AL-ADABIYAH: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam
http://al-adabiyah.uinkhas.ac.id/

Teachers' Strategies in Cultivating Islamic Moral Character through Aqidah Akhlaq Learning in Islamic Primary Schools

Lailatul Mukarromah,[1] Robith Fahmi[2]
[1,2] IAI MIftahul uLum Lumajang, Indonesia
*rosyla235@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines teachers' strategies in cultivating Islamic moral character through Aqidah Akhlaq learning at an Islamic primary school. The research employed a descriptive qualitative approach involving Aqidah Akhlaq teachers, the madrasah principal, and students as research participants. Data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that teachers implemented several interconnected strategies to cultivate students' *akhlaqul karimah*, namely habituation practices, role modelling (*uswatun hasanah*), reward and punishment, motivational guidance, and the integration of moral values into the learning process through storytelling, discussion, and simulation methods. Among these strategies, habituation and teacher exemplarity were found to have a greater influence on students' moral behavior than formal cognitive instruction alone. The study also found that a supportive madrasah environment and parental involvement strengthened the implementation of moral education, whereas limited parental supervision and negative influences from social media and digital technology became major obstacles. This study contributes to the discourse on Islamic character education by highlighting the importance of integrating instructional, cultural, and relational approaches in cultivating moral character at the primary education level. However, the findings are limited to a specific institutional context and cannot be generalized broadly. Further studies involving wider educational settings are therefore recommended.

Keywords: Aqidah Akhlaq learning, character education, Islamic moral character, Islamic primary school, teacher strategies

Introduction

Character education is one of the fundamental pillars of the Indonesian national education system. Education is not solely directed toward cognitive achievement, but also toward the development of affective and psychomotor aspects. In the perspective of Islamic education, moral formation (*akhlaqul karimah*) constitutes a primary objective that must be instilled from an early age because morality reflects the quality of an individual's faith and religious awareness. Therefore, Islamic elementary educational institutions such as *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* (MI) play a crucial role in instilling moral and religious values as a foundation for students' future lives (Suyitno, 2020).

The urgency of character education has become increasingly significant amid rapid social change and technological development. The widespread influence of digital media, declining social ethics among students, and weakening moral awareness among children have become major challenges for educational institutions. These conditions indicate that schools are not only responsible for transferring knowledge but also for shaping students' moral character through continuous educational processes. In this context, madrasahs serve not merely as formal educational institutions but also as environments for cultivating religious culture and ethical behavior among students.

Akhlaqul karimah cannot be formed instantly; rather, it develops through continuous and systematic educational processes. Such processes require the integration of knowledge, habituation, discipline, and exemplary conduct implemented consistently within the school environment. Teachers therefore occupy a strategic position as agents of change who not only deliver instructional materials but also become real examples of moral behavior in students' daily lives (Amaliah & Nasution, 2024). In Islamic education, the exemplary role of teachers is considered essential because students tend to imitate the attitudes and behavior demonstrated by educators in both formal and informal interactions.

One of the subjects that plays an important role in the formation of students' moral character is Aqidah Akhlaq. This subject does not merely emphasize students' cognitive understanding of Islamic creed and morality but also focuses on shaping attitudes and ethical behavior in everyday life. Consequently, the success of Aqidah Akhlaq learning largely depends on the strategies implemented by teachers during the instructional process. Effective learning strategies are needed so that Islamic moral values are not only understood theoretically but are also practiced in students' daily behavior.

Teachers' strategies in Aqidah Akhlaq learning involve various approaches, including habituation methods, role modelling (*uswah hasanah*), advice-giving, motivational reinforcement, and the strengthening of religious values through daily school activities. Previous studies indicate that habituation methods are among the most effective strategies for improving students' *akhlaqul karimah* because students are continuously trained to practice positive behavior until it becomes part of their character (Sari et al., 2022). Likewise, research conducted by Subaidi et al. (2024) demonstrates that Islamic educational practices such as reciting *Asmaul Husna*, smiling, greeting, and other religious routines contribute significantly to strengthening children's moral character through repeated daily activities.

In addition to habituation strategies, teachers also employ guidance, disciplinary reinforcement, and the integration of moral values into both curricular and extracurricular activities. Through these approaches, moral formation is not limited to classroom instruction but becomes embedded within the broader culture of the school environment (Caisar et al., 2023). Research by Fauzi et al. (2024) further explains that the development of

religious culture in Islamic educational institutions plays a significant role in strengthening students' moral awareness and religious behavior because values are continuously internalized through school traditions and daily interactions.

Interaction and communication between teachers and students also constitute important factors in cultivating *akhlaqul karimah*. Effective communication enables students to understand moral values more deeply and internalize them in their daily lives. Furthermore, social environments such as family and peer groups significantly influence the success of students' moral development (Yanti et al., 2024). Character education therefore requires collaboration among schools, families, and communities so that the moral values taught at school can be consistently reinforced in students' social environments.

Nevertheless, in practice, teachers encounter numerous challenges in cultivating *akhlaqul karimah* among students. These challenges include limited parental supervision, unsupportive social environments, the influence of digital media, and differences in students' personal characteristics. Such conditions indicate that moral formation requires strong synergy between schools, families, and communities to achieve optimal outcomes (Ladjiham et al., 2024). Similarly, research conducted by Salim et al. (2024) emphasizes that character formation in Islamic educational institutions requires not only formal instruction but also hidden curriculum practices and the consistent development of religious culture within the educational environment.

Habituation is considered one of the most effective strategies for developing *akhlaqul karimah* among students. Activities such as praying before and after lessons, greeting others, maintaining cleanliness, and showing mutual respect need to be carried out consistently so that they become embedded habits in students' daily lives. Through continuous habituation, moral values can be naturally internalized within students' behavior (Fauzi, 2023). In addition, integrating character education into religious and social programs has also been shown to strengthen students' empathy, social awareness, and moral responsibility through participatory educational experiences (Fitria et al., 2025).

Although many studies have discussed character education and religious culture in schools, research specifically examining teachers' strategies in cultivating *akhlaqul karimah* through Aqidah Akhlaq learning at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah level remains limited. Previous studies have generally focused on conceptual discussions of character education rather than on the practical pedagogical strategies implemented by teachers in everyday classroom activities. Therefore, this study seeks to provide a deeper analysis of the strategies employed by teachers in cultivating *akhlaqul karimah* through Aqidah Akhlaq learning in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.

Based on the explanation above, it can be understood that teachers' strategies in cultivating *akhlaqul karimah* through Aqidah Akhlaq learning constitute an important and complex aspect of Islamic elementary education.

Therefore, a more comprehensive investigation is needed to examine the strategies employed by teachers, the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting their implementation, and their effectiveness in shaping students with noble moral character.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive research design. A qualitative approach was selected because this study aimed to understand, describe, and analyze in depth the strategies implemented by teachers in cultivating *akhlaqul karimah* through Aqidah Akhlaq learning at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Qualitative research is particularly appropriate for investigating educational and social phenomena that require contextual understanding, interpretative analysis, and exploration of participants' experiences within natural settings. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative inquiry emphasizes meaning construction, interaction patterns, and the interpretation of human behavior in specific social and cultural contexts. Therefore, this approach enabled the researcher to examine comprehensively the process of moral habituation, teacher-student interaction, and the implementation of religious values within the educational environment.

In this study, the researcher functioned as the primary instrument (*human instrument*) directly involved in data collection, interpretation, and analysis. The role of the researcher as the main instrument is a fundamental characteristic of qualitative inquiry because researchers interact directly with participants and social situations in order to obtain rich and contextual data. Through direct engagement in the field, researchers are able to explore participants' perspectives, educational experiences, and social interactions more deeply. Creswell and Poth (2018) explain that qualitative researchers seek to understand phenomena through participants' viewpoints while maintaining sensitivity toward the social and cultural contexts in which those phenomena occur. Similarly, Aspers and Corte (2019) emphasize that qualitative research focuses on understanding meanings, interpretations, and human experiences through contextual exploration rather than numerical measurement.

This research was conducted at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Hidayatul Mubtadi'in Sumberbaru, Jember. The research site was selected purposively based on preliminary observations indicating that several students still demonstrated behaviors inconsistent with the values of *akhlaqul karimah*. In addition, the institution actively implemented various religious habituation programs that were relevant to the focus of this study. Accessibility of the location, availability of data, and institutional openness also supported the selection of this madrasah as the research setting. The study was conducted over approximately three months to allow prolonged engagement in the field and provide sufficient time for observing educational activities, school culture, and students' behavioral patterns comprehensively.

The data sources in this study consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from research participants through observations and interviews. The primary informants included Aqidah Akhlaq teachers, the head of the madrasah, and students. Aqidah Akhlaq teachers served as the main informants because they directly implemented moral habituation strategies in classroom instruction and school activities. The head of the madrasah provided information regarding institutional policies, school culture, and educational programs related to character formation. Students were involved as participants who directly experienced the implementation of moral education practices in their daily activities. Participant selection was conducted using purposive sampling techniques because this method allows researchers to select participants who possess relevant knowledge and experience concerning the phenomenon being studied. Campbell et al. (2020) explain that purposive sampling is widely used in qualitative research to obtain information-rich participants capable of providing deep and meaningful insights related to the research focus.

Secondary data were obtained from documents relevant to the research focus, including curriculum documents, Aqidah Akhlaq syllabi, lesson plans (*Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran*), students' behavioral records, photographs of religious activities, and institutional archives related to character education programs. Documentary data functioned as supporting evidence to strengthen observational and interview findings. The use of multiple data sources is important in qualitative inquiry because it enables researchers to develop more comprehensive and credible interpretations of the investigated phenomena.

Data collection was conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation in this study employed participant observation techniques in which the researcher was directly involved in observing educational activities within the madrasah environment. Observation was carried out to examine teachers' instructional strategies, interaction patterns between teachers and students, students' moral behavior, and the implementation of religious habituation practices both inside and outside the classroom. Participant observation is considered effective in qualitative educational research because it allows researchers to understand naturally occurring behavior and social interaction within authentic educational contexts.

Interviews were conducted using semi-structured in-depth interview techniques. Semi-structured interviews enabled researchers to explore participants' experiences and perspectives more flexibly while maintaining alignment with the research focus. Interview guidelines were prepared based on the objectives of the study and developed contextually during fieldwork. Interviews were conducted with Aqidah Akhlaq teachers, the madrasah principal, and students to obtain comprehensive information regarding instructional strategies, supporting factors, obstacles, and the implementation process of moral habituation practices. All interviews were conducted with participants' consent and audio-recorded before being

transcribed for data analysis. Moser and Korstjens (2018) explain that semi-structured interviews are highly appropriate for qualitative studies because they provide opportunities for participants to express their experiences openly while still enabling researchers to maintain focus on the research objectives.

Documentation techniques were used to complement and strengthen data obtained through observations and interviews. The collected documents included lesson plans, school regulations, photographs of educational activities, students' development records, and institutional archives related to character education implementation. Documentation analysis allowed researchers to identify institutional patterns, educational practices, and policy orientations associated with moral formation programs within the madrasah environment.

Data analysis in this study employed the interactive analysis model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data condensation involved selecting, simplifying, categorizing, and organizing raw field data according to the research focus. At this stage, the researcher identified themes related to habituation strategies, role modelling, disciplinary reinforcement, and moral integration within Aqidah Akhlaq learning. The reduced data were subsequently organized into narrative descriptions and thematic categories to facilitate interpretation and analytical reflection.

Data display involved presenting organized data in the form of narrative texts, matrices, tables, and thematic descriptions to enable systematic interpretation and conclusion drawing. The final stage consisted of conclusion drawing and verification. Preliminary conclusions were continuously reviewed and verified through repeated examination of field notes, participant confirmation (*member checking*), and comparison among various data sources to ensure the credibility and consistency of the findings.

To ensure data trustworthiness, this study employed triangulation techniques consisting of source triangulation, technique triangulation, and time triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from teachers, school principals, students, and institutional documents. Technique triangulation involved comparing findings generated through interviews, observations, and documentation. Time triangulation was conducted by collecting data at different times and situations to ensure the consistency of participants' responses and observed behaviors. Stahl and King (2020) explain that trustworthiness in qualitative research is essential to ensure that research findings accurately represent participants' experiences and social realities. Likewise, Nowell et al. (2017) emphasize that credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability constitute important criteria in establishing rigor within qualitative inquiry. Therefore, this study sought to maintain methodological rigor through prolonged engagement, triangulation, member checking, and systematic data analysis procedures throughout the research process.

Results and Discussion

Results

This study aimed to examine the strategies implemented by Aqidah Akhlaq teachers in cultivating *akhlaqul karimah* among students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Hidayatul Mubtadi'in Sumberbaru Jember. In addition, this study explored the challenges faced by teachers in implementing moral habituation practices within the school environment. Based on observations, interviews, and documentation, the findings revealed that the cultivation of *akhlaqul karimah* was conducted through several interconnected strategies involving habituation, exemplary conduct, reinforcement, advice, and the integration of moral values into classroom learning activities.

The findings indicate that teachers consistently attempted to direct educational activities toward strengthening students' moral awareness and religious behavior. The implementation of moral education was not limited to formal classroom instruction but was integrated into daily school culture and students' habitual activities. Based on classroom observations, students were routinely encouraged to greet teachers respectfully, pray before and after lessons, maintain politeness in communication, and participate in collective religious activities organized by the madrasah. These activities gradually formed behavioral patterns reflecting discipline, respect, and social awareness among students.

An interview with the Aqidah Akhlaq teacher (coded as Informant G1) revealed:

"We continuously familiarize students with simple positive habits such as greeting, praying, speaking politely, and respecting teachers. At first, some students ignored these practices, but after being repeatedly guided, they gradually became accustomed to implementing them in their daily activities."

Similarly, the madrasah principal (Informant P1) explained:

"Character education in this madrasah is not only taught theoretically in the classroom. We try to create a religious culture so that students experience moral values directly through daily practices and interactions within the school environment."

Observational data also demonstrated that teachers consistently modeled positive behavior during learning activities. Teachers arrived punctually, communicated politely with students, and demonstrated disciplined behavior in classroom management. Students appeared to imitate these attitudes in their interactions with peers and teachers. Several students were observed greeting teachers voluntarily and showing respectful behavior without direct instruction.

One student participant (Informant S2) stated:

"Our teachers always remind us to be polite and respectful. They also give examples directly, so we feel embarrassed if we behave badly."

The findings further revealed that teachers implemented reward and punishment strategies to reinforce positive behavior. Rewards were generally provided in the form of praise, verbal appreciation, or additional responsibilities for students demonstrating exemplary behavior. Meanwhile, educational punishment was implemented through constructive warnings and reflective advice rather than physical sanctions. According to the Aqidah Akhlaq teacher (Informant G2):

"If students behave well, we praise them in front of the class to motivate others. However, when students violate the rules, we advise them calmly so they understand their mistakes without feeling humiliated."

In addition, teachers regularly provided moral advice and motivation during and outside classroom learning activities. Advice was often connected to verses from the Qur'an, prophetic traditions, and stories of Islamic figures to make moral messages more understandable and meaningful for students. During observations, teachers were seen integrating short moral reflections into classroom discussions and reminding students about honesty, discipline, and respect during everyday interactions.

Another important finding showed that moral values were integrated directly into the Aqidah Akhlaq learning process through storytelling, discussion, simulation, and reflective learning methods. Teachers attempted to connect theoretical understanding with practical implementation so that students could apply Islamic moral values in their social lives. This approach encouraged students not only to understand moral concepts cognitively but also to practice them behaviorally.

However, the study also identified several obstacles encountered by teachers in cultivating *akhlaqul karimah*. The most dominant challenge was the students' social environment, particularly limited parental supervision and the influence of digital media. Teachers explained that some students received minimal moral guidance at home and were frequently exposed to inappropriate online content through smartphones and social media platforms.

One teacher (Informant G3) explained:

"The biggest challenge comes from outside the school environment. Some parents pay little attention to their children's behavior at home, and many students are influenced by social media content that contradicts the moral values taught at school."

These findings indicate that the cultivation of *akhlaqul karimah* requires collaboration not only between teachers and schools but also with families and the broader social environment. Moral education becomes more effective when positive values taught at school receive reinforcement within students' family and community settings.

Table 1. Teachers' Strategies in Cultivating *Akhlaqul Karimah* and the Observed Outcomes

No.	Teacher Strategies	Forms of Activities	Findings/Observed Outcomes
1	Habituation Strategy	Greeting, praying before and after lessons, respecting teachers, speaking politely	Students gradually developed polite, disciplined, and respectful behavior in daily school activities
2	Role-Modelling (*Uswatun Hasanah*)	Teachers demonstrated discipline, honesty, politeness, and religious commitment	Students tended to imitate teachers' attitudes and behavior in classroom and social interactions
3	Reward and Punishment	Praise, verbal appreciation, educational warnings, and reflective advice	Students became more motivated to demonstrate positive behavior and comply with school rules
4	Advice and Motivation	Providing moral guidance, Islamic stories, and motivational reinforcement	Students showed increased understanding of moral values and ethical responsibility
5	Integration of Moral Values into Learning	Storytelling, discussion, simulation, and contextual learning activities	Students were able to connect theoretical moral concepts with practical behavior in daily life

Overall, the findings demonstrate that teachers' strategies in cultivating *akhlaqul karimah* at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Hidayatul Mubtadi'in were implemented systematically through habituation, role modelling, reinforcement, motivational guidance, and integrated learning processes. These strategies contributed positively to students' moral development, although their effectiveness remained influenced by family environments and broader social conditions.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that Aqidah Akhlaq teachers at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Hidayatul Mubtadi'in Sumberbaru Jember implemented various interconnected strategies in cultivating *akhlaqul karimah* among students. These strategies consisted of habituation, role modelling (*uswatun hasanah*), reward and punishment, advice and motivation, and the integration of moral values into the learning process. The findings indicate that moral

education in Islamic elementary schools is not limited to cognitive instruction but involves continuous processes of value internalization embedded within students' daily activities, social interactions, and religious culture.

Habituation Strategy (*Habituation*)

The study revealed that habituation strategies were implemented through routine religious and social activities such as greeting teachers, praying before and after lessons, maintaining politeness in communication, and respecting others within the madrasah environment. These findings confirm Lickona's (2019) argument that character formation is developed through repeated positive habits practiced consistently in everyday life. Habituation therefore functions as a continuous educational process that transforms moral values into behavioral patterns and personal character.

In Islamic educational philosophy, habituation is closely related to the concept of *ta'wid*, namely the process of repeatedly practicing positive behavior until it becomes an inseparable part of an individual's personality. This finding supports the study conducted by Fadillah and Khoirida (2021), which found that systematic habituation strategies significantly contribute to strengthening students' religious character in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Similarly, Maarif et al. (2024) explain that students' character development becomes more effective when positive values are embedded within daily school activities and continuously reinforced through institutional culture.

The findings also align with the study conducted by Subaidi et al. (2024), which demonstrated that religious habituation activities such as smiling, greeting, reciting *Asmaul Husna*, and collective worship effectively strengthen students' moral awareness and Islamic character. Likewise, Safitri et al. (2023) found that the habituation of religious activities in Islamic elementary schools contributes significantly to improving students' discipline, responsibility, and social ethics because students repeatedly practice moral values within authentic social situations. These findings indicate that habituation strategies are effective because moral values are not merely taught theoretically but are experienced directly through repetitive daily practices.

Furthermore, Nurizah and Amrullah (2024) emphasize that religious habituation in primary education strengthens students' moral consciousness because children at the elementary level are in a developmental stage characterized by imitation and behavioral adaptation. Therefore, repeated exposure to positive routines gradually shapes students' moral identity and social behavior. This study strengthens previous findings by demonstrating that habituation strategies become more effective when supported by school culture, teacher consistency, and institutional commitment.

Role-Modelling Strategy (*Uswatun Hasanah*)

Another important finding of this study is that teachers positioned themselves as role models for students through disciplined behavior, honesty, politeness, responsibility, and religious commitment. Teachers consistently demonstrated Islamic moral values in both classroom instruction and daily

interaction. These findings are consistent with QS. Al-Ahzab verse 21, which explains that the Prophet Muhammad SAW represents the best example for humanity.

The findings support Wibowo and Hamrin's (2022) argument that teacher exemplarity constitutes one of the most influential factors in character formation at the elementary school level because children naturally imitate the behavior of adults whom they respect and admire. Similarly, Hidayat (2023) found that teachers who consistently demonstrate commendable attitudes contribute significantly to improving students' moral discipline and ethical awareness.

The results of this study are also relevant to the findings of Solihah et al. (2024), who explain that teachers' exemplary conduct plays a central role in implementing religious character education through habituation methods in elementary schools. According to their study, students are more likely to internalize moral values when they directly observe positive behavior practiced consistently by teachers within the educational environment. Likewise, Syaputra (2025) emphasizes that teachers function not only as knowledge transmitters but also as moral educators whose behavior significantly shapes students' religious attitudes and social ethics.

In addition, the findings strengthen the hidden curriculum perspective proposed by Salim et al. (2024), which explains that students' character is often shaped more strongly through implicit educational practices than through formal instruction. Teachers' communication styles, attitudes, emotional responses, and interpersonal interaction unconsciously become part of students' moral learning experiences. Therefore, role modelling should be understood not merely as an instructional strategy but as a cultural and relational process embedded within the broader educational environment.

Reward and Punishment Strategy

This study found that teachers implemented reward and punishment strategies to reinforce positive behavior and reduce inappropriate conduct among students. Rewards were generally provided through praise, appreciation, and positive recognition, while punishment was delivered in educational and persuasive forms such as reflective advice and constructive warnings. These findings support Skinner's reinforcement theory, which explains that behaviors receiving positive reinforcement tend to be repeated, whereas behaviors followed by negative consequences gradually decrease.

In the perspective of Islamic education, this strategy corresponds to the concepts of *targhib* and *tarhib*, which emphasize balanced encouragement and warning in moral education. Marzuki (2019) explains that the proportional implementation of *targhib* and *tarhib* represents an effective Qur'anic approach for developing students' moral awareness without creating psychological pressure or fear. Likewise, Suyadi and Dahlia (2021) argue that rewards provided consistently and appropriately contribute significantly to strengthening students' intrinsic motivation to maintain positive behavior.

The findings of this study further indicate that educational punishment becomes effective when implemented persuasively rather than repressively. Teachers prioritized reflective guidance and emotional communication instead of physical sanctions, enabling students to understand the moral meaning underlying educational discipline. This finding aligns with Haluti et al. (2024), who explain that Islamic Religious Education teachers should apply humanistic and educative approaches in character education so that moral discipline develops through awareness rather than coercion.

Advice and Motivational Strategy

The study also revealed that teachers consistently provided advice and motivation during classroom instruction and informal interaction. Teachers connected moral messages with Qur'anic verses, prophetic traditions, and stories of Islamic figures to strengthen students' emotional and spiritual understanding of moral values. This strategy reflects the concept of *mau'izhah hasanah* stated in QS. An-Nahl verse 125, which encourages inviting others toward goodness through wisdom and compassionate guidance.

The findings support Ramayulis (2021), who argues that advice delivered with sincerity, patience, and emotional closeness is more easily accepted and internalized by students compared to formal instruction alone. Likewise, Nurhayati (2022) found that Islamic-based motivational strategies significantly contribute to developing students' inner moral awareness because students are encouraged to behave ethically based on faith and personal responsibility.

In addition, Suryadi (2025) explains that moral education grounded in habitual religious practices and persuasive spiritual guidance effectively strengthens students' ethical awareness and religious commitment. This indicates that motivational approaches become more meaningful when moral values are connected to students' spiritual experiences and daily realities. The findings of this study therefore suggest that advice and motivation should be integrated continuously into social interaction and classroom communication rather than delivered only during formal religious instruction.

Integration of *Akhlaqul Karimah* Values into the Learning Process

Another important finding is the integration of moral values into Aqidah Akhlaq learning through storytelling, discussion, simulation, and contextual learning methods. This approach reflects the paradigm of meaningful learning, which emphasizes the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions simultaneously. Teachers attempted to connect theoretical moral concepts with students' real-life experiences so that moral values could be understood contextually and practiced behaviorally.

The findings support Muhaimin and Suti'ah (2023), who argue that integrating moral values into every learning activity constitutes one of the most effective holistic approaches to character education because students directly experience and practice ethical values rather than merely understanding them conceptually. Likewise, Anwar (2020) explains that

storytelling and simulation methods are effective in moral education because they stimulate students' emotional engagement and encourage reflective understanding of ethical behavior.

The results of this study are also consistent with Alfarisy and Iswandi (2025), who found that integrating character education values into Islamic Religious Education learning significantly strengthens students' moral awareness, empathy, and social responsibility. Furthermore, Fitria et al. (2025) explain that integrating character education into religious and social programs encourages students to develop participatory moral experiences through collective activities involving empathy, cooperation, and social responsibility.

Challenges in Cultivating *Akhlaqul Karimah*

Despite the implementation of various strategies, this study also identified several obstacles encountered by teachers in cultivating *akhlaqul karimah*. The primary challenges included limited parental supervision, unsupportive social environments, and the negative influence of social media and digital technology. Teachers explained that some students lacked moral reinforcement at home and were excessively exposed to online content inconsistent with Islamic ethical values.

These findings support Zubaedi (2021), who states that the success of character education depends heavily on the consistency between values taught at school and values reinforced within family environments. Similarly, Pratiwi and Suharso (2022) found that exposure to negative digital content contributes significantly to moral degradation among elementary school students, particularly when digital literacy and parental supervision remain weak.

The findings also indicate that contemporary moral education faces increasingly complex challenges due to rapid technological development and changing social interaction patterns among children. Therefore, effective character education requires collaboration among schools, families, and communities to establish consistent moral environments for students. In addition, strengthening parental involvement and digital literacy education becomes essential in minimizing the negative impact of technology on students' moral development.

Conclusion

The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive analysis of teachers' strategies in cultivating *akhlaqul karimah* through Aqidah Akhlaq learning at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah level by integrating habituation, role modelling (*uswatun hasanah*), reward and punishment, motivational guidance, and contextual moral integration within a single pedagogical framework. Unlike previous studies that generally discuss character education conceptually or focus only on one specific strategy, this study demonstrates how these strategies are interconnected and continuously implemented through both

classroom instruction and the broader religious culture of the madrasah environment. In addition, this research provides empirical evidence derived from direct observation, interviews, and daily educational practices, showing that the cultivation of Islamic moral values is not merely instructional but also cultural, relational, and experiential. The study also highlights the influence of contemporary challenges, particularly digital media exposure and limited parental supervision, which remain underexplored in previous studies concerning moral education in Islamic elementary schools.

The contribution of this study is both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this research enriches the discourse of Islamic character education by offering a contextual model of *akhlaqul karimah* formation based on integrated pedagogical strategies within Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. The findings strengthen the understanding that moral education in Islamic schools should involve not only cognitive learning but also continuous habituation, exemplary conduct, emotional guidance, and the development of religious school culture. Practically, this study provides educational insights for teachers, school administrators, and policymakers regarding effective approaches to strengthening students' moral character in contemporary educational contexts. Furthermore, the findings may serve as a reference for developing character education programs that integrate classroom learning, religious activities, parental involvement, and digital literacy in order to address current moral and social challenges faced by elementary school students.

References

Alfarisy, S. J., & Iswandi. (2025). Integration of character education values in Islamic religious education learning at school. *Multidisciplinary Indonesian Center Journal (MICJO), 2*(2), 1503–1509.

Aspers, P., & Corte, U. (2019). What is qualitative in qualitative research. *Qualitative Sociology, 42*(2), 139–160.

Campbell, S., Greenwood, M., Prior, S., Shearer, T., Walkem, K., Young, S., Bywaters, D., & Walker, K. (2020). Purposive sampling: Complex or simple? Research case examples. *Journal of Research in Nursing, 25*(8), 652–661.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Fauzi, I., Sari, D. N., & Junaidi, M. (2024). Pengembangan budaya religius pada pembelajaran pendidikan agama Islam di sekolah. *Tarbiyatuna, 17*(1).

Fitria, A., Rodliyah, S., & Fauzi, I. (2025). Integrating character education into religious practices: The management of Jumat Berkah and Bhakti Sosial programs. *MANAGERIA: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam, 10*(1).

Haluti, F., Mufarrihah, A., & Nimim. (2024). Islamic religious education teacher strategies in developing student character education. *Jurnal Pendidikan Glasser, 8*(1), 151–161.

Maarif, M. A., Ariyanto, A., & Wibowo, A. (2024). Developing Islamic character values through student habituation activities. *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education, 8*(1).

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Moser, A., & Korstjens, I. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 3: Sampling, data collection and analysis. *European Journal of General Practice, 24*(1), 9–18.

Nengseh, H., & Fauzi, I. (2025). Analisis kompetensi sosial guru terhadap pembentukan karakter siswa di SD/MI: Kajian literatur kualitatif. *Journal on Education, 8*(2).

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 16*(1), 1–13.

Nurizah, A. K., & Amrullah, M. (2024). Religious character formation through Islamic habituation in primary education. *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Studies, 12*(4).

Rofifah, R. N., Prasetyo, A., & Lestari, D. (2025). Habituation of religious activities in strengthening character education of the Pancasila student profile. *Gentala Pendidikan Dasar, 10*(1).

Safitri, L. N., Hidayat, T., & Rahmawati, S. (2023). Character education through habituation of religious activities in Islamic elementary schools. *EduBasic Journal: Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar, 5*(2).

Salim, N. A., Zaini, M., Wahib, A., Fauzi, I., & Asnawan, A. (2024). Fostering moderate character of santri: Effective hidden curriculum strategy in Islamic boarding schools. *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam, 7*(2), 357–372.

Sikana, A. M., Fauzi, I., & Zawawi, M. I. (2025). Integrasi keterampilan 4C dan nilai-nilai Islam dalam pembelajaran abad ke-21 di Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. *Auladuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar Islam, 7*(2).

Solihah, A. M., Sugara, U., & Fathoni, A. (2024). Teacher's role: Implementation of religious character education through the habituation method in elementary school. *Jurnal Ilmiah Sekolah Dasar, 8*(3).

Stahl, N. A., & King, J. R. (2020). Expanding approaches for research: Understanding and using trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Developmental Education, 44*(1), 26–28.

Subaidi, S., Fauzi, I., & Mahnun, N. (2024). Implementation of Islamic education: Recitation of Asmaul Husna and smiling-greeting to strengthen children's character. *Journal of Islamic Education Research, 5*(2).

Suryadi, R. A. (2025). Fostering moral education through the habituation of the seven sunnahs. *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam, 13*(2).

Syaputra, M. S. (2025). The role of teachers and the implementation of Islamic character education methods in madrasah students. *Young Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, 1*(4), 9–19.