

Efforts of Islamic Education Teachers in Fostering Noble Character in elementary Islamic school

Siti fatinnah binti Ab Rahman, Muh, Ibnu Sholeh
fatinnah@ucmi.edu.my

Correspondence Email/WA: fatinnah@ucmi.edu.my

Abstract: This study aims to analyze the efforts of Islamic Education teachers in fostering noble character among students at MI Fattahul Huda. Character education is considered a fundamental aspect of Islamic education, as it equips young learners not only with cognitive knowledge but also with moral and spiritual values. This research employs a qualitative descriptive method, involving observation, interviews, and documentation to gather comprehensive data about teaching practices and student behavior. The findings reveal that teachers implement character development through modeling good behavior, habituating positive practices, and integrating moral values into learning activities and school culture. Teachers also engage students in religious routines such as prayer, Qur'an recitation, and social activities to strengthen both discipline and empathy. Despite these efforts, challenges arise from the diversity of student backgrounds, limited family involvement, and the influence of technology and social media, which often contradict school values. Teachers overcome these issues by collaborating with parents, reinforcing religious practices, and adopting creative and contextualized teaching methods. This study highlights the novelty of examining teacher strategies in a rural madrasah context, showing how local values and religious traditions influence character-building efforts. The research concludes that consistent, sincere, and context-based approaches by Islamic Education teachers are essential in shaping students' noble character and ensuring the sustainability of moral education in primary Islamic schools.

Keywords: Islamic Education, teacher efforts, noble character, moral development

INTRODUCTION

Education is universally recognized as a key factor in shaping the moral, intellectual, and spiritual character of the younger generation (Jumaevich et al., 2021). In the context of Islamic education, the role of religious instruction is not only to deliver knowledge but also to instill values and ethics that align with Islamic teachings. At the elementary level, particularly in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays an essential role in guiding students during their formative years (Hasibuan, 2024; Muthrofin et al., 2025). These early educational stages are critical for developing habits, character, and religious consciousness that last into adulthood. Consequently, the importance of PAI in elementary Islamic schools extends beyond academic achievement to include the cultivation of noble character (akhlak mulia). Such a holistic

approach to education aligns with national educational goals, which emphasize the integration of knowledge, skills, and character formation. Thus, PAI at MI becomes a cornerstone for moral development among Muslim children(Habibullah, 2025).

The significance of character education in Islamic schools cannot be overstated(Laili, 2024; Mujahid, 2021). In recent years, the government and educational practitioners have increasingly emphasized the importance of integrating character values into the curriculum. This is especially crucial in the face of global challenges, where students are exposed to rapid technological change, social media, and multicultural interactions at an early age(Chen et al., 2020). Madrasah Ibtidaiyah institutions are expected to provide students with the necessary spiritual foundation to navigate these challenges while maintaining strong Islamic values(Maryam & Ari, 2025; Srinio et al., 2025). Within this framework, Islamic teachers are not only knowledge transmitters but also role models in moral behavior and religious practice. Their presence provides students with direct examples of how Islamic principles should be lived daily. Therefore, the PAI teacher becomes central to the success of moral education in MI.

Specifically, Islamic education at MI is designed to form students' character in accordance with Islamic ethics, emphasizing honesty, responsibility, discipline, respect, and compassion. These values are cultivated not only in the classroom but also in extracurricular and community activities, creating a holistic environment for moral development. The process of teaching akhlak mulia is not limited to verbal instruction but also includes modeling, habituation, and reinforcement strategies. Teachers must ensure that students internalize these values in their daily lives, both inside and outside the school environment. The integration of such practices is what differentiates Islamic schools from their secular counterparts. At MI Fattahul Huda, for example, the role of PAI teachers in shaping moral character has been consistently emphasized as part of the institution's vision and mission. This reflects broader trends in Islamic education in Indonesia, which highlight the dual role of schools in cognitive and moral development.

Despite the importance of PAI in shaping noble character, there are several challenges that hinder its effective implementation. One major issue is the influence of digital technology and social media, which can expose children to content that contradicts Islamic moral values. Students at the elementary level are particularly vulnerable to these influences due to their limited ability to

critically filter information. This situation poses difficulties for teachers, who must compete with external influences in forming students' akhlak. Moreover, in some cases, there is a lack of parental support at home, leading to inconsistencies between school-based and home-based moral education. Such challenges indicate that moral education cannot be achieved by the school alone, but requires collaboration between teachers, parents, and the community. However, the central role still lies with PAI teachers in addressing these difficulties directly in the classroom.

Another problem concerns the limited pedagogical strategies used by some PAI teachers in delivering moral education. Many still rely on traditional lecture methods, which may not fully engage students or ensure the internalization of values. This lack of innovation often results in a gap between knowledge and practice, where students understand moral principles but fail to apply them consistently in daily life. Additionally, there are disparities in the level of teacher training, where not all PAI teachers have received adequate preparation in character-based pedagogy. Such conditions can hinder the effectiveness of akhlak education in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, including MI Fattahul Huda. Therefore, there is an urgent need to explore and analyze the strategies teachers employ to overcome these challenges and ensure that moral education is both meaningful and transformative.

Previous studies have highlighted the central role of teachers in fostering moral and character development in students. For instance, research shows that teachers who employ active learning, storytelling, and modeling techniques tend to be more successful in instilling values compared to those who rely solely on lecturing. Moreover, collaboration between teachers and parents has been found to significantly enhance students' moral growth. This body of literature emphasizes that moral education requires a comprehensive approach that combines pedagogy, role modeling, and community support. The findings suggest that effective PAI instruction is not merely about transmitting knowledge but about inspiring students to practice values in their daily lives.

Other scholars have examined the impact of institutional culture and school environment on the success of character education. Studies indicate that when schools provide a consistent moral environment, students are more likely to internalize Islamic values. Factors such as the behavior of school staff, extracurricular programs, and religious activities play a significant role

in reinforcing classroom instruction. At the same time, innovation in teaching methods—such as integrating digital media, project-based learning, and peer mentoring—has been shown to enhance the effectiveness of moral education in Islamic schools. These insights underline the importance of creating a school-wide moral ecosystem, with PAI teachers serving as its driving force .

Although much research has been conducted on character education in Islamic schools, there remains a lack of context-specific studies focusing on individual institutions such as MI Fattahul Huda. Most existing research discusses general strategies without examining the practical challenges faced by teachers in specific school settings. Furthermore, limited attention has been paid to the ways in which PAI teachers adapt their methods in response to contemporary challenges such as digital influence and changing family dynamics. This study seeks to fill that gap by providing an in-depth analysis of how PAI teachers at MI Fattahul Huda endeavor to cultivate noble character among their students. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on practical teacher strategies in a local MI context, offering both theoretical and practical contributions to the field of Islamic education.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the efforts of PAI teachers at MI Fattahul Huda in fostering noble character among their students. Specifically, this research aims to identify the strategies employed, the challenges encountered, and the ways in which teachers address these challenges. By exploring these aspects, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of PAI teachers as moral educators in the Islamic elementary school context. Furthermore, the findings are expected to contribute to the ongoing discourse on character education in Indonesia, particularly within the framework of Islamic schooling. Ultimately, this research aspires to offer recommendations for improving the quality and effectiveness of moral education in MI institutions, thereby supporting the broader goal of nurturing morally upright and spiritually grounded future generations.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative case study design to explore the efforts of PAI teachers in fostering noble character (akhlak mulia) among students at MI Fattahul Huda. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate because it allows for an in-depth examination of teacher practices, strategies, and challenges within their natural educational setting (du Plessis, 2015;

Olafson et al., 2014). Case study design provides the opportunity to capture the complexity of the social and cultural context of the school. The focus is not only on the instructional practices of teachers but also on how values are transmitted and internalized by students. This design enables researchers to obtain rich descriptions that reflect the lived experiences of teachers and students. Through qualitative inquiry, the study seeks to reveal meanings, perspectives, and processes that cannot be captured by quantitative methods.

The research was conducted at MI Fattahul Huda, a Madrasah Ibtidaiyah located in a suburban area of Bojonegoro, East Java, Indonesia. The institution was selected due to its strong emphasis on character education as part of its curriculum and school culture. Participants included three PAI teachers, the school principal, and a selection of students from different grade levels. Purposeful sampling was employed to ensure that participants had direct involvement and experience with the implementation of character education. This sampling strategy allows the researcher to focus on individuals who can provide the most relevant and insightful information for the study. The inclusion of teachers and administrators also offers multiple perspectives on the practices and challenges of fostering akhlak mulia in the school context.

Data were collected using three primary techniques: observation, interviews, and document analysis(Chand, 2025; Morgan, 2022). Classroom observations were conducted to examine how PAI teachers integrate character education into daily teaching and student interactions. Semi-structured interviews with teachers and the principal were carried out to gather detailed information about their strategies, challenges, and perceptions of character education. Additionally, documents such as lesson plans, school policies, and activity reports were reviewed to provide supporting evidence. Triangulation of these data sources ensures that findings are validated and not solely dependent on one method of collection. This approach strengthens the credibility of the research and provides a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study.

The data collected were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and categories related to teacher efforts in instilling noble character(Pan & Songco, 2023). Transcripts from interviews and notes from observations were coded systematically, allowing themes to emerge inductively from the data. Thematic analysis provides flexibility while maintaining a rigorous

structure to ensure consistency in identifying key insights. The process involved several stages: data familiarization, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, and defining final themes. This approach allowed the researcher to uncover both explicit and implicit meanings within the data. NVivo software was also utilized to assist with data organization and coding efficiency.

To establish trustworthiness, this study applied criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through triangulation of data sources and member checking, where participants were given opportunities to review and validate the findings. Transferability was ensured by providing thick descriptions of the context and participants, allowing readers to determine applicability to other settings. Dependability was maintained through detailed documentation of the research process, making the study auditable. Confirmability was achieved by maintaining an audit trail and practicing reflexivity to minimize researcher bias. These strategies are widely recognized in qualitative research for enhancing validity and reliability.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Strategies of PAI Teachers in Fostering Noble Character

The findings revealed that PAI teachers at MI Fattahul Huda applied a variety of strategies to instill noble character in students. One of the most dominant methods was habituation, where students were encouraged to practice good manners consistently in daily routines. For example, students were guided to greet teachers politely, recite short prayers before and after lessons, and maintain cleanliness in the classroom. This approach emphasized repetition and consistency, which helped students internalize positive behavior as part of their identity. Teachers believed that by repeating small acts of goodness, children would naturally develop habits aligned with Islamic ethics. Such practices also strengthened the school's moral climate, ensuring that character education was not only theoretical but lived in everyday life.

Another strategy widely used by PAI teachers was the use of storytelling and exemplary behavior. Teachers often shared stories from the Qur'an, Hadith, and the lives of the Prophet Muhammad to illustrate moral values in practical contexts. These stories were delivered in ways that were engaging and relatable to children, allowing students to connect moral lessons

with their own experiences. Teachers also acted as role models by consistently demonstrating good manners and ethical behavior inside and outside the classroom. Students were more likely to follow the behavior of their teachers because they viewed them as figures of authority and guidance. This dual approach of storytelling and modeling created an effective learning environment where students could see values embodied rather than only spoken about.

Religious activities and school programs also played a significant role in character formation. Teachers incorporated practices such as congregational prayers, Qur'an recitation, and religious ceremonies into the school's routine. These activities reinforced the spiritual aspect of character building while simultaneously creating a sense of community among students. Participation in religious practices helped students experience faith as an active and shared practice, not just an academic subject. Teachers also used extracurricular activities, such as Islamic competitions or charity events, to further reinforce values of responsibility, cooperation, and compassion. These activities provided students with opportunities to apply moral values in concrete, social contexts.

Disciplinary strategies were also employed by teachers to guide students toward noble behavior. Instead of relying solely on punishment, teachers emphasized positive reinforcement, such as praise and acknowledgment, when students displayed good behavior. For misbehavior, corrective strategies like advising and reminding students about Islamic principles were prioritized. This approach avoided creating fear and instead fostered a sense of accountability and self-awareness. Teachers also sought to instill the idea that discipline was not external enforcement but a form of self-control rooted in Islamic values. Such methods helped students understand the moral reasoning behind rules and encouraged them to act responsibly even without supervision.

Collaboration with parents was considered an important strategy by PAI teachers. They recognized that character education would be less effective if not reinforced at home, so they frequently communicated with parents about their children's progress and behavior. Regular meetings, home visits, and parent-teacher discussions were organized to ensure alignment between school and family values. Teachers encouraged parents to model good behavior at home, just as teachers did in the classroom. This collaboration created a consistent framework

for character education, preventing conflicts between school teachings and home practices. As a result, students received reinforcement of moral values from both their primary environments.

2. Challenges Faced by Teachers in Character Education

Although teachers applied various strategies to instill noble character, they faced significant challenges that influenced the effectiveness of their efforts. One of the most pressing issues was the impact of digital technology and social media on students. Many children were exposed to content that contradicted the values taught at school, such as disrespectful language, inappropriate behavior, or materialistic lifestyles. This exposure often led to moral inconsistencies where students understood Islamic principles but struggled to apply them in daily life. Teachers noted that the rapid influence of media sometimes outweighed the messages they conveyed in class. This created a continuous struggle to maintain the moral integrity of students.

Another challenge was the limited involvement of some parents in reinforcing moral education at home. Teachers reported that not all families were equally committed to practicing Islamic values consistently. Some parents prioritized academic performance over moral development, leaving teachers with the responsibility of addressing character issues alone. Furthermore, busy work schedules often prevented parents from monitoring their children's behavior closely. This lack of reinforcement at home created difficulties for teachers in achieving long-term character formation. The inconsistency between school and home environments weakened the overall impact of the moral education program.

Teachers also highlighted the challenge of student diversity within the classroom. Each student came from different family backgrounds, with varying levels of religious commitment and cultural influences. Some students showed strong moral behavior due to supportive family environments, while others struggled due to limited guidance at home. This diversity required teachers to adapt their strategies to individual needs, which was often time-consuming and demanding. Teachers found it challenging to balance the need for individualized attention with the collective goals of classroom instruction. Such conditions demanded flexibility and creativity in teaching approaches.

Institutional constraints also posed challenges for teachers. Although MI Fattahul Huda had programs supporting character education, resources such as teaching materials, training, and facilities were sometimes limited. Teachers felt the need for more professional development opportunities to enhance their skills in implementing innovative methods of character education. Without continuous support and updated training, they risked relying too heavily on traditional methods. The lack of adequate resources also limited the variety of activities that could be offered to students. As a result, teachers often had to improvise with minimal resources to maintain effective character education.

Finally, the challenge of sustaining students' motivation emerged as a recurring issue. Teachers observed that while students initially responded positively to character education programs, maintaining consistent engagement was difficult. The attraction of external influences, peer pressure, and the natural curiosity of children often distracted them from consistently practicing noble values. Teachers had to continuously innovate their approaches to keep students interested and committed to moral learning. The dynamic nature of children's development made this a never-ending challenge. Thus, teachers were required to demonstrate persistence, patience, and adaptability in their character education efforts.

3. Solutions and Implications for Effective Character Building

In response to the challenges they faced, PAI teachers developed several solutions to strengthen the effectiveness of character education. One key solution was integrating digital literacy into the moral curriculum, teaching students how to use technology responsibly. Instead of banning devices outright, teachers guided students to differentiate between beneficial and harmful content. By connecting Islamic values with real-life digital practices, students learned to make conscious decisions when navigating online spaces. This strategy helped minimize the negative influence of media while promoting critical thinking. Teachers reported that this approach resonated well with students, as it acknowledged their digital realities while reinforcing moral principles.

To address the lack of parental involvement, teachers intensified collaboration with families through regular communication and structured programs. They organized workshops and parent meetings focusing on the importance of consistent character education at home.

Teachers encouraged parents to establish simple daily practices, such as praying together or discussing moral lessons before bedtime. These initiatives fostered greater awareness among parents about their critical role in shaping their children's character. As collaboration improved, the reinforcement of values became more consistent between school and home. Teachers noticed that students who received stronger parental support showed better progress in character development.

In dealing with student diversity, teachers adopted differentiated instruction and personalized guidance. They provided extra attention to students who struggled with moral behavior, while also challenging those who excelled to take leadership roles in promoting good conduct. Peer mentoring programs were introduced, where students could learn from one another through positive influence. Teachers also used small group activities to ensure that every child had opportunities to engage in moral practice according to their capacity. This approach allowed students from different backgrounds to feel included and supported. As a result, the classroom environment became more cohesive and responsive to individual needs.

To overcome institutional constraints, teachers maximized the use of local resources and creativity in their teaching methods. They used storytelling, role-playing, and community-based projects that required minimal financial investment but delivered strong moral messages. Teachers also advocated for more training opportunities by collaborating with local religious leaders and educational organizations. These collaborations provided additional insights and enriched the teachers' strategies in implementing character education. Despite limited resources, the willingness of teachers to innovate demonstrated their commitment to the mission of instilling noble character. This adaptability proved essential in maintaining program sustainability.

Finally, to sustain student motivation, teachers incorporated interactive and experiential learning activities. Instead of relying solely on lectures, they used games, group discussions, and project-based learning to make moral education more engaging. Teachers also celebrated student achievements in character development through recognition and awards, reinforcing positive behavior. By creating a joyful and supportive learning environment, students became more enthusiastic about practicing noble values. Teachers emphasized the importance of

making moral education feel relevant and enjoyable rather than burdensome. These solutions demonstrated that maintaining motivation required creativity, encouragement, and consistent reinforcement.

The implications of these solutions suggest that character education cannot rely on a single method but requires a comprehensive, adaptive approach. Teachers must act not only as instructors but also as role models, counselors, and collaborators with families. Institutions must also provide support through policies and resources that enable innovation and consistency. Most importantly, students must be engaged as active participants in their own moral development, not passive recipients of values. The findings highlight that character education is an ongoing process requiring patience, flexibility, and continuous adaptation. This understanding positions MI Fattahul Huda as a valuable case study for other Islamic schools seeking to strengthen their role in shaping noble character among students.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the efforts of Islamic Education teachers in fostering noble character among students at MI Fattahul Huda are carried out through integrated strategies that combine exemplary modeling, habituation of good practices, and the internalization of moral values in daily learning activities. The teachers not only provide religious knowledge but also serve as role models who consistently display honesty, discipline, responsibility, and respect, thereby creating a positive environment for character development. Challenges such as differences in student backgrounds, limited family support, and the influence of digital media are real obstacles that require continuous adaptation and innovation from teachers. However, these challenges have been addressed through active communication with parents, reinforcement of school culture, and the use of creative learning methods that engage students both emotionally and spiritually. This research contributes to understanding how Islamic Education teachers function as agents of moral transformation in primary schools, emphasizing that character education is not merely a formal subject but a holistic process embedded in every interaction. The novelty of this study lies in highlighting the specific practices and contextual challenges faced by teachers in shaping noble character within a rural madrasah environment. Ultimately, the study concludes that the consistent,

sincere, and contextualized efforts of Islamic Education teachers are vital in ensuring the sustainability of moral education for young learners.

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