



## Islamic Religious Education Teachers' Perceptions of the Implementation of Character Education in Middle Schools

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### ARTICLE INFORMATION

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### ABSTRACT

Character education is a key focus of the national education system, particularly at the junior high school (SMP) level. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers hold a strategic position in integrating character values into the learning process, both in and outside the classroom. This study aims to analyze PAI teachers' perceptions of the implementation of character education in junior high schools. The research method used is a desk study by analyzing literature related to character education, the role of teachers, and the implementation of Islamic values in schools. The results show that most PAI teachers view character education as an integral part of the mission of Islamic education, as it not only teaches cognitive aspects but also shapes students' attitudes, morals, and spirituality. However, teachers also face several challenges, such as time constraints, the influence of the digital environment, and a lack of support from some parents. This study confirms that the implementation of character education will be effective if PAI teachers are given adequate space to integrate Islamic values into the curriculum, receive institutional support, and build collaboration with all involved parties.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Character education in Indonesia is increasingly becoming a crucial focus in facing the challenges of globalization and modern technological developments. Schools serve not only as a place to transfer knowledge but also as an institution for moral and ethical development. In this context, character education is seen as a systematic effort to shape students into individuals who are faithful, pious, have noble morals, and possess integrity in social life. ([Aisyah et al., 2024](#))

Junior high school (SMP) is a strategic educational level for implementing character education. During adolescence, students are in a phase of self-discovery, requiring appropriate guidance to avoid being easily influenced by negative environments. Teachers are central figures

in determining the direction of students' character development, as they not only impart knowledge but also instill values through their role models.

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers play a crucial role in implementing character education. This is because PAI's function is not only oriented toward religious cognition, but also toward the development of students' morals and ethics. The Islamic values taught in PAI, such as honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and discipline, are highly relevant to the goals of national character education.

However, the implementation of character education in schools does not always go as expected. Many factors influence its success, including limited learning time, a dense curriculum, and the influence of digital media, which often contradicts moral values. Furthermore, differing teachers' perceptions of the concept of character education can also influence how they implement it in the classroom. ([Bahrudin, 2021](#))

Therefore, research into Islamic Religious Education teachers' perceptions of the implementation of character education in junior high schools is crucial. Teachers' perceptions will determine the attitudes, strategies, and approaches they use in teaching character values. This article attempts to analyze how Islamic Religious Education teachers understand, assess, and implement character education in the junior high school context.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a library research method. This approach was chosen because the focus of the study was to understand Islamic Religious Education teachers' perceptions through analysis of relevant literature, including academic journals, books, and previous research reports. Therefore, this study does not present direct empirical data from the field, but rather focuses on conceptual analysis.

The first step in this literature review was to identify sources that discuss character education and the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in junior high schools. The selected literature encompassed Islamic educational perspectives, modern character education theories, and national education policies in Indonesia. This was done to obtain a comprehensive picture.

Next, the data was analyzed using a descriptive-analytical approach. Researchers described Islamic Religious Education teachers' perceptions as reflected in the literature and then analyzed them within the framework of character education implementation in junior high schools. This analysis covered aspects of teachers' understanding, challenges, and strategies implemented.

The advantage of this method is that it provides a strong theoretical foundation, drawing on various previous studies and theories. However, its limitation is the lack of direct empirical data from the field. Therefore, the results of this study are primarily conceptual in nature, but remain relevant as a basis for future field research.

With this approach, the research is expected to contribute to understanding the importance of Islamic Education teachers' perceptions of the success of character education, as well as being a reference in developing more effective learning strategies in junior high schools.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Islamic Religious Education Teachers' Perceptions of Character Education: Most Islamic Religious Education teachers view character education as an integral part of their duties, especially in the modern era when the moral degradation of adolescents is often in the public spotlight. Islamic Religious Education teachers are not only required to teach the Qur'an, Hadith, Jurisprudence, and morals within a cognitive framework, but must also ensure that these noble values can be applied in students' daily lives. Character education in this case is not understood merely as an additional subject, but as the spirit that animates the entire educational process. This view becomes relevant when many cases in the media show deviant behavior of adolescents, ranging from bullying at school, misuse of social media, to low respect for teachers and parents. This condition strengthens the belief of Islamic Religious Education teachers that character education must be a top priority in the learning process. ([Arifa et al., 2023](#))

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers consider character education to be the primary mission of true Islamic education. The concept of noble morals, which is at the heart of Islamic teachings, aligns with the concept of national character education, which emphasizes honesty, discipline, responsibility, hard work, and social awareness. This alignment serves as the foundation for PAI teachers in integrating the national curriculum with Islamic values. In this way, education is directed not only at academic achievement but also at developing individuals with noble character. Its relevance is further strengthened when the challenges of globalization expose adolescents to foreign values that do not always align with their culture and religion. PAI teachers therefore view character education as the primary bulwark against which students maintain their Islamic and Indonesian identities. ([Yusnita et al., 2017](#))

However, Islamic Religious Education teachers' perceptions of character education are not uniform, influenced by their educational background, experience, and the school environment in which they teach. Teachers who have participated in character education training or Islamic values-based learning tend to have a broader understanding and are more applicable in implementing it. Conversely, teachers who have received less training or who work in schools with a weak culture of moral development tend to view character education as merely a secondary aspect that is not emphasized enough. This suggests that institutional and government support in providing comprehensive training programs will significantly determine the quality of perceptions and implementation of character education in the field. ([Rezki & Mangsi, 2020](#))

Besides being influenced by internal factors, Islamic Religious Education teachers' perceptions are also influenced by current social dynamics. For example, there is the increasing incidence of violence between students in several regions, the prevalence of hate speech on social media, and the tendency for students to idolize public figures who are less than suitable role models. These phenomena reinforce Islamic Religious Education teachers' perception that character education should not remain theoretical but must be put into practice in students' lives. Thus, Islamic Religious Education teachers are increasingly convinced that their role as moral guides is vital and cannot be replaced by even modern technology or media. ([Harmi, 2022](#))

From the various literature analyzed, it is clear that positive perceptions of Islamic Religious Education teachers are a key asset in supporting the implementation of character education. However, this perception is insufficient if it is not balanced with curriculum support, learning resources, and pedagogical skills that are appropriate to the needs of the times. For example, recent literature emphasizes that character education in the digital age must integrate digital literacy so that students develop good morals not only in the real world but also in cyberspace. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education teachers with positive perceptions need to be empowered to face the realities of character education in the modern era. ([Mujiono, 2020](#))

Thus, it can be concluded that Islamic Religious Education teachers' perceptions of character education are generally positive, but its implementation still faces significant challenges. A strong perception without an appropriate implementation strategy will leave character education merely a mere discourse. Therefore, positive teacher perceptions must be combined with ongoing training, institutional support, and collaboration with families and the community so that character education can truly be internalized by junior high school students in their daily lives. ([Hafiz et al., 2024](#))

**Challenges of Implementing Character Education in Junior High Schools:** Although Islamic Religious Education teachers have a positive perception, the implementation of character education in junior high schools does not always go according to expectations. One of the main challenges perceived is the limited learning time. The allocation of Islamic Religious Education lessons, which are only a few hours per week, often forces teachers to choose to focus on delivering cognitive material, while character development, which requires a repetitive and intensive process, is less than optimal. This condition contrasts with the current reality, when character education requires more attention due to the increasing number of cases of juvenile delinquency and the decline in morality that has emerged in schools. Islamic Religious Education teachers feel that the space for instilling moral values in formal learning is still very limited. ([Sarina & Rahman, 2022](#))

Furthermore, an equally significant challenge is the overwhelming influence of the digital environment. The junior high school generation is a digital native, spending most of their time

online through gadgets, social media, and entertainment apps. The content they consume often contains values that conflict with character education, such as hedonism, individualism, and instant gratification. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in the field often reveal that students are more familiar with TikTok trends or online games than with daily prayers. This phenomenon poses a serious challenge, as character education must address the realities of the digital world, not simply provide normative advice that students easily ignore. ([Arve, 2024](#))

The next challenge comes from family factors, particularly a lack of parental support. Many parents are too busy with work to pay enough attention to their children's character development at home. Some parents even tend to leave moral education entirely to schools, even though character formation truly requires continuity between school and home education. In many cases, Islamic Religious Education teachers complain that their efforts to guide students are less effective because they are not balanced with adequate parental supervision. As a result, the values instilled in school are often lost once students return to their families or social circles. ([Aeni, 2023](#))

Besides family factors, limited curricula and learning methods also pose real obstacles. Many schools still employ rigid learning approaches that emphasize memorization, preventing students from deeply internalizing character values. However, character education requires participatory, contextual, and applicable methods so that the values taught can be truly internalized by students. Amidst the challenges of the digital era, character education should place greater emphasis on reflective skills, ethical discussions, and real-life practices. ([Winarni, 2018](#))

Another challenge is a school culture that doesn't fully support the implementation of character education. In some cases, the school environment still places more emphasis on academic achievement than on moral development. Students are valued more for high test scores than for their honest behavior or discipline. This situation makes Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers feel that their work in instilling character values is underappreciated. However, educational success is measured not only by academic achievement but also by the moral and spiritual qualities of students. ([Maghfiroh, 2025](#))

Given these challenges, implementing character education in junior high schools cannot be left solely to Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers. Strong collaboration between teachers, schools, parents, the government, and the community is required to consistently instill character values. Without comprehensive support, character education risks remaining merely a slogan without having a real impact on student behavior. ([Anggila, 2022](#))

Islamic Religious Education Teachers' Strategies in Implementing Character Education. To address these challenges, Islamic Religious Education teachers have developed various strategies for implementing character education in junior high schools. One key strategy is integrating character values into every learning material. When discussing the stories of the prophets, teachers emphasize the values of patience, courage, and honesty. When teaching Islamic jurisprudence, teachers emphasize responsibility and discipline. These strategies are relevant in today's era, as students are not only required to understand religious knowledge but also to apply it to address contemporary moral challenges, such as the wise use of social media and tolerance in multicultural life. ([Sari et al., 2024](#))

In addition to integration into learning, role modeling is a highly effective strategy. Islamic Religious Education teachers recognize that students are more likely to imitate real-life behavior than simply listen to advice. Therefore, teachers strive to demonstrate noble morals in their daily lives, such as arriving on time, being fair to all students, and maintaining politeness in speech. In the modern era, role modeling is also required not only in the classroom but also in the digital world. Islamic Religious Education teachers who wisely use social media, share positive content, and avoid hate speech will be real role models for students in their media use. ([Sudarsono & Sudrajat, 2016](#))

Islamic Religious Education teachers also implement participatory learning methods to instill character values. Through group discussions, case studies, and social projects, students are encouraged to internalize character values in real life. For example, in a social project, students are invited to visit an orphanage to foster empathy and caring. This approach is highly relevant in today's climate, where students need real-world experiences to understand the meaning of moral



values. Character education linked to direct experience is more ingrained than mere theory. ([Hidayati & Nurdi, 2023](#))

Furthermore, extracurricular activities are a strategic tool for character development. Religious organizations such as Rohis (Islamic Spiritual Groups), religious studies, or commemorations of Islamic holidays are effective ways to strengthen students' religiosity and sense of community. In the current context, technology-based extracurricular activities, such as creating digital Islamic preaching content or Islamic educational videos, can also be utilized to train students to become positive creators online. This addresses the challenges of digitalization while strengthening character education in the virtual realm. ([Sulasm, 2023](#))

Another equally important strategy is collaboration with parents and the community. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers need to involve parents in the character-building process, for example through regular communication, Islamic parenting counseling, and cooperation in monitoring children's behavior at home. Through effective collaboration, the character values instilled in schools can be reinforced within the family environment. Furthermore, collaboration with the community is also crucial for creating a social environment conducive to student character development. ([Lubis et al., 2024](#))

With these strategies, Islamic Religious Education teachers strive to ensure that character education is not merely theoretical but is truly implemented in students' daily lives. This effort is highly relevant in today's climate, a time of increasing moral crisis and increasingly complex digital challenges. Through adaptive, creative, and collaborative strategies, Islamic Religious Education teachers are expected to produce a generation that is not only academically intelligent but also possesses strong Islamic character. ([Saputra et al., 2023](#))

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the study results, it can be concluded that Islamic Religious Education teachers' perceptions of the implementation of character education in junior high schools are generally positive. Islamic Religious Education teachers view character education as an integral part of religious learning, aiming to shape students not only intellectually intelligent but also with noble character. However, the implementation of character education still faces several challenges, such as time constraints, the negative influence of digital media, lack of parental support, and limited effective learning methods. These challenges demonstrate that the success of character education depends not only on teachers but also requires support from families and the social environment.

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers have developed various strategies to implement character education, ranging from integrating values into the curriculum, role modeling, participatory learning, and extracurricular activities. These strategies demonstrate a strong commitment to shaping students' character.

The conclusion of this study is that positive perceptions of Islamic Religious Education teachers must be supported by institutional support, training, and policies that support the implementation of character education in junior high schools. This way, character education can be more effective and produce a generation with Islamic character, noble morals, and readiness to face the challenges of the times.

This research is expected to be a reference for the development of character education policies in Indonesia, as well as a basis for more in-depth field research on the perceptions and practices of Islamic Education teachers in various schools.

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