

# Integration of Character Values in the Islamic Religious Education Curriculum at SMPN 7 Tambusai Utara, Rokan Hulu, Riau

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## Abstract

This study aims to analyze in depth the implementation of character value integration within the islamic religious education (pai) curriculum at smpn 7 tambusai utara, rokan hulu regency, riau province. Character education is regarded as a fundamental foundation in shaping a muslim generation with noble morals, responsibility, and competitiveness in the midst of the challenges of globalization. On the other hand, the increasing moral degradation among students requires integrative, systematic, and sustainable efforts in instilling character values through formal education. This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a single-case study design. Data collection techniques include participant observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The research informants consist of 28 individuals, including the principal, vice principal for curriculum affairs, islamic education teachers, homeroom teachers, students from grades vii–ix, and parents/guardians of students. Data analysis follows the interactive model of miles, huberman, and saldaña, using source and method triangulation to ensure data validity. The findings indicate that smpn 7 tambusai utara has integrated 18 character values developed by the ministry of education and culture into learning instruments such as syllabi and lesson plans (rpp), as well as into both intraclass and extracurricular islamic education learning activities. The most dominant character values developed include religiosity (100%), discipline (95.8%), responsibility (91.7%), honesty (87.5%), and social care (79.2%). The school's flagship programs for strengthening character education include congregational *duha* prayer, qur'an recitation (*tadarus*), islamic student organization activities (rohis), and islamic literacy programs. The main challenges encountered include limited infrastructure, lack of continuous teacher training, negative influences of social media, and suboptimal parental involvement in character education. This study recommends the importance of multi-stakeholder synergy between schools, families, and communities, as well as strengthening islamic education teachers' competencies through continuous professional development programs.

**Keywords:** Character Value Integration; Islamic Religious Education Curriculum; Islamic Education; SMPN 7 Tambusai Utara; Character Education Strengthening

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## Introduction

Education is the most strategic instrument in shaping a civilized, dignified, and cultured national character. As stipulated in law number 20 of 2003 concerning the national education system, education aims to develop the potential of learners so that they become individuals who are faithful and devoted to almighty god, possess noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, competent, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens. This formulation explicitly indicates that character formation is the core of the entire educational process, not merely the transfer of knowledge (kesuma et al., 2011). The development and advancement of knowledge have led to the emergence of several other academic disciplines. (Abdi Syahril, Dakwatul Islam: 2020).

The cultivation of religious and moral values needs to be introduced and instilled in children from an early age as an effort to shape a generation that is spiritually strong and morally wellmannered. In essence, every human being is born with the potential for spiritual and moral intelligence. (Mhd Habibu Rahman, Tahta Media: 2023).

In the midst of increasingly rapid globalization, the challenges faced by the Indonesian education system have become more complex. The influence of foreign cultures that are not aligned with national values, the advancement of information technology that is not always used positively by learners, and the weakening of social cohesion and communal values pose serious threats to efforts in shaping the younger generation's character (koesoema, 2007). The phenomenon of moral degradation among students such as inter-student brawls, drug and substance abuse, pornography and immoral behavior, as well as various forms of juvenile delinquency serves as clear evidence of the urgent need to strengthen character education through formal schooling (azzet, 2011). Data from the ministry of women empowerment and child protection in 2023 recorded more than 3,200 cases of violence involving students, a highly alarming figure that demands a systemic response from the education sector.

Implementation is the process of executing or applying a plan, policy, or program into concrete actions in order to achieve the desired objectives. For example, curriculum implementation in schools refers to the practice of carrying out the curriculum content in daily learning activities. (Danny Abrianto, Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research: 2025).

Islamic religious education (pai) holds a highly strategic position in the context of character education in schools. As a subject derived from divine revelation and the exemplary conduct of the prophet muhammad (peace be upon him), pai not only addresses cognitive aspects of religious knowledge but also affective and psychomotor dimensions directly related to the formation of students' morals and personality (mujib & mudzakkir, 2008). The qur'an and hadith, as the two primary sources of Islamic teachings, contain universal values that are in harmony with Indonesia's national character values, including religiosity, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democracy, curiosity, nationalism, love for the homeland, appreciation of achievement, friendliness/communication, peace-loving attitude, reading habit, environmental care, social care, and responsibility. These eighteen values, as developed by the ministry of education and culture (2017), serve as the reference for the implementation of strengthening character education (ppk) across all educational institutions in Indonesia. (Muhammad Yunan, JIM: Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa Pendidikan Sejarah: 2022).

Theologically, the primary mission of Islamic education is the formation of *insan kamil* (the perfect human being), who integrates intellectual, emotional, and spiritual intelligence in a balanced and harmonious manner (al-ghazali, 2010). This concept aligns with Agustian's (2001) view of emotional and spiritual quotient (esq), which emphasizes that the balance among intellectual, emotional, and spiritual intelligence is the key to true success. From an Islamic pedagogical perspective, character education is not merely a process of instruction (*ta'lim*), but also includes

habituation (*ta'wid*), moral development (*tarbiyah*), and exemplary conduct (*uswah*) that are carried out holistically and continuously in students' lives.

Government policies through minister of national education regulation number 23 of 2006 on graduate competency standards, minister of education and culture regulation number 20 of 2018 on strengthening character education in formal education units, and presidential regulation number 87 of 2017 on strengthening character education affirm that every educational institution is required to integrate character values into all subjects, including pai (samani & hariyanto, 2012). The implementation of these policies requires islamic religious education teachers not only to teach religious content in a textual and ritualistic manner, but also to instill character values in a contextual, applicable, and transformative way in students' daily lives.

Smpn 7 tambusai utara, located in rokan hulu regency, riau province, is one of the public junior high schools strongly committed to implementing character education through islamic religious education. The school is situated in the tambusai utara district, where the majority of the population is muslim and local malay riau cultural wisdom is deeply rooted in community life. This socio-cultural context serves as valuable social capital in integrating character values into the pai curriculum, as islamic values have become an integral part of the local cultural identity (fitri, 2012).

Based on preliminary observations conducted in november 2023, smpn 7 tambusai utara has demonstrated concrete and well-planned efforts in integrating character values, including the habituation of congregational *duha* prayer before the start of lessons, 15 minutes of qur'an recitation at the beginning of the first period, weekly "clean friday" activities involving the entire school community, islamic literacy programs targeting qur'an completion (*khatam*) for all students, and various islamic-based extracurricular activities. However, the extent to which these integrations are systematically embedded in curriculum documents, instructional processes, and assessment practices still requires in-depth and comprehensive examination (muhaimin, 2012).

Research on character integration in pai has been conducted by several scholars. Gunawan (2012) found that effective character education requires synergy among the written curriculum, the taught curriculum, and the lived curriculum. Meanwhile, asmani (2011) emphasizes the importance of internalizing character values through consistent and repeated habituation within the school environment. This study seeks to fill the research gap by comprehensively and deeply analyzing how character value integration is implemented in the pai curriculum at smpn 7 tambusai utara, rokan hulu, riau, including the factors influencing its success and implementation challenges.

## Literature Review

### 1. The concept of character education in islamic perspective

Character education in islamic perspective is a systematic and planned effort to shape human personality in accordance with the guidance of the qur'an and the sunnah of prophet muhammad (peace be upon him). The term "character" in arabic is often associated with *akhlaq* (أخلاق), *adab* (أدب), or *khuluq* (خلق), all of which refer to an inner disposition that drives a person to act in a certain way without deliberation or hesitation (ulwan, 2012).

Ibn miskawaih, in his work *tahdhib al-akhlaq*, defines character as a stable condition of the soul that enables a person to perform actions spontaneously without prior thought or deliberation. This definition implies that true character becomes an integral part of one's personality rather than externally imposed behavior.

Al-ghazali, in *ihya ulumuddin*, emphasizes that character education must begin with the purification and reform of the heart (*qalb*) as the center of human behavior (al-ghazali, 2010). He identifies four main pillars of islamic character: wisdom (*hikmah*), moral courage (*syaja'ah*), selfrestraint (*iffah*), and justice (*'adalah*). These four pillars are interrelated and form a comprehensive system of character development.

In modern educational discourse, lickona (2012) identifies three essential components of good character: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. These three components are interrelated and must be developed integratively. A person is considered to have good character when they know what is right, feel compelled to do what is right, and consistently act upon it.

Narvaez and lapsley (2009) propose the character schema theory, which explains that character is formed through repeated internalization of values until they become automatic behavioral patterns. This aligns with the islamic concept of habituation (*ta'wid*), which emphasizes consistent repetition of good deeds until they become part of one's personality.

## 2. Curriculum and character integration models

The pai curriculum at the junior high school level consists of five main components: qur'an and hadith, creed (*aqidah*), islamic ethics (*akhlaq*), islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and islamic history and civilization (*ski*). These components inherently contain character values that must be integrated into learning processes (muhaimin, 2012).

Character integration in the pai curriculum can be implemented through three models: (1) substantive integration, (2) procedural integration, and (3) cultural integration (fitri, 2012). Substantive integration embeds character values explicitly within learning objectives and content. Procedural integration incorporates character values through teaching methods and learning strategies. Cultural integration establishes a school environment that supports character development.

## 3. Implementation of strengthening character education (ppk) in schools

The strengthening character education (ppk) program launched by the ministry of education and culture in 2016 is a national movement aimed at fostering character development in schools (kemendikbud, 2017). It focuses on five core values: religiosity, nationalism, independence, mutual cooperation, and integrity.

Ppk is implemented through three main pathways: classroom-based, school culture-based, and community-based approaches. Evaluation of character education requires holistic assessment methods such as observation, self-assessment, peer assessment, reflective journals, and portfolios (zubaedi, 2011).

## 4. Factors affecting the effectiveness of character education

According to lickona (2012), the effectiveness of character education depends on ten essential elements, including school commitment, teacher modeling, positive school culture, parental involvement, and moral leadership. Kesuma et al. (2011) further emphasize that teacher role modeling is the most dominant factor in character education effectiveness.

## Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach aimed at deeply describing and analyzing the integration of character values in the pai curriculum at smpn 7 tambusai utara. A qualitative approach was chosen because the study seeks to understand meaning, process, and context rather than measuring variables quantitatively (sukmadinata, 2017).

The research design is a case study (single-case study), focusing intensively and comprehensively on smpn 7 tambusai utara (miles et al., 2014). The study was conducted at smpn 7 tambusai utara, rokan hulu regency, riau province. The research was carried out from january to april 2024. Participants were selected using purposive sampling and included the principal, vice principal for curriculum, three pai teachers, three homeroom teachers, eighteen students, and three parents, totaling 28 informants.

Data were collected through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation study, including lesson plans (rpp), syllabi, and school programs. Data were analyzed using miles, huberman, and saldaña's interactive model, consisting of data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through triangulation, member checking, and prolonged engagement (sukmadinata, 2017)

## Research findings

### 1. Integration of character values in islamic education curriculum planning

The analysis of islamic education (pai) curriculum documents at smpn 7 tambusai utara indicates that the integration of character values has been systematically implemented at the planning stage. Of the 24 lesson plans (rpp) analyzed, all explicitly included character values in at least three components: learning objectives, core learning activities, and attitude assessment instruments. This finding is consistent with the standards for character-based lesson planning stipulated in ministerial regulation of education and culture (permendikbud) no. 22 of 2016 on process standards (kemendikbud, 2017).

Based on the frequency analysis of character values appearing in the pai lesson plans, the following hierarchy was identified: religious (100%), discipline (95.8%), responsibility (91.7%), honesty (87.5%), tolerance (83.3%), social care (79.2%), hard work (70.8%), independence (66.7%), communicativeness (62.5%), and creativity (50.0%).

The dominance of religious values across all lesson plans is logical, considering that islamic education fundamentally aims to strengthen faith and devotion to allah swt (mujib & mudzakkir, 2008). Similarly, the prominence of discipline as the second highest value is also expected, as in islam, obedience and regularity in performing religious practices represent a concrete manifestation of disciplinary values taught within islamic teachings.

**Table 1.** Distribution of character values in pai lesson plans (rpp)

| No. | Character value   | Frequency (rpp) | Percentage |
|-----|-------------------|-----------------|------------|
| 1   | Religious         | 24              | 100%       |
| 2   | Discipline        | 23              | 95.8%      |
| 3   | Responsibility    | 22              | 91.7%      |
| 4   | Honesty           | 21              | 87.5%      |
| 5   | Tolerance         | 20              | 83.3%      |
| 6   | Social care       | 19              | 79.2%      |
| 7   | Hard work         | 17              | 70.8%      |
| 8   | Independence      | 16              | 66.7%      |
| 9   | Communicativeness | 15              | 62.5%      |
| 10  | Creativity        | 12              | 50.0%      |

The dominance of religious values across all lesson plans is logical, considering that islamic education fundamentally aims to strengthen faith and devotion to allah swt (mujib & mudzakkir, 2008). Similarly, the prominence of discipline as the second-highest value is also understandable,

as obedience and orderliness in performing religious practices in islam represent a clear manifestation of discipline.

## 2. Implementation of character-based islamic education learning

In classroom learning, teachers employ various strategies and methods that support authentic character development among students. Based on observations of twenty pai learning sessions across grades vii, viii, and ix, the most frequently used methods were: role modeling (*uswah hasanah*) implemented in 100% of observed sessions; habituation through routines such as prayer recitation and qur'an reading in 95% of sessions; and value-based discussions in 75% of sessions. These findings align with asmani (2011), who states that modeling and habituation are among the most effective methods in character education.

Interviews with ustadz h. Syamsul bahri, s.pd.i., m.pd., a grade ix pai teacher, revealed his integration strategy: "we do not separate religious instruction from character development. When teaching zakat, for example, we always connect it to social care, empathy, and social responsibility. Students are not only required to memorize the conditions and pillars of zakat, but also to understand why zakat is obligatory and how its values can be applied in their daily lives." This reflects a deep understanding of the transformative dimension of islamic education as described by muhaimin (2012).

The use of technology in character-based pai learning at smpn 7 tambusai utara remains limited due to infrastructure constraints. However, teachers demonstrate creativity by utilizing available resources such as islamic educational videos, reflection worksheets, and classroom discussions on contemporary issues from an islamic value perspective (djamarah & zain, 2010).

## 3. Extracurricular programs and character-based school culture

SMPN 7 tambusai utara implements various extracurricular programs and develops a school culture that systematically supports character development. The congregational dhuha prayer program, conducted daily before lessons begin, is the most consistently implemented flagship program. It involves all muslim students and teachers, reflecting a religious and inclusive school culture. Interviews showed that 83.3% of students reported that this program positively contributes to their emotional calmness and learning focus (agustian, 2001).

The islamic student organization (rohis) is the most active extracurricular organization, with 47 active members. Its activities include weekly islamic study sessions, islamic leadership training, and social service programs for orphanages and underprivileged communities, fostering social care, empathy, independence, and responsibility (zubaedi, 2011).

Daily qur'an recitation (*tadarus*) for 15 minutes at the beginning of the first lesson serves as a habituation strategy to instill religious values, discipline, and love for the qur'an. The principal stated: "we are committed to making the qur'an the spiritual foundation of this school. The tadarus program is not merely ritualistic but a systematic effort to connect students with their life guidance." This reflects transformational leadership, a key factor in successful character education implementation (kesuma et al., 2011).

The physical environment of the school is also intentionally designed to support character development. Slogans and moral messages are displayed throughout classrooms and corridors. The school mosque functions not only as a place of worship but also as a center for religious and character-building activities. Reading corners with qur'anic materials are available in classrooms, while the green school environment reflects environmental care values (koesoema, 2007). These elements form a hidden curriculum that supports organic internalization of character values.

## 4. Character evaluation and assessment system in pai

Character assessment in pai learning at smpn 7 tambusai utara is conducted using multiple instruments in a continuous manner. Four main assessment tools are used: (1) attitude observation sheets completed twice a month; (2) teacher journals recording meaningful behavioral developments; (3) self-assessment conducted at the end of each learning unit; and (4) peer assessment conducted each semester (zubaedi, 2011).

Assessment results are integrated into student report cards under two categories: spiritual attitude (ki-1) and social attitude (ki-2). Data from the 2023/2024 academic year show that 67.5% of students achieved “very good” (a), 28.3% “good” (b), and 4.2% “fair” (c). However, teachers acknowledge limitations in current assessment systems, particularly in capturing authentic character development outside the classroom, consistent with lickona (2012).

## **5. Supporting factors for character integration success**

Five main supporting factors were identified: transformational school leadership; competent and dedicated pai teachers; a religious socio-cultural environment supported by malay islamic values (“adat bersendi syarak, syarak bersendi kitabullah”); strong parental support; and collaboration with local religious leaders (fitri, 2012).

Key challenges include limited technological infrastructure, lack of continuous teacher training, negative influence of social media, and weak school-family synergy (gunawan, 2012). Schools have responded by using non-digital learning media, strengthening parent meetings, and integrating islamic digital literacy (azzet, 2011).

This study supports previous findings (asmani, 2011) that character education requires a holistic-integrative approach. Among fitri’s (2012) three models substantive, procedural, and cultural the procedural and cultural models are relatively well implemented, while the substantive model still requires strengthening.

Theoretically, this study highlights the need for a more contextual and adaptive character integration model suitable for rural school contexts. Practically, it emphasizes the need for mentoring programs for pai teachers to enhance implementation effectiveness (zubaedi, 2011; koesoema, 2007).

No matter how well-designed a curriculum is, if the teachers who implement it do not possess adequate competencies, the curriculum will not be effectively carried out. Such readiness includes the preparedness of curriculum tools, as well as facilities and infrastructure. In the process of implementing the 2013 Curriculum, there are certainly supporting factors in its application and its transition toward “Merdeka Belajar” (Freedom to Learn). These include the availability of facilities and infrastructure that support the learning process, as well as the active role of schools in sending teachers to participate in seminars, outreach programs, workshops, and other professional development activities related to the 2013 Curriculum and its transition toward Merdeka Belajar, and other similar initiatives.(bahtiar siregar, Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research, 2023).

## **Conclusions**

Based on the findings and discussion presented comprehensively, several important conclusions can be drawn. First, smpn 7 tambusai utara has systematically integrated character values into the islamic religious education (pai) curriculum at three levels: the document level (lesson plans/rpp and syllabus), the implementation level (learning process and extracurricular programs), and the evaluation level (multi-instrument attitude assessment). This integration demonstrates a strong institutional commitment to character education as the core mission of islamic educational institutions (kemendikbud, 2017).

Second, the most dominant character values developed through the pai curriculum are religiosity, discipline, honesty, responsibility, and social concern. The prominence of these five

values reflects teachers' understanding of the core teachings of islam, which emphasize obedience to allah and social responsibility toward fellow human beings (mujib & mudzakkir, 2008). Third, flagship programs such as congregational duha prayer, qur'an recitation (tadarus al-qur'an), and the islamic student organization (rohis) serve as effective instruments for instilling character values in a contextual and sustainable manner, although their effectiveness still requires continuous evaluation and improvement.

Fourth, the implementation of character integration still faces significant challenges, particularly related to limited resources, insufficient periodic professional development for teachers, the influence of social media, and suboptimal synergy with families (gunawan, 2012). Fifth, the socio-cultural strength of the religious community in tambusai utara represents valuable social capital that has not yet been fully optimized to support character education programs in schools.

Based on these findings, this study proposes five strategic recommendations. First, the rokan hulu district education office should allocate a dedicated budget to improve technology-based learning facilities in schools in rural areas as a means of supporting innovation in character education. Second, professional training and development programs for pai teachers should be conducted regularly at least twice a year, focusing on innovative and relevant character-based learning strategies. Third, schools need to develop more structured parenting education programs to strengthen parents' capacity in supporting children's character education at home (lickona, 2012). Fourth, a school-community synergy model should be developed by utilizing malay riau local wisdom as a foundation for strengthening islamic character values. Fifth, further research using a mixed-methods approach is needed to measure the long-term impact of character integration programs on students' personality development in a more comprehensive and measurable manner.

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