

Implementation of Moral Education Through the Islamic Religious Education Curriculum

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Abstract: This study explores the implementation of moral education through the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum at MIN 5 Ponorogo, focusing on how values are integrated into teaching, learning, and school culture. Moral education is considered a core element of Islamic education, aimed not only at transferring knowledge but also at shaping students' character to become morally responsible individuals. Using a qualitative descriptive method, data were collected through interviews with teachers and administrators, classroom observations, and analysis of school documents. The findings indicate that moral education is implemented holistically through classroom instruction, teacher modeling, extracurricular programs, and habituation practices embedded in daily school routines. Teachers play a pivotal role as role models, mentors, and collaborators with parents and the community, ensuring that moral lessons extend beyond the classroom. Despite challenges such as academic pressures, digital influences, varied family backgrounds, and limited institutional resources, the school has developed innovative strategies to strengthen moral education. These strategies include contextual learning, project-based approaches, moral habituation, and collaborative engagement with families and communities. The novelty of this research lies in highlighting practical and comprehensive approaches that bridge the gap between theoretical curriculum objectives and real-life character formation. It concludes that the success of moral education requires a synergistic collaboration between curriculum, teachers, families, and communities to prepare students to face the complexities of the modern era while upholding noble Islamic values.

Keywords: Moral Education, Islamic Religious Education, Curriculum, Character Building

INTRODUCTION

Education has always been recognized as one of the most significant instruments for shaping the character and behavior of the younger generation (Abdurrahman et al., 2024; Wenas & Verana, 2025). In particular, moral education is considered a fundamental aspect that enables students to develop ethical reasoning, discipline, and social responsibility (Chowdhury, 2016). In many contexts, education is not only aimed at transferring knowledge but also at instilling values that guide individuals in their daily lives. Islamic education, with its holistic approach, integrates knowledge, spirituality, and morality into the formation of human beings (Sehati et al., 2024). This integration is crucial, especially in shaping students into individuals who can balance intellectual

advancement with virtuous behavior(Newstead et al., 2020). Thus, moral education within the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum emerges as an essential tool for building strong moral foundations in students' lives.

In Islamic teachings, morality (akhlaq) is inseparable from faith and religious practice, forming a comprehensive approach to personal and social development(Ihsan, 2023). The Qur'an and the Hadith emphasize the importance of noble character as a reflection of one's faith and devotion. Therefore, the Islamic Religious Education curriculum does not merely provide theoretical knowledge but also aims to internalize moral principles that are applicable in real-life situations. Schools and madrasahs, particularly at the elementary and secondary levels, serve as strategic environments for implementing moral education through structured curricula. The integration of moral values into learning ensures that students are prepared not only academically but also spiritually and ethically(Studies et al., 2025). This makes the IRE curriculum a vital platform for nurturing morally upright future generations.

Globally, the rapid pace of modernization, globalization, and digital transformation has influenced the moral fabric of societies, particularly among the younger generation. In this context, Islamic Religious Education becomes even more relevant as it provides students with strong ethical grounding amidst external influences. National education systems in Muslim-majority countries, such as Indonesia, have positioned moral education as a core objective of Islamic Religious Education. By doing so, schools aim to counteract moral decline and strengthen cultural and religious identity. The relevance of this curriculum lies in its ability to address universal ethical challenges while maintaining specific Islamic moral values. Thus, implementing moral education through IRE contributes not only to personal development but also to the preservation of moral and social harmony.

Despite the emphasis on moral education, there are persistent challenges in its implementation through the Islamic Religious Education curriculum. Many teachers face difficulties in translating abstract moral concepts into practical, relatable lessons for students. Additionally, the dominance of cognitive-oriented teaching often overshadows the affective and behavioral aspects of moral education. Students may memorize moral principles but fail to embody them in daily life, leading to a gap between knowledge and practice. The influence of social media,

peer culture, and materialistic lifestyles further complicates the process of internalizing moral values. As a result, moral education often remains theoretical and does not always produce the intended behavioral outcomes.

Another issue lies in the inconsistency between curriculum design and classroom implementation. While the IRE curriculum emphasizes moral education, teachers may lack sufficient pedagogical skills, innovative methods, or institutional support to integrate values effectively into teaching. Moreover, differences in family backgrounds and community environments can either support or hinder the success of moral education in schools. These disparities result in uneven outcomes, where some students exhibit strong moral awareness while others struggle to apply what they have learned. This situation raises questions about the effectiveness of the current implementation strategies and calls for innovative approaches that make moral education more contextual, experiential, and impactful.

Scholars have highlighted the importance of integrating moral education into the Islamic Religious Education curriculum as a holistic effort to foster character formation (Setyobudi, 2021). Several studies emphasize that effective moral education requires interactive, student-centered learning approaches that engage learners in reflective thinking and real-life applications. Research also suggests that curricula focusing solely on theoretical aspects fail to achieve long-term behavioral transformation. Therefore, pedagogical strategies such as project-based learning, moral modeling, and character habituation are widely recommended. These approaches ensure that students not only understand but also practice moral principles consistently in their daily interactions.

Other studies have also pointed out that moral education must adapt to the digital and globalized context in which students live. Teachers are expected to employ digital tools, interactive media, and contextual discussions to make moral education more relevant and engaging. Research findings indicate that schools that integrate moral education with digital literacy programs tend to achieve better results in shaping students' ethical behaviors. Furthermore, collaboration between schools, families, and communities is seen as a crucial factor in reinforcing moral lessons learned in classrooms. This growing body of literature reflects the consensus that moral education is most effective when implemented comprehensively across multiple dimensions of a student's life.

Although numerous studies have examined moral education in Islamic Religious Education, many have focused more on theoretical concepts rather than practical implementation. There is a lack of empirical evidence on how the IRE curriculum can be systematically adapted to address contemporary challenges, particularly in digital and multicultural contexts. Moreover, the gap between curricular objectives and classroom realities remains underexplored, especially regarding the integration of moral education into everyday learning practices. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on practical strategies for implementing moral education within the IRE curriculum, highlighting innovative pedagogical approaches and contextual adaptations that can bridge the gap between knowledge and behavior.

The purpose of this study is to explore the implementation of moral education through the Islamic Religious Education curriculum, with particular attention to its challenges, opportunities, and effective strategies. The research seeks to analyze how moral education can be translated into concrete practices that shape students' character both within and beyond the classroom. Additionally, this study aims to propose innovative and holistic approaches to ensure that moral education becomes an integral and lived experience for students. By doing so, the study contributes to strengthening the role of Islamic Religious Education in building morally responsible individuals who can respond wisely to the complexities of the modern world.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the implementation of moral education through the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum at MIN 5 Ponorogo (Nurhidin, 2023). The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to deeply understand the practices, challenges, and strategies used by teachers in fostering moral values. The study focused on how moral education is integrated into classroom activities, school culture, and students' daily experiences. By using a descriptive framework, this research provided a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon as it occurs in its natural setting.

The study was conducted at MIN 5 Ponorogo, an Islamic elementary school known for its strong emphasis on both academic achievement and character development. Participants in this study included PAI teachers, school administrators, and selected students. Teachers were chosen because of their direct involvement in curriculum delivery, while administrators provided insights

into school policies and institutional support. Students were included to capture their perspectives and experiences regarding the integration of moral education into their learning process. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants who were most knowledgeable and experienced in the subject matter.

Data were collected through multiple methods to ensure validity and depth (Hawkins et al., 2020). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers and administrators to gather detailed information about strategies, challenges, and perceptions regarding moral education. Classroom observations were carried out to directly examine how PAI teachers implemented moral values in daily lessons and interactions. In addition, document analysis of lesson plans, curriculum guidelines, and school programs was conducted to understand how moral education was formally integrated into the curriculum. These triangulated methods provided rich and reliable data for analysis.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved coding, categorizing, and identifying emerging themes from the collected information. The researcher followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The process ensured that the findings accurately reflected the participants' experiences and perspectives. Themes such as pedagogical approaches, institutional support, challenges, and student responses were identified and analyzed to answer the research objectives.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the research, several strategies were applied. Triangulation of data sources (interviews, observations, and documents) was used to validate findings. Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary results with participants to confirm accuracy. Prolonged engagement at the research site helped the researcher gain a deeper understanding of the context. Transferability was enhanced by providing thick descriptions of the research site and participants, while dependability and confirmability were ensured through careful documentation of the research process.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Integration of Moral Values in Classroom Learning

Moral education at MIN 5 Ponorogo is systematically integrated into the Islamic Religious Education curriculum through daily learning activities. Teachers not only deliver

cognitive knowledge about Islam but also emphasize the importance of practicing moral values such as honesty, respect, and responsibility. Lesson plans are designed to combine theoretical content with practical applications that encourage students to internalize values in their behavior. For example, after teaching about honesty, teachers encourage students to apply the value by being truthful in class activities and examinations. This practice reflects the school's commitment to ensuring that moral education is not confined to abstract concepts but is embodied in students' daily experiences.

Furthermore, classroom discussions often become a medium for students to reflect on moral dilemmas relevant to their age and social environment. Teachers use contextual teaching methods by relating lessons to students' real-life situations, such as interactions with peers, family responsibilities, and digital behavior. In doing so, students learn that morality is not limited to ritual worship but also extends to broader social interactions. By consistently linking theory with practice, the curriculum at MIN 5 Ponorogo demonstrates a holistic approach that strengthens both academic understanding and moral awareness.

Another significant practice is the use of modeling by teachers, who act as role models in embodying the values they teach. Students often observe their teachers' behavior, such as fairness in evaluation, respect for others, and sincerity in teaching. This modeling reinforces students' belief that moral values are not merely taught but are lived out daily. As a result, the teacher's role becomes central not only as a knowledge transmitter but also as a moral exemplar.

In addition, moral education is reinforced through cooperative learning, where students are given opportunities to work in groups and practice values such as teamwork, tolerance, and responsibility. This cooperative model not only improves learning outcomes but also fosters interpersonal skills essential for moral development. Such practices prove that moral education at MIN 5 Ponorogo goes beyond conventional lecture-based instruction.

Overall, the integration of moral values into classroom activities demonstrates a dynamic balance between curriculum objectives and practical implementation. The combination of theory, contextual practice, teacher modeling, and cooperative learning ensures that students

internalize moral values effectively. This holistic approach makes moral education meaningful and sustainable in shaping students' character.

2. The Role of Teachers as Moral Guides

Teachers at MIN 5 Ponorogo play a crucial role as facilitators, guides, and models in the process of moral education. They are responsible for ensuring that the Islamic Religious Education curriculum not only transfers knowledge but also nurtures values in students. This role extends beyond classroom instruction to encompass mentoring, counseling, and providing personal guidance. Teachers often adopt a personalized approach, identifying students' unique strengths and weaknesses in character development. By doing so, they are able to provide tailored guidance that addresses individual needs.

Moreover, teachers act as role models whose actions carry significant weight in students' moral development. Students learn not only from verbal instructions but also from observing teachers' behavior in various situations. For instance, a teacher's fairness in handling conflicts or discipline issues becomes a direct lesson in justice for students. This form of implicit moral education has been found to be highly effective, as students tend to emulate the behaviors they frequently observe in authority figures.

Teachers also serve as moral motivators, encouraging students to practice virtues both inside and outside the classroom. They often use motivational stories from Islamic history, such as the Prophet Muhammad's exemplary character, to inspire students. These narratives help students connect religious teachings with practical moral lessons, strengthening their personal commitment to ethical behavior. This motivational aspect is particularly important in reinforcing values beyond theoretical understanding.

In addition to teaching and mentoring, teachers actively collaborate with parents to ensure that moral education is consistent between school and home. Through regular communication, teachers share insights about students' progress and challenges in character development. This partnership helps reinforce moral values, as students receive consistent guidance from both school and family environments. It also reflects the holistic approach adopted by MIN 5 Ponorogo in integrating multiple stakeholders into the moral education process.

Therefore, teachers at MIN 5 Ponorogo hold multifaceted roles as instructors, role models, mentors, and collaborators in the moral education process. Their active involvement ensures that the Islamic Religious Education curriculum is effectively implemented, not only in the classroom but also in students' broader social and personal lives.

3. Challenges in Implementing Moral Education

Despite its strengths, the implementation of moral education at MIN 5 Ponorogo faces significant challenges. One of the primary issues is balancing academic demands with moral and character-building activities. Teachers often feel pressured to focus on preparing students for academic assessments, leaving limited time for reflective and experiential moral education. This imbalance sometimes results in moral lessons being reduced to theoretical discussions rather than practical applications.

Another challenge comes from external influences such as digital culture and peer pressure. Many students are active users of social media, where they are exposed to content that may contradict the moral values taught in school. Teachers must therefore compete with external forces that shape students' attitudes and behaviors, making moral education more complex and demanding. These influences highlight the need for schools to integrate digital literacy with moral education to ensure that students can critically navigate the online world.

In addition, differences in students' family backgrounds create varying levels of moral readiness. While some students receive strong moral guidance at home, others may lack consistent support due to parents' limited time, knowledge, or awareness. This inconsistency often makes it difficult for schools to ensure uniform moral development among all students. Consequently, teachers are required to adopt differentiated strategies to address diverse student needs.

Institutional limitations also present obstacles, including limited resources for innovative programs and professional development opportunities for teachers. Without adequate training, some teachers may rely on traditional lecture methods that are less effective in engaging students in moral education. This situation underscores the importance of providing continuous professional development to equip teachers with innovative pedagogical skills.

Overall, these challenges reveal that implementing moral education requires ongoing adaptation, innovation, and collaboration. Addressing them effectively demands not only commitment from teachers but also systemic support from schools, families, and communities.

4. Strategies for Strengthening Moral Education

To overcome challenges and enhance effectiveness, MIN 5 Ponorogo has adopted several innovative strategies in implementing moral education. One key strategy is the integration of extracurricular programs designed to reinforce values beyond the classroom. Activities such as Islamic scouting, Quran recitation groups, and community service projects provide students with opportunities to practice moral values in real-life contexts. These programs serve as platforms for experiential learning, where students apply virtues such as teamwork, empathy, and social responsibility.

Another strategy involves adopting interactive and student-centered teaching methods. Teachers use role-playing, discussions, and project-based learning to encourage students to actively engage with moral issues. These methods allow students to critically reflect on moral dilemmas and develop decision-making skills rooted in Islamic values. By making learning participatory, teachers ensure that students internalize values rather than passively memorizing them.

The school also promotes a culture of habituation, where moral practices are reinforced through daily routines. Activities such as greeting teachers and peers respectfully, maintaining cleanliness, and praying in congregation are consistently emphasized. These practices, repeated regularly, help instill moral values in students' daily lives until they become ingrained habits. This culture of habituation complements formal instruction, making moral education a lived experience for students.

Collaboration with parents and communities has also been strengthened as part of the moral education strategy. Regular parent meetings and community engagement programs ensure that students receive consistent guidance across different environments. This collaborative approach helps bridge the gap between school and home, creating a supportive ecosystem for moral development.

In summary, MIN 5 Ponorogo's strategies reflect a comprehensive and proactive approach to moral education. By combining curricular, extracurricular, pedagogical, and cultural practices, the school creates an environment that supports the holistic development of students' moral character. These strategies demonstrate how challenges can be transformed into opportunities for innovation and growth.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal that the implementation of moral education through the Islamic Religious Education curriculum at MIN 5 Ponorogo is carried out holistically by integrating values into classroom instruction, teacher modeling, extracurricular activities, and daily school culture. Teachers play a central role not only as knowledge transmitters but also as role models, mentors, and collaborators with parents and the community. Despite facing challenges such as academic pressures, digital influences, diverse family backgrounds, and limited resources, the school has successfully adopted innovative strategies including contextual learning, habituation, and collaborative programs that strengthen students' character. The novelty of this research lies in its emphasis on practical and comprehensive approaches that transform moral education from theoretical concepts into lived experiences. Therefore, it can be concluded that effective moral education requires synergy between curriculum, teachers, families, and the broader community to nurture morally responsible individuals who are prepared to face the complexities of modern life.

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