

Research Article

The Relevance of Moral Education from an Islamic Perspective as the Basis for Character Building

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Received : October 3, 2025

Revised : November 18, 2025

Accepted : December 6, 2025

Available online : December 26, 2025

How to Cite: Rahma Noviana, Mahima Ayu Dwi Prasetyo, Fathimah Az Zahraa, & Ro'ifah. (2025). The Relevance of Moral Education from an Islamic Perspective as the Basis for Character Building. Mazidah: Journal Of Educational Research, 1(4), 162-171. <https://doi.org/10.63738/mazidah.v1i4.32>

Abstract

In this fast-paced era of globalization, the formation of individuals with integrity and high moral character has become a major focus in various disciplines. Failure in character education is often linked to an increase in social problems and ethical degradation in society. In Islam, moral education is not only social ethics, but also a manifestation of faith that encompasses vertical and horizontal relationships, making it a major pillar in character building. This study aims to examine in depth the relevance of moral education in the Islamic perspective as an irreplaceable foundation in the character-building process. The focus of the study includes an analysis of basic principles, identification of effective methods of formation in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunnah, and the implementation of moral values in the contemporary education system. The method used is library research, which relies on analysis of various writings and theories from relevant literature (reference books, journal articles, proceedings, and documents). Data is analyzed using content analysis, which includes the stages of problem identification, framework development, methodology, analysis, and data interpretation. Moral education, as conceptualized by Imam Al-

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Ghazali, is the cultivation of character traits in the soul that result in good deeds coming easily. The methods used to shape this character include direct teaching (the example set by the Prophet Muhammad) and indirect teaching (wisdom stories), as well as early cultivation through the instilling of faith and piety. Moral education is relevant in shaping a character that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also spiritually and emotionally mature, capable of being an agent of positive change, and possessing moral resilience in the midst of globalization. Moral education in Islam is an irreplaceable fundamental foundation in shaping the character of students to be whole (insan kamil), have integrity, and be highly moral. Further research is recommended to empirically examine the implementation of moral education at various levels of education and measure its concrete impact on changes in student behavior.

Keywords: Moral Education, Islamic Perspective, Character Building, Perfect Human Being, Relevance.

INTRODUCTION

In this fast-paced and complex era of globalization, the issue of human character has become a major focus in various disciplines, ranging from sociology and psychology to education. Universally, the formation of individuals with integrity, responsibility, and high morality is considered the main foundation for the creation of a superior civilization. Failure in character education is often associated with an increase in various social problems and ethical degradation in society at large. In the context of science and practice, Islam offers a comprehensive and in-depth framework for character building through the concept of akhlak. In the Islamic view, akhlak is not merely social ethics, but a manifestation of practiced faith, encompassing vertical relationships (with Allah SWT) and horizontal relationships (with fellow human beings and nature). Islamic education places akhlak education at the core of the entire learning process, believing that deeds without good akhlak will lose their spiritual and social meaning (Juandi Pasaribu, Muhammad Zalnur, 2023).

Moral education in the Islamic perspective has a very important relevance as the basis for shaping a person's character. In this modern era, the decline in morals and ethics among the younger generation has become an urgent phenomenon that needs to be addressed. Moral education plays a key role in instilling moral and spiritual values that form the basis of a strong and principled character. This is in line with the view that Islamic religious education, particularly moral education, is a key pillar in character building based on Islamic beliefs and values that are universal and eternal (Novi Puspitasari, Linda Relistian. R, 2022).

The relevance of moral education in shaping character can also be seen from its function as a guideline for life that guides students in facing the dilemmas and problems of the modern world based on faith and piety. Moral education is not only aimed at instilling values in a normative manner, but also oriented towards shaping students who are trustworthy, disciplined, and responsible for themselves and society. This approach strengthens the moral resilience of the younger generation to become agents of positive change in society (Hapsari et al., 2025).

Previous studies have discussed the role of religious education in character building, but they are still limited in their explanation of curriculum implementation and direct practice in Islamic educational institutions. This article

aims to provide an in-depth description of the implementation of moral education in the pesantren curriculum and how this can be an applicable solution in shaping the character of students to be adaptive and ethical in facing social change and globalization. The hypothesis tested is that Islamic-based moral education in pesantren plays a central role in developing individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also morally and spiritually mature (Afif, 2024).

Therefore, this study aims to examine in depth the relevance of moral education in the Islamic perspective as an irreplaceable foundation in the character-building process. The focus of this study is to analyze the basic principles of moral education, identify effective methods of character building in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah, and describe how these moral values can be implemented in contemporary education systems to produce a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also strong in spirituality and morality.

RESEARCH METHODS

The method applied in writing this scientific paper is literature research, which relies on or refers to a list that includes various writings and ideas or theories sourced from relevant literature, which are systematically organized and clearly explained. Efforts were made to find various scientific information from various recognized sources, such as reference books, journal articles, conference proceedings, research reports, and reading sources from both the internet and print media such as local newspapers and magazines.

Library research is a type of research conducted by collecting, reading, recording, and analyzing data from various written sources such as books, scientific articles, journals, research reports, theses, dissertations, and reliable digital sources. This method focuses on literature review to gain an in-depth understanding of a topic without conducting direct field research. The main purpose of library research is to build a theoretical foundation, a framework of thinking, and to support hypotheses based on a review of relevant sources. This research is important for obtaining a comprehensive overview and mature analysis of the issues or problems being studied through secondary data sources (Fahriana Nurrisa, Dina Hermina, 2025).

Researchers utilize a data analysis method known as content analysis because this type of research is literature research, with data sources derived from books, documents, and various other literature. The stages in this analysis include the following steps: (1) Identifying the problem; (2) Developing a framework; (3) Organizing the methodology; (4) Analyzing the data; and (5) Interpreting the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Moral Education in the Islamic Perspective

Akhlak is an Arabic term (khuluqun) that means a person's character, nature, or habits, and is often equated with the terms ethics or morals. Akhlak can be understood as a person's character that is formed from consistently repeated actions. This means that when a person does something (good or bad) over and

over again, that action will automatically become ingrained and become a permanent habit that is integrated into that person's daily behavior (Maulidah, 2022). Although linguistically *akhlak* means character or habit, religious scholars (*ulama*) have different interpretations of *akhlak*. One important figure, Imam Al-Ghazali, defines *akhlak* as "a trait embedded in the soul that causes actions to be carried out easily and effortlessly, without the need for thought or consideration." (Husaunu, 2018) .

The process of developing good character must begin during the prenatal period (in the womb) and continue until the child reaches the age of *mukallaf* (the age at which a person is considered legally adult and ready to face the responsibilities of life). The essence of this character building is the instilling of strong faith (belief) in God Almighty and the habit of living consistently (*istiqomah*). Children need to be trained to always remember God (be pious) and always depend on and ask for His help. With a solid foundation of faith and good spiritual habits, individuals will have the mental preparedness and high responsiveness to accept and practice all forms of good teachings. Therefore, in addition to being accustomed to good behavior (praiseworthy morals), children must also be accustomed to having a strong spiritual foundation as the main foundation of their character (Saputri et al., 2024).

Education is a planned effort to provide various stimuli and learning experiences to students. The goal is to develop the full potential of children in a comprehensive manner, covering aspects of knowledge (cognitive), attitude/emotion (affective), and skills (psychomotor). The development of this potential will ultimately lead children to a single point of focus, namely the achievement of the results or final goals that have been set in the learning process (Suryadarma & Haq, 2015). Imam Al-Ghazali was a highly influential and respected Muslim scholar. He was known for his intense passion for learning; he was always thirsty for knowledge and never stopped studying everything. Because of his deep love for knowledge, Al-Ghazali became an expert in various fields of study. This made him one of the most influential and impactful Islamic figures throughout the history of Islamic civilization (Maisarah et al., 2025).

In educating children, Al-Ghazali had a very clear main focus bringing children closer to God Almighty (Allah SWT). This means that every activity and educational process provided to children must aim to introduce and guide them to become closer to the Creator. According to him, the path to this spiritual goal will be wide open and easy to achieve if children are also equipped with adequate knowledge. This view, as he explains in his various works (books), shows that ideal education is a combination of spiritual development and mastery of knowledge. "Indeed, the result of knowledge is to bring oneself closer to Allah SWT, the Lord of the Universe, to connect oneself with the heights of angels and to be close to the high angels..." .

Imam Al-Ghazali, a great scholar in Islamic history, outlined two main methods in educating and teaching morals to children or students. The first method is direct teaching. In this method, the role of educators or parents is very important, namely by explicitly and openly conveying the virtues and nobility of

the Prophet Muhammad's morals. This direct teaching is reinforced with strong arguments, using verses from the Holy Qur'an and hadiths that describe in detail the praiseworthy character of the Prophet Muhammad. The goal is to provide concrete examples that must be emulated. The second method is indirect teaching. This method is more subtle and inspiring, where the teaching of morals and the exploration of children's moral potential are carried out through stories. Educators will tell various stories that contain *akhlakul karimah* (noble behavior) in them. By listening to these wise stories, children are expected to absorb moral values in an inspiring way without feeling lectured, so that these values are easily instilled in their souls and become part of their character (Naldi et al., 2024).

The simple goal of moral education is to improve students' behavior and ensure that the drive to do good is deeply ingrained in them. The philosophical basis for this effort is fundamental: humans, or individuals, are inherently endowed with an innate moral tendency; we have a natural ability to distinguish between good and bad. The human mind functions to plan ways to achieve these moral goals, while the heart acts as the center that directs the will and instincts. Some definitions even refer to humans as beings who specifically have the power to distinguish between right and wrong. In addition, humans are dynamic beings who are never satisfied with the existing reality, but are always driven to pursue the ultimate example or ideal of perfect behavior. Therefore, moral education serves to optimize this innate moral potential so that it is in harmony with noble life goals (Oktaviani et al., 2025).

The process of moral education has the fundamental goal of shaping people into good individuals with noble character, going beyond merely equipping them with intelligence and technical skills. According to the classical scholar Al-Khathib Al-Baghdadi, moral education specifically aims to: first, create harmonious relationships, both with God the Creator (*al-Khaliq*) and with fellow human beings. second, to foster sincerity in doing good deeds for the sake of happiness in this world and the hereafter. third, to guide behavior so that it is always in line with Islamic teachings. fourth, to instill noble character and behavior as a habit. Fifth, to foster a sense of responsibility to carry out social duties by encouraging good deeds and preventing evil (*amar ma'ruf nahy munkar*). Sixth, to instill a high spirit of work and learning. And seventh, to strengthen motivation and refine the character or morals of students.

The Concept of Character Education

Education is a process that transforms behavior, increases knowledge, and provides life experiences so that students develop into more mature individuals in terms of their thinking and attitudes. The development of education in the digital age is progressing rapidly, where technological advances are not only enjoyed by adults, but also by elementary school children who can feel its impact. Education can be defined as a conscious and planned effort to create a learning environment and process that enables students to actively develop their potential. This potential includes religious spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and the skills needed for personal, community, national, and state

success. The term “character” has many definitions from experts that cover various important aspects in the formation of students' personalities and morals (Welianti & Sartono, 2025).

Ki Hadjar Dewantara defined education as a collective effort to develop the good character, intellectual strength, and physical health of students. The main goal of this holistic development is to achieve true harmony with the surrounding environment and community, which shows the importance of balance between individuals and their social context. On the other hand, from a formal perspective of terms and definitions, the concept of education has also been elaborated by various observers and leading educational figures. One of them is Rimba (1989), who explains that education is a process of guidance or mentoring that is carried out deliberately and consciously by educators. This guidance has the fundamental aim of supporting the progress and growth of students, both physically and mentally. In particular, these guidance efforts are aimed at shaping excellent and integrity-driven characters. Both of these figures' views emphasize that education is an active, planned process aimed at developing the whole person, not merely transferring knowledge, but shaping personalities that are ready to contribute to their environment (Efendi & Ningsih, 2020).

In the Indonesian dictionary, the term ‘character’ refers to behavior, psychological traits, morals, or manners that distinguish one person from another, as well as their nature. Ki Hajar Dewantara defines character as personality or manners. In his view, character is the integration of thoughts, emotions, and desires that produce energy. Before discussing character education, it is necessary to first emphasize the meaning of education itself. There are many definitions of education expressed by various experts, where the meaning of education differs based on perspective, paradigm, method, and field of science used, one of which is: According to D. Rimba, education is “Understanding or guidance carried out consciously by educators towards the physical and mental development of students in order to create a well-rounded personality” (Efendi & Ningsih, 2020).

Character education has a noble vision, which is to improve the quality of education and its outcomes by focusing on the comprehensive development of good character and morals in every student. This vision goes beyond mere academic achievement, targeting the formation of well-rounded individuals. Through the structured and consistent implementation of character education, students are expected to be able to independently internalize, develop, and then apply the knowledge or science they have. This application must be manifested in the form of concrete actions that are in line with noble values and ethics in facing various situations, conditions, and challenges of everyday life. These efforts will provide significant benefits in preparing students to become a future generation of high-quality, highly moral, and strong-charactered citizens. Character education is a long-term investment in creating responsible, ethical citizens who are able to face the dynamics of change wisely.

In a broader sense, Ibn Faris argues that the main purpose of education in Islam is to guide and direct society by utilizing and maximizing all existing potential. This approach includes systematic and appropriate stages for teaching

and developing various aspects of human life simultaneously. Things to consider include spiritual, moral, intellectual, physical health, religious, socio-political, economic, aesthetic, and fighting spirit dimensions. Islam's focus on comprehensive individual development is clearly evident in Ibn Faris's profound approach. Education is not merely the transfer of knowledge, but also emphasizes spirituality, morality, intellectuality, and practical aspects relevant to everyday life. The ultimate goal is to create balanced, well-rounded Muslim individuals who are ready to face various challenges with integrated knowledge, faith, and deeds, so that they become individuals who are able to make positive contributions to society and civilization.

The Relevance of Moral Education in the Islamic Perspective can Shape Character

Moral education in Islam is highly relevant as the basis for building strong character in the younger generation. Through moral values derived from the Qur'an and Hadith, this education instills faith, honesty, trustworthiness, and responsibility in students. As a fundamental foundation, moral education can provide solutions to the moral crisis and ethical degradation currently faced by the younger generation in the era of globalization and technological advancement (Rahayu et al., 2025).

In this context, moral education in Islam is not merely about instilling rules, but also includes habituation, teaching values, and setting real examples from the environment, including family, school, and society. Character building through moral education encourages the formation of a generation that is not only academically intelligent but also highly moral, responsible, and capable of performing their social roles well. For example, the habit of doing good and maintaining social ethics is an integral part of the education process (Nur, 2020).

Comprehensive moral education not only shapes outward behavior, but also develops the emotional and spiritual sides of students. Thus, the character that is formed is a person who is not only intellectually intelligent, but also mentally and spiritually mature. This is crucial in facing increasingly complex challenges of the times, such as shifting values and the pressures of modern lifestyles that can threaten morals. The integration of moral values into the current education system can also strengthen the character-building process at every level of education. Islamic moral values such as honesty, patience, compassion, discipline, and responsibility need to be instilled from an early age so that they become deeply ingrained and shape individuals with strong character (Rahayu et al., 2025).

The development of students' Islamic character is greatly influenced by Islamic Religious Education (PAI), which is positioned as a key and strategic pillar in the educational environment. PAI plays a vital role in building and strengthening the morals and ethics of the younger generation. The PAI curriculum includes a number of fundamental texts and teachings such as the Shahada, the Qur'an, Hadith, Fiqh, Islamic History, and Akhlak, which collectively become a rich instructional resource for guiding the formation of character with integrity. More than just a transfer of knowledge, Islamic Religious Education

serves as an effective means of contextualizing general knowledge within a religious framework, thereby helping to shape students' personalities in a comprehensive manner. In addition to the personal dimension, PAI also has a strategic role in the national context, namely to preserve and foster the spirit of sacrifice and national values that have been fought for by the founders of the Republic of Indonesia, making it a bastion of social identity. Therefore, the ultimate goal of PAI is to create well-rounded students with noble character, where these spiritual and moral values are reflected in their actions, behavior, and positive mentality in their daily lives (Yusri et al., 2024).

Religious education has proven to be highly effective educationally because it has a strong ability to directly and profoundly influence the process of forming positive character in students. In terms of relevance, the formation of a child's basic character from an early age is closely related to the substance of the teachings conveyed in religious education materials. Religion acts as the main moral guide that provides various positive teachings that can be applied to shape children's personalities. For example, instilling politeness, respect, and good manners towards older people is a clear manifestation of religious teachings that support the development of good character (Salisah et al., 2024).

By internalizing these fundamental values, children are prepared to interact ethically in their social environment. More specifically, the focus on moral education has the noble goal of creating individuals who are not only knowledgeable, but also responsive, adaptive, and resilient in facing the complexities and challenges of life. This goal is achieved through the instillation of full wisdom and adequate moral competence. The development of strong moral abilities is considered very important and relevant given the rapid pace of globalization and ongoing changes. A strong moral foundation serves as an anchor that ensures students can filter external influences, make ethical decisions, and maintain their integrity amid the flow of changing information and values (Faizin, 2020).

CONCLUSION

Moral education in Islam serves as a fundamental basis for shaping the character of students, characterized by integrity, responsibility, and high morality. This concept emphasizes the importance of internalizing the values of faith and piety from an early age, with the aim of producing perfect human beings—individuals who are spiritually, mentally, and intellectually mature. Moral education goes far beyond simply instilling outward behavior; it focuses on strengthening the emotional and spiritual dimensions, making it key to dealing with the complexities of the modern era.

The character of students is built through the absorption of moral values that are authentically sourced from the Qur'an and Sunnah. Thus, moral education serves as a moral guide in responding to various social and global challenges, providing the basis for Islamic ethics. The strategic integration of moral education into the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum is essential for shaping a generation that is not only academically intelligent but also possesses strong

morality and religiosity. This education specifically teaches noble traits such as honesty, trustworthiness, discipline, and compassion.

In practical terms, moral education strengthens students' moral resilience, equips them to always act ethically in any situation, and makes them agents of positive change in society. A holistic approach, involving synergy between the family, school, and social environments, is the most effective way to instill noble morals in a sustainable manner. Therefore, Islamic-based moral education is an absolute necessity and highly relevant as a solution for creating highly competitive and ethical characters amid the rapid pace of globalization.

Based on a review of relevant literature and sources from the past five years, this study concludes that strengthening moral education must be fundamental to the Islamic education system. This foundation is crucial for the formation of a well-rounded and practical character that is always based on values of faith and morality. For further research, it is recommended that there be more detailed empirical studies on how moral education is implemented at various levels of education, as well as measuring the impact on the behavior of students.

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