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Implementation of Character Education in Islamic Religious Education Learning at SMP Islam Denggen Timur

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze and describe the implementation of character education in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMP Islam Denggen Timur. The research focuses on examining the strategies employed by teachers, the forms of character habituation implemented within the school environment, the responses of students toward character education practices, as well as the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing the implementation process. This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design in order to obtain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon within its natural educational setting. The data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. Primary data were obtained from four Islamic Religious Education teachers and four student representatives, while secondary data were derived from journal articles, books, school documents, and other relevant literature. The data analysis technique utilized the interactive model developed by Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The validity of the data was ensured through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking. The findings of the study indicate that character education at SMP Islam Denggen Timur has been systematically integrated into both instructional and non-instructional educational activities through religious habituation, teacher exemplarity, contextual learning strategies, and Islamic school culture. Teachers play strategic roles as educators, motivators, and moral role models in fostering students' discipline, honesty, responsibility, respect, and religiosity. Religious activities such as congregational prayers, Qur'anic recitation, Islamic lectures, and social

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service programs significantly contribute to students' character formation. However, the implementation process still encounters challenges, particularly regarding the influence of social media and external social environments on students' behavior. The implications of this study suggest that the successful implementation of character education requires continuous collaboration among schools, teachers, families, and communities in developing holistic and sustainable moral education practices within Islamic educational institutions.

Keywords: Character Education; Islamic Religious Education; Islamic School.

INTRODUCTION

Character education constitutes one of the primary foundations within the national education system, which is oriented toward the formation of Indonesian individuals who are faithful, pious, morally upright, and possess social integrity. From the perspective of modern education, education is not merely directed toward the development of cognitive aspects, but also encompasses affective and psychomotor dimensions integrated into the character formation of students (Saidek, A. R., & Islami, R., 2016; Firdaus, S. A., & Suwendi, S., 2025). Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education of the Republic of Indonesia emphasizes that character education serves as a strategic instrument in developing a generation that is adaptive, ethical, and capable of facing the challenges of globalization without losing its moral and spiritual identity. Therefore, the implementation of character education in the learning process becomes a fundamental necessity for every educational institution, particularly Islamic educational institutions that bear moral and religious responsibilities in fostering students' morality comprehensively.

Normatively, the urgency of character education has been affirmed in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, particularly Article 3, which states that national education aims to develop the potential of students to become individuals who are faithful and devoted to Almighty God, possess noble character, are competent, creative, independent, and responsible. From an Islamic perspective, character education possesses a strong theological foundation as stated in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Ahzab verse 21, which explains that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is uswatun hasanah, or the best example for humanity. Furthermore, Surah Luqman verse 17 also emphasizes the importance of character formation through worship, enjoining good and forbidding evil, and cultivating patience. These verses demonstrate that character education in Islam is not merely conceptual but also applicative in all

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educational processes and students' social lives.

Although character education has become a primary focus in various educational policies, empirical realities indicate that its implementation within schools still faces numerous challenges. The phenomenon of moral degradation among students, such as low discipline, declining respect toward teachers, intolerant behavior, bullying, and weak social responsibility, serves as an indicator that the internalization of character values has not yet been optimally implemented. This condition reveals a gap between the ideal objectives of national education and the actual behavior of students in the field. Within the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, the educational process often remains oriented toward the transfer of religious knowledge, while the aspect of character formation has not been deeply and systematically implemented (Mujahid, I., 2021; Qoyyimah, U., 2016).

This discrepancy is also evident in educational practices within various Islamic schools, which institutionally should serve as the forefront of fostering Islamic character. PAI learning in some educational institutions still tends to be textual, normative, and centered solely on academic achievement, resulting in spiritual and moral values not being fully internalized into students' daily behavior. In fact, the idealism of Islamic education requires an integration of knowledge, appreciation, and practice of Islamic teachings within students' lives. This situation indicates that the implementation of character education requires pedagogical strategies that are not only theoretical but also applicative and contextual in accordance with students' dynamics (Solihin, I., Hasanah, A., & Fajrussalam, H., 2020).

The problems surrounding the implementation of character education in PAI learning cannot be separated from the complexity of both internal and external school factors. Internally, teachers' abilities to integrate character values into the learning process vary considerably. Some teachers place greater emphasis on delivering subject matter rather than cultivating attitudes and habituating values (Iriany, I. S., & Paciana, R. 2019). Moreover, limitations in character evaluation models make the success of character education implementation difficult to measure comprehensively. On the other hand, school culture that does not fully support character formation also becomes an obstacle in the process of internalizing moral and religious values.

Externally, the development of information technology and the flow of globalization also influence students' behavioral patterns. Easy access to digital media without adequate supervision may foster individualistic and consumptive behaviors, as well as decreased social sensitivity. Students are placed in social situations vulnerable to identity crises and moral disorientation if

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they are not equipped with strong character education. Therefore, PAI learning is demanded not only to convey religious doctrines but also to become a medium of value transformation relevant to contemporary life challenges (Alnashr, M. S., & Suroso, A. 2020).

Within the context of Islamic education, the implementation of character education should essentially be realized through the integration of religious values into all learning activities. PAI teachers hold strategic roles as educators, motivators, and role models in building students' character culture. Learning processes based on exemplary conduct, habituation, reinforcement of spiritual values, and humanistic approaches are believed to enhance the effectiveness of character education. Thus, the implementation of character education should not merely be understood as an additional school program, but rather as the spirit underlying the entire educational process (Larson, E. M., 2018).

Based on these conditions, an implementative approach capable of systematically integrating character education into PAI learning is required. This study proposes the importance of strengthening the implementation of character education through learning strategies emphasizing teacher exemplarity, habituation of religious values, integration of character values into learning materials, and reinforcement of Islamic school culture. Such an approach is expected to shape students who are not only academically excellent but also possess Islamic character reflected in their daily behavior (Wenas, J. C., & Verana, K., 2024).

In addition, this study also offers an in-depth analysis concerning the forms of character education implementation, supporting and inhibiting factors, and their implications for students' behavior within the school environment. Through this research, it is expected that a comprehensive understanding regarding the effectiveness of implementing character education in PAI learning will be obtained so that it may serve as a model for developing character education in other Islamic educational institutions (Apandie, C., & Rahmelia, S., 2025; Awalin, H. Z., et al., 2026; Rahimah, R. S., 2025).

Studies concerning character education in PAI learning have actually been widely conducted by previous researchers. Research conducted by Thomas Lickona emphasized that character education must be implemented integrally through moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Furthermore, research by Zubaedi demonstrated that character education based on Islamic values significantly influences the formation of students' morality. Another study by Doni Koesoema highlighted the importance of school culture in supporting the successful implementation of character education.

Nevertheless, previous studies still tend to discuss character education in general and have

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not specifically examined its implementation in PAI learning within the context of a particular Islamic school, especially at SMP Islam Denggen Timur. In addition, some studies focus more on conceptual aspects without deeply exploring implementative practices in the field along with their supporting and inhibiting dynamics. Therefore, this study possesses novelty in its focus on examining the contextual implementation of character education in PAI learning within an Islamic school environment through a more in-depth empirical approach.

The urgency of this research becomes increasingly relevant considering that character education has now become a strategic issue in the development of Indonesian human resources. The effective implementation of character education in PAI learning is believed to be capable of providing solutions to various moral crises occurring among students. This research is also important in providing theoretical contributions to the development of Islamic education studies as well as practical contributions for schools in designing more integrative and character-based PAI learning models.

Based on preliminary observations conducted at SMP Islam Denggen Timur, it was found that the school has attempted to implement various character-building programs through religious activities, disciplinary habituation, and the integration of Islamic values into learning processes. However, in practice, there are still students who demonstrate undisciplined behavior, low awareness of responsibility, and suboptimal internalization of character values in daily life. These conditions become important indicators that the implementation of character education still requires more systematic and sustainable reinforcement within the PAI learning process.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze and describe the implementation of character education in Islamic Religious Education learning at SMP Islam Denggen Timur, including the forms of implementation, strategies employed by teachers, supporting and inhibiting factors, as well as their implications for students' character formation. This research is expected to provide scientific contributions to the development of character education based on Islamic values and to become a reference for educational institutions in building learning systems oriented toward the formation of a generation possessing noble character (akhlaqul karimah).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study research design (Noviana, R.,, 2025; Muslim, M., 2023). The qualitative approach was selected because this research aims to obtain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of character education implementation in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning within its natural setting at SMP Islam Denggen Timur.

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This approach enables the researcher to comprehensively explore the process of implementing character education, the strategies employed by teachers, and the dynamics emerging in daily learning practices. Meanwhile, the case study design was utilized because the research focuses on a particular educational institution with unique characteristics, thereby allowing an intensive, contextual, holistic, and empirical exploration of the researched phenomenon.

The data sources in this study consisted of primary and secondary data sources (Ithnin, N. B., & Husti, I., 2023). Primary data were obtained directly through in-depth interviews with several Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at SMP Islam Denggen Timur who were considered to have direct involvement in the implementation of character education in the learning process. In addition to PAI teachers, primary data were also collected from the school principal and students in order to strengthen the comprehensiveness and validity of the research findings. Meanwhile, secondary data were derived from various supporting documents such as scientific journal articles, books, previous research findings, school documents, learning instruments, school activity archives, and other relevant literature related to character education and Islamic Religious Education learning.

In this qualitative study, the researcher functioned as the primary instrument (human instrument) who was directly involved in the entire research process. The researcher was physically present at the research site to conduct observations, gather information, understand the social setting, and interpret the meaning of various phenomena encountered in the field. The researcher's presence was participatory and adaptive while maintaining scientific objectivity in order to ensure that the obtained data reflected natural and empirical realities. Therefore, the researcher not only acted as a data collector but also as an interpreter and analyzer of the collected data based on the research context (Hidayat, A. L., Anwar, S., & Azizah, N. 2025).

The research instruments utilized in this study included interview guidelines, observation sheets, and documentation instruments. The interview guidelines were employed to obtain in-depth information regarding the implementation of character education in PAI learning, teachers' strategies in instilling character values, and the supporting and inhibiting factors encountered during the learning process. Observation sheets were used to directly observe learning activities, teacher-student interactions, and forms of character habituation within the school environment. Meanwhile, documentation instruments were used to collect supporting data in the form of school documents, photographs of activities, learning schedules, instructional tools, and various archives relevant to the research objectives.

The procedures of data collection in this study were conducted through interviews,

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observations, and documentation. Interviews were carried out using in-depth interview techniques with PAI teachers and other relevant informants in order to obtain comprehensive information concerning the implementation of character education in the learning process. Observations were conducted directly during PAI learning activities and students' daily activities within the school environment to identify the forms of character value implementation in educational practices. Furthermore, documentation techniques were conducted by collecting various relevant documents as supporting and corroborating data for the interview and observation findings. These three techniques were employed integratively to ensure the completeness, validity, and comprehensiveness of the collected data.

The data analysis technique in this study employed the interactive analysis model developed by Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, which consists of three major stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification (Hashimov, E., 2015; Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J., 2014). Data reduction was conducted by selecting, focusing, simplifying, and organizing the data obtained from the field according to the research focus. Subsequently, the data were presented in the form of descriptive narratives to facilitate the researcher in understanding relationships among the data and identifying certain patterns. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and verification, which were continuously conducted throughout the research process in order to produce findings that are valid and scientifically accountable.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, this study applied source triangulation, technique triangulation, and time triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different informants such as teachers, the school principal, and students. Technique triangulation was carried out by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure data consistency. Meanwhile, time triangulation was conducted through repeated observations at different times in order to obtain more accurate and stable data. In addition, the researcher also applied prolonged engagement and member checking to enhance the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and overall validity of the research findings.

RESULTS

The findings of this study were derived from a series of in-depth interviews conducted with four Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers and four student representatives at SMP Islam Denggen Timur. The interviews focused on the implementation of character education in Islamic

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Religious Education learning, particularly concerning the strategies employed by teachers, the forms of character habituation, students' responses, and the challenges encountered during the implementation process. The obtained findings indicate that character education has become an integral component of the PAI learning process and is implemented through both instructional and non-instructional activities within the school environment.

One of the PAI teachers explained that character education is consistently integrated into classroom learning through religious habituation and exemplary conduct demonstrated by teachers. The informant stated:

> *"In every learning activity, we do not only teach religious theories, but we also emphasize moral values such as honesty, discipline, respect, and responsibility. Before starting the lesson, students are accustomed to praying, reciting short surahs, and greeting teachers respectfully*." (Interview with PAI Teacher 1)

This statement indicates that the implementation of character education at SMP Islam Denggen Timur is not merely conceptual but also practical through continuous habituation. The integration of religious values into daily learning activities reflects an effort to internalize Islamic character within students' behavior. This finding was further strengthened by another teacher who emphasized the significance of teacher exemplarity in shaping students' character.

The second informant stated:

> *"Students tend to imitate what they see from their teachers. Therefore, teachers must become role models in terms of discipline, politeness, honesty, and religious commitment because character education will not be effective if teachers only provide theoretical explanations."* (Interview with PAI Teacher 2)

The statement above demonstrates that teacher exemplarity constitutes a central strategy in implementing character education. The implementation process is not solely carried out through verbal instruction but also through teachers' attitudes and behavior in daily interactions with students. The findings from both interviews reveal a strong correlation between habituation and exemplarity as complementary approaches in strengthening character education within PAI learning.

Furthermore, another teacher highlighted that character education was also implemented through collaborative school programs involving all educational stakeholders. The informant explained:

> *"The school has several programs to strengthen students' character, such as congregational prayers, Friday religious activities, Islamic lectures, and social service activities. These*

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programs are integrated with Islamic Religious Education learning so that students can directly practice Islamic values in real life." (Interview with PAI Teacher 3)

This finding illustrates that the implementation of character education extends beyond classroom instruction and is reinforced through broader school culture and religious activities. The integration between curricular and extracurricular activities demonstrates the school's commitment to establishing a holistic character education environment. Such practices indicate that character formation is perceived as a collective responsibility shared by the entire school community.

In addition, another teacher acknowledged that despite the school's efforts, several obstacles still hindered the implementation process. The informant stated:

"One of the challenges is the influence of social media and students' environments outside school. Sometimes students behave well at school, but external influences make character formation difficult to maintain consistently." (Interview with PAI Teacher 4)

This statement reveals that the implementation of character education is influenced not only by internal school factors but also by external social dynamics. The challenges caused by digital technology and social environments demonstrate that character education requires continuous reinforcement both within and outside the school setting. The findings collectively indicate that while the school has implemented systematic character education programs, sustaining students' character development remains a complex and ongoing process.

The interview findings from student representatives further support the teachers' explanations regarding the implementation of character education at SMP Islam Denggen Timur. One student stated:

"Our teachers always remind us to be disciplined and respectful. Before lessons begin, we pray together, and if we make mistakes, teachers advise us in a good manner instead of scolding us harshly." (Interview with Student 1)

This statement suggests that students directly experience the implementation of character education through daily learning interactions. The teachers' persuasive and humanistic approach appears to contribute positively to students' moral awareness and emotional development. This finding aligns with the teachers' perspectives emphasizing habituation and exemplary conduct as central methods of character formation.

Another student explained:

"The religious activities at school help us become more disciplined and responsible. We are encouraged to participate in congregational prayers, recite the Qur'an, and respect our

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friends and teachers." (Interview with Student 2)

The statement above demonstrates that religious activities serve as effective instruments for strengthening students' character formation. The integration of worship practices within school activities contributes to the development of discipline, responsibility, and social ethics among students. This finding reinforces the argument that character education in PAI learning is implemented not only cognitively but also behaviorally and spiritually.

Similarly, another student stated:

"Teachers often provide examples from the stories of the Prophet and relate them to our daily lives. That makes us understand how to behave properly in school and outside school." (Interview with Student 3)

This finding indicates that contextual learning strategies utilizing Islamic narratives and prophetic stories contribute significantly to students' understanding of moral values. By connecting religious teachings with real-life situations, teachers facilitate students' internalization of Islamic character values in a more meaningful and applicable manner. This approach reflects the transformative function of PAI learning as a medium for both moral understanding and behavioral development.

However, one student also acknowledged that maintaining consistent character-based behavior remains challenging. The informant stated:

"Sometimes students still break rules or become undisciplined, especially when influenced by friends or social media. But teachers continue reminding us and guiding us patiently." (Interview with Student 4)

This statement confirms the existence of ongoing challenges in the implementation of character education despite the school's continuous efforts. The influence of peers and digital media remains a significant factor affecting students' behavior. Nevertheless, the teachers' continuous guidance and mentoring demonstrate the school's commitment to sustaining the character-building process through consistent educational practices.

Overall, the findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of character education in Islamic Religious Education learning at SMP Islam Denggen Timur has been conducted systematically through the integration of religious values in classroom learning, teacher exemplarity, habituation programs, and religious school culture. The interconnected findings from teachers and students reveal that character education is implemented through collaborative and continuous educational processes involving cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions.

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Although several challenges remain, particularly concerning external social influences and digital media exposure, the school continues to strengthen character education through integrated Islamic educational practices aimed at fostering students with noble character (akhlaqul karimah).

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of character education in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMP Islam Denggen Timur has been systematically integrated into both instructional and non-instructional educational activities. This finding confirms that character education is not positioned merely as a complementary educational agenda, but rather as an essential and inseparable dimension of the overall educational process. Conceptually, this condition aligns with the perspective of Thomas Lickona who argues that effective character education must encompass moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action simultaneously. In this context, the integration of religious habituation, exemplary conduct, and school culture identified in the present study reflects the actualization of these three dimensions within the educational environment. The implementation of daily religious practices such as praying before lessons, reciting short surahs, and cultivating respectful interactions demonstrates that the school attempts to transform Islamic values into lived experiences rather than merely cognitive knowledge.

The findings regarding the role of habituation in strengthening students' character indicate that repetitive religious and moral practices contribute significantly to the internalization of ethical values among students (Maarif, M. A., et al., 2024). From an educational psychology perspective, habituation serves as a strategic pedagogical mechanism capable of shaping behavioral patterns through continuous repetition and reinforcement. Theoretically, this finding corresponds with behavioristic educational theory, particularly the concept proposed by B. F. Skinner emphasizing that behavior can be formed through consistent conditioning processes. Within the Islamic educational context, habituation also reflects the principle of ta'dib, namely the cultivation of discipline and moral refinement through continuous practice. Therefore, the implementation of habituation-based character education at SMP Islam Denggen Timur can be interpreted as an educational strategy aimed at embedding Islamic moral consciousness into students' daily conduct both inside and outside the classroom environment.

Furthermore, the findings highlighting teacher exemplarity as a central strategy in character education implementation reinforce the theoretical assumption that teachers occupy not only instructional roles but also moral and spiritual leadership functions within educational institutions

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(Nursobah, A., et al., 2025; Solehah, I., & Manshur, U., 2025). The statement of the interviewed teachers concerning the necessity for educators to become role models in discipline, honesty, politeness, and religiosity reflects the Islamic educational concept of uswatun hasanah, which positions educators as living examples for students. This finding is strongly supported by the theory of social learning proposed by Albert Bandura, which emphasizes that individuals learn behaviors through observation and imitation of significant models within their environment. In this regard, the moral conduct demonstrated by teachers becomes a powerful medium through which students internalize ethical values. The consistency between teachers' verbal instruction and practical behavior identified in this study strengthens the effectiveness of character education because students tend to emulate observable actions rather than abstract moral concepts.

The implementation of collaborative school programs such as congregational prayers, Friday religious activities, Islamic lectures, and social service initiatives also illustrates that character education at SMP Islam Denggen Timur is approached holistically through the integration of curricular and extracurricular dimensions. This finding aligns with the educational philosophy asserting that character formation cannot be effectively achieved solely through classroom instruction but requires supportive sociocultural environments capable of reinforcing moral values continuously. Previous research conducted by Doni Koesoema similarly emphasizes the strategic role of school culture in strengthening students' character development. The present study extends this perspective by demonstrating that Islamic school culture contributes not only to the reinforcement of religious identity but also to the development of social ethics, discipline, responsibility, and collective awareness among students. Consequently, character education emerges as a communal educational process involving all school stakeholders rather than the sole responsibility of PAI teachers (Khoirunissa, K., & Jinan, M., 2025; Trisnantari, H. E., et al., 2026).

Another significant finding concerns the implementation of contextual learning strategies through prophetic narratives and Islamic stories. The use of stories of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as moral exemplars reflects the transformative orientation of Islamic Religious Education learning. This pedagogical approach enables students to connect religious teachings with real-life experiences, thereby facilitating deeper moral comprehension and emotional engagement (Setiono, J., & Arifin, I. 2026; Iqbal, M., 2024). Theoretically, this finding corresponds with constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes that meaningful learning occurs when students actively relate new knowledge to their personal experiences and social realities. By contextualizing Islamic teachings within students' everyday lives, teachers at SMP Islam Denggen Timur effectively transform PAI learning into a process of moral reflection and

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behavioral transformation rather than mere doctrinal transmission. This finding also supports previous studies indicating that narrative-based religious instruction contributes significantly to the development of empathy, ethical awareness, and reflective thinking among students.

The findings derived from student interviews further reveal that students perceive the implementation of character education positively, particularly regarding the humanistic and persuasive approaches employed by teachers. The students' experiences of being guided patiently rather than punished harshly indicate the presence of an educational climate grounded in compassion and emotional support. Such findings correspond with humanistic educational theory proposed by Carl Rogers, which emphasizes that meaningful learning emerges within environments characterized by empathy, acceptance, and positive interpersonal relationships. The implementation of character education through nurturing teacher-student interactions demonstrates that moral development is closely connected to students' emotional experiences within educational settings. Consequently, the success of character education at SMP Islam Denggen Timur cannot be separated from the school's efforts to establish constructive and emotionally supportive educational relationships (Achadah, A., et al., 2022; Hidayah, I. N., Kurniawaty, I., & Parhan, M. 2025).

However, the findings also reveal persistent challenges concerning the influence of social media, peer environments, and external social dynamics on students' character development. This condition reflects the increasingly complex realities faced by contemporary educational institutions in maintaining students' moral consistency amidst rapid technological advancement and globalization (Intansari, I., et al., 2026; Fazrani, K. 2025; Juhansyah, J., Suyadi, S., & Widodo, H., 2025). The influence of digital culture identified in this study supports previous research indicating that uncontrolled exposure to social media may contribute to behavioral shifts, declining social sensitivity, and weakened moral discipline among adolescents. From a sociological perspective, this phenomenon indicates that character formation is not exclusively determined by school-based educational processes but is also shaped by broader social environments. Therefore, the challenges encountered by SMP Islam Denggen Timur demonstrate the necessity of collaborative partnerships between schools, families, and communities in reinforcing students' character development comprehensively and sustainably.

Overall, the findings of this study confirm that the implementation of character education in Islamic Religious Education learning at SMP Islam Denggen Timur reflects an integrative educational model combining religious habituation, teacher exemplarity, contextual learning, and Islamic school culture (Shobicha, S., 2025; Al-Otaibi, H. H., 2022). The interconnectedness between

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instructional strategies, students' experiences, and institutional programs indicates that character education functions as a multidimensional educational process encompassing cognitive, affective, spiritual, and behavioral dimensions simultaneously. Although external social influences remain substantial challenges, the school's continuous efforts to strengthen character education demonstrate a strong institutional commitment toward fostering students with noble character (akhlaqul karimah). Consequently, this study contributes not only to the theoretical discourse on Islamic character education but also provides empirical insights regarding effective strategies for integrating moral and spiritual values within contemporary Islamic educational institutions.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion of this study, it can be concluded that the implementation of character education in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMP Islam Denggen Timur has been systematically and integratively carried out through various educational strategies oriented toward the formation of students' moral, spiritual, and social character. Character education is not merely positioned as an additional educational program but has become an essential component embedded within the entire learning process and school culture. The implementation is realized through the integration of Islamic values into classroom instruction, religious habituation activities, teacher exemplarity, contextual learning approaches, and collaborative school programs designed to strengthen students' moral awareness and behavioral development.

The study reveals that teachers play a highly strategic role in the implementation of character education, not only as transmitters of religious knowledge but also as moral exemplars and facilitators of value internalization. The consistent practice of habituation activities such as praying before lessons, reciting the Qur'an, congregational worship, and fostering respectful interactions contributes significantly to shaping students' discipline, responsibility, honesty, and social ethics. Furthermore, the implementation of contextual learning through prophetic stories and real-life moral examples enables students to understand and apply Islamic teachings more meaningfully in their daily lives. These findings demonstrate that character education within PAI learning functions not only cognitively but also affectively, spiritually, and behaviorally.

In addition, the findings indicate that the success of character education implementation is strongly supported by the creation of an Islamic school culture involving all educational stakeholders. Religious activities, social service programs, and school-wide moral practices collectively reinforce the internalization of Islamic values among students. However, the study

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also identifies several challenges, particularly the influence of social media, peer environments, and external social dynamics that may weaken the consistency of students' character formation outside the school setting. This condition suggests that character education requires continuous reinforcement through cooperation between schools, families, and communities to ensure sustainable moral development among students.

Overall, this study confirms that the implementation of character education in Islamic Religious Education learning at SMP Islam Denggen Timur reflects a holistic and transformative educational model that integrates cognitive understanding, moral cultivation, spiritual reinforcement, and behavioral habituation simultaneously. The findings contribute theoretically to the discourse of Islamic character education by emphasizing the importance of integrative and contextual approaches in moral formation. Practically, this study provides valuable insights for Islamic educational institutions in designing effective character-based learning systems capable of fostering students with noble character (akhlaqul karimah), strong religious commitment, and positive social responsibility in facing contemporary societal challenges.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Future research on the implementation of character education in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is expected to expand both theoretically and empirically in order to strengthen the development of Islamic character-based educational models. This study primarily focused on the implementation process within a single educational institution, namely SMP Islam Denggen Timur; therefore, further studies are recommended to involve broader research settings across various Islamic schools, madrasahs, and other educational institutions with different sociocultural backgrounds. Comparative studies between institutions may provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of diverse character education strategies and their contextual influences on students' moral development.

In addition, future researchers are encouraged to examine the long-term impact of character education implementation on students' behavioral transformation, academic achievement, social interactions, and spiritual development. Longitudinal studies may contribute significantly to understanding the sustainability and consistency of character formation processes among students over time. Furthermore, future investigations may explore the role of parents, families, and community environments in supporting or inhibiting the effectiveness of character education programs implemented in schools. Such studies are important considering that students' character development is influenced not only by school environments but also by

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broader social and familial interactions.

Future research may also focus on the integration of digital literacy and technological ethics within Islamic character education frameworks, particularly in addressing the challenges posed by social media and globalization. The increasing influence of digital culture on students' behavior necessitates innovative educational approaches capable of integrating Islamic moral values with responsible technology usage. Therefore, studies examining digital-based character education models, Islamic ethical communication in online environments, and technology-oriented moral learning strategies would provide substantial contributions to contemporary Islamic education discourse.

Moreover, future studies are expected to develop practical and innovative learning models that integrate character education into Islamic Religious Education more systematically and measurably. Research focusing on the development of character-based curricula, authentic assessment models for character evaluation, and teacher professional development in moral pedagogy would further enrich the implementation of Islamic character education. Consequently, future investigations are anticipated to contribute not only to theoretical advancement but also to practical educational policies and strategies aimed at fostering students with strong moral integrity, religious commitment, and social responsibility in the contemporary era.

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