' knowledge and moral awareness, but also has a positive impact on their daily behaviour. Students who have received this education show signs of higher

moral integrity, which is not only limited to the school environment, but is also visible in their interactions outside of school. This is in line with the theory of moral development and the theory of habitus, which emphasizes the importance of the role of education and the social environment in shaping the character of individuals.

In addition, the results of this study show that the integration strategy implemented in madrasas in Ponorogo has given positive results in shaping the moral integrity of students. However, there is an opportunity to further increase the effectiveness of these strategies through innovations in teaching and learning methods. For example, the application of technology in Islamic and character education, such as the use of educational applications or e-learning, can help strengthen the learning process and provide students with wider access to learn Islamic values and character anytime and anywhere.

This is in accordance with the results of the study which revealed that the use of technology to improve teacher performance through e-learning and blended learning in Islamic education. The use of Islamic education applications in classroom management is by means of scheduling applications, task management applications, learning material applications, quiz applications and evaluations and communication applications. Training and professional development of teachers through technology through self-paced learning, webinars and virtual conferences, collaboration and networking, use of learning tools and applications, online certification programs and building digital portfolios (Sholeh, 2023). Other research results reveal that the role of information technology in education, in addition to helping students in learning, also has a quite influential role for teachers, especially in the use of facilities to enrich teaching skills, and the Qur'an as a guideline and guidance for the development of science and technology in order to strengthen faith and improve human welfare (Haris Budiman, 2017).

As a result of further research, strengthening collaboration between schools, families, and communities is another important step. By ensuring that all parties involved in children's education work together in harmony, the values taught in schools can be reinforced at home and in society. It can also encourage a more supportive environment for students to apply these values in their daily lives. These results are in accordance with the results of research in terms of cooperation between teachers and parents in improving student learning outcomes, namely parenting, communication, volunteering, parental involvement in children's learning at home, decision-making and collaboration with community groups (Diana & Susilo, 2020).

Although the findings of this study show positive results, there are some challenges and obstacles that need to be considered. One of the main challenges is consistency in the implementation of integration strategies in all madrasas. Not all madrasas have the same resources,



both in terms of teaching staff and learning materials, which can affect the quality of education provided.

These challenges are in accordance with the results of research faced in integrating technology in Islamic education, including the digital divide, attention to religious values, professional training and development, data security and privacy, and content and quality management. Steps to implement technology in Islamic education management through technology needs analysis, teacher training and development, formation of educational technology teams, technology-based learning planning, utilization of applications and supporting platforms, monitoring and evaluation and continuity and sustainable development (Sholeh, 2023). Other research that highlights challenges in madrasah quality and quality management includes: low standards of educator qualifications, educator performance that has not reached its maximum potential, damage to infrastructure and facilities, shortage of educators, availability and quality of learning resources that are not optimal, limitations on financial resources, suboptimal supervisory performance, and lack of competence in structural management (Efendi et al., 2024).

In addition, external factors such as pressure from an unsupportive social environment or value conflicts at home can be an obstacle in the formation of students' moral integrity. Therefore, a more comprehensive and inclusive approach is needed to address this challenge, including by involving broader stakeholders in the character education process. These results are in accordance with the results of research on value conflicts at home, which are caused by time, parents' views on teachers, parents' confidence is still low and there is still limited ability and understanding of teachers and parents about cooperation (Diana & Susilo, 2020).

This research opens up opportunities for further research, especially in a broader context and with a more in-depth approach. Comparative research involving madrassas in other regions or educational institutions with different cultural backgrounds can provide richer insights into the variation in integration strategies and their effectiveness. In addition, longitudinal research that follows students' progress over time can provide a better understanding of the long-term impact of the integration of Islamic Education and Character Education on the formation of moral integrity.

## **Conclusion**

The integration of Islamic Education and Character Education in Madrasah Aliyah in Ponorogo has shown a significant impact in shaping the moral integrity of students. Through the application of an integrated curriculum, habituation of Islamic behaviour, and support from the social environment, students not only gain knowledge about Islamic values but also internalize and apply them in daily life. These findings support theories of character education and moral development that emphasize the importance of a holistic approach to education. Nonetheless, there



are challenges that need to be addressed, and more research is needed to develop more effective and sustainable strategies for building students' moral integrity.

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to STAI Terpadu Yogyakarta for supporting and facilitating the completion of writing this article.

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