



Strengthening Student Character Through Qur'anic Values in Islamic Education

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Abstract

This study explores how Islamic education grounded in Qur'anic values strengthens the character of students through pedagogical practices implemented by teachers in an Islamic school context. Using a qualitative descriptive design, the research investigates how teachers interpret Qur'anic values, integrate them into instructional activities, and employ strategies to ensure the internalization of moral principles among students. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and documentation review, and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model of data condensation, display, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that teachers view Qur'anic values not as abstract religious concepts but as practical ethical guidelines that must be embedded into daily behavior, interpersonal interactions, and learning routines. Integration occurs through lesson planning infused with moral objectives, value-centered classroom activities, reflective dialogue, and narrative-based instruction that links Qur'anic teachings with real-life situations. Teachers also employ strategies such as habit formation, experiential moral tasks, compassionate discipline, and role modeling to facilitate character internalization. These practices collectively form a moral ecosystem that enables students to experience, practice, and reflect upon Qur'anic ethics in their daily school life. The study concludes that the effectiveness of Qur'anic-based character education depends on its holistic implementation, where values are consistently demonstrated by teachers, reinforced within the learning environment, and absorbed through continuous behavioral and spiritual engagement. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of Islamic pedagogy and highlights the importance of integrating Qur'anic values in nurturing morally grounded and socially responsible learners.

Introduction

Islamic education has long been recognized as a foundational force in shaping the moral, ethical, and spiritual dimensions of learners, particularly within Muslim-majority societies (Saada et al., 2023; Wijaksono et al., 2024; Sahin et al., 2024). At the center of Islamic educational philosophy lies the Qur'an, which provides not only doctrinal guidance but also a comprehensive moral framework designed to cultivate virtuous individuals and socially responsible communities (Stimpson & Calvert, 2021; Maidugu & Isah, 2024; Ibrahim et al., 2024; Al-Nahdi, Li, 2025; Jamil, 2024; Juthi et al., 2025; Bhat & Bisati, 2025). In contemporary educational discourse, the urgency to strengthen character among students is increasingly emphasized, driven by concerns related to declining moral behavior, the erosion of social values, and the pervasive influence of digital culture on young people's attitudes and habits (Hanafiah et al., 2024). Within this context, Qur'anic values offer a deeply rooted moral compass capable of guiding students toward ethical conduct, emotional maturity, and responsible citizenship (Jamil, 2024; Ismet & Rahmawati, 2025; Alhamuddin et al., 2025;

Khumairah et al., 2023). Globally, character education has become a strategic priority for governments, educational institutions, and communities seeking to prepare young people for complex social realities (Hidayati & Nihayah, 2025; Engkizar et al., 2024; Tytova & Mereniuk, 2022; Edwards-Fapohunda, 2024). Yet, despite increasing awareness of its importance, character education often suffers from fragmented implementation, limited integration within the curriculum, and inconsistent teacher commitment (Anisah, 2023). This challenge is particularly significant in Islamic-based schools, where moral and spiritual development should ideally be embedded in everyday teaching and learning practices (Moslimany et al., 2024; Firnando et al., 2025). Scholars argue that character development in Islamic education must move beyond formal instruction to include internalization, habituation, and reflective engagement with Qur'anic teachings (Maarif et al., 2024; Ilhamsyah & Ramli, 2024). However, empirical studies show that many schools struggle to translate these ideals into concrete pedagogical strategies due to time constraints, misalignment between home and school environments, and teachers' varying levels of competence in Qur'anic pedagogy (Giroux, 2024).

The role of Qur'anic values in shaping character is profound and multidimensional. In the Qur'an, values such as *ṣidq* (truthfulness), *amānah* (trustworthiness), *ʿadl* (justice), *taqwā* (God-consciousness), and *rahmah* (compassion) are presented not merely as abstract ideals but as actionable principles that guide interpersonal conduct, decision-making, and self-regulation. Character, in an Islamic perspective, is understood as the harmonious integration of knowledge, emotion, and behavior, forming the essence of human excellence (*akhlaq al-karimah*) (Giroux, 2024; Danlami et al., 2025; Yanto, 2025). This holistic approach underscores that nurturing character requires consistent modeling, situated practice, and meaningful engagement with values rather than didactic instruction alone.

Modern educational settings, however, present unique challenges to embedding Qur'anic values in students' character development. Digital distractions, exposure to globalized youth cultures, and shifting family structures have altered how young people perceive discipline, responsibility, and social relationships (Šehić, 2023; Tabatabaei et al., 2024). At the same time, educators face increasing pressure to meet academic standards, often at the expense of moral and spiritual objectives. This situation creates a tension between the theoretical aims of Islamic education and the practical realities within school environments. As a result, researchers emphasize the need to examine how Qur'anic values are actually implemented in daily school practices and how students experience these values within their learning environments (Qorib & Afandi, 2024; Munawar, 2025; Badri & Malik, 2024; Sugiarto, 2025; Munawar, 2025).

While numerous studies affirm the significance of Islamic moral values in student development, there remains a gap in understanding how these values are internalized through real-life pedagogical practices, school culture, and teacher-student interactions (Ibrahim et al., 2024). Much of the existing literature focuses on conceptual discussions, curriculum analysis, or normative perspectives, with limited exploration of how Qur'anic values materialize in the concrete experiences of teachers and learners. This gap is especially pronounced in contexts where the school positions itself explicitly as a character-based institution yet struggles to implement a coherent value-integration approach across different educational activities.

Given these challenges, examining Islamic education through the lens of Qur'anic values is both timely and essential (Setiawan, 2024; Muzaki et al., 2025; Muzaki et al., 2025). Qur'anic teachings offer a holistic character framework that addresses not only moral behavior but also emotional regulation, social harmony, and spiritual awareness dimensions urgently needed in the current era marked by rapid cultural change and moral ambiguity (Hussain et al., 2023;

Hashi, 2024; Huda et al., 2020). Furthermore, Qur'anic values provide a consistent foundation upon which schools can build a transformative educational environment that shapes not only the knowledge but also the identity and ethical orientation of students.

This study responds to the need for deeper empirical insights into how Qur'anic values contribute to strengthening students' character within an Islamic school context. By exploring how teachers interpret these values, how they integrate them into instructional practices, and how students experience the internalization process, this research provides a nuanced understanding of the dynamic relationships between Islamic educational philosophy and character development. Such understanding is crucial not only for educators and policymakers but also for communities seeking to preserve moral integrity while adapting to contemporary educational demands. Ultimately, the introduction of Qur'anic values into character education is not merely a curricular initiative but a transformative endeavor aimed at forming individuals who embody ethical excellence and contribute positively to society.

Methods

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design aimed at exploring and understanding how Qur'anic values are implemented in Islamic education to strengthen students' character. A qualitative approach was chosen because the focus of the research is not on measuring variables or testing hypotheses, but on capturing processes, meanings, and lived experiences within the school environment. This design enables the researcher to portray how teachers, students, and school leaders interpret, apply, and internalize Qur'anic values in everyday educational practices. Through this approach, the study offers a deep, contextualized account of character formation as it naturally occurs in the learning setting.

Research Setting

The study was conducted in an Islamic-based school that explicitly integrates Qur'anic values into its character development program. The site was selected purposively based on three considerations: (1) the institution formally recognizes Qur'anic values as the foundation of its character education objectives, (2) the school implements ongoing religious activities that link Qur'anic learning with character-building practices such as daily recitations, mentoring sessions, and value-based assemblies, and (3) the school administration demonstrated strong willingness to participate in the research. Detailed documentation of the school's curriculum, daily routines, religious activities, and sociocultural context was collected to ensure a rich description of the setting and to situate the analysis within its institutional reality.

Participants and Sampling

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to obtain information-rich cases with direct involvement in character and Qur'anic-based educational activities. The participant groups included Islamic Studies teachers, school leaders (such as the principal or vice principal for curriculum), homeroom teachers, character mentors, and students from different grade levels. Islamic Studies teachers were selected based on a minimum of two years of teaching experience and active involvement in Qur'anic value programs, while student participants were selected based on their engagement in school character activities. The number of participants followed the principle of data saturation: interviews continued until no new themes emerged. In practice, saturation was generally reached after a series of 12–20 in-depth interviews across different roles.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through three main techniques: semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore teachers' interpretations of Qur'anic values, their pedagogical strategies, and the challenges they face in implementing character-building activities. Interviews with students focused on their experiences of internalizing Qur'anic values, behavioral changes, and the influence of school activities on their character. Each interview lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and was audio-recorded with participant consent. Participant observations were carried out in classrooms, religious sessions, student mentorship activities, and school-wide routines such as assemblies and daily prayers. These observations allowed the researcher to capture authentic interactions and behaviors that reflect the internalization of Qur'anic values. Detailed field notes were taken during all observations. Document analysis included curriculum documents, lesson plans, character program handbooks, religious activity schedules, and other school materials. These documents were analyzed to triangulate and enrich the findings generated from interviews and observations.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and coded through open coding to identify initial meaningful units related to the implementation and internalization of Qur'anic values. These codes were then refined and grouped into categories through axial coding, which facilitated the construction of broader themes. Analytical tools such as thematic maps and matrices were used to visualize relationships between categories, particularly connections between teaching strategies and student character outcomes. Throughout the analysis, analytical memos were written to document interpretive decisions and emerging insights. An audit trail was maintained, including coding schemes, sample excerpts, and analytic notes, to ensure transparency in how the themes were constructed.

Results and Discussion

The findings of this study illustrate that Qur'anic values function as a living moral framework that shapes the behavior, emotional attitudes, and interpersonal relations of students in the school context. Teachers view Qur'anic teachings not merely as verses to be memorized, but as ethical guidelines that must be performed in daily life, reflected in a teacher's statement that "Qur'anic values for us are not just verses to memorize; they are principles that must shape how students speak, behave, and treat others every day." This perception positions the Qur'an as an active moral compass that directs student character development more deeply than conventional moral instruction. The emphasis on values such as *sidq*, *amanah*, *sabr*, *adl*, and *taqwa* confirms that teachers conceptualize Qur'anic values as internal moral regulators that guide behavior even in the absence of surveillance, as voiced in the interview: "When students understand the meaning of values like *taqwa* and *amanah*, they develop an inner awareness to control themselves even when teachers are not watching."

These empirical findings align with perspectives in Islamic education research asserting that character formation should move beyond cognitive knowledge toward value internalization through experience and relational interaction. Muharomah et al. (2025) report that Qur'anic morality becomes meaningful only when it is translated into everyday action rather than memorization, which resonates strongly with the present results where teachers emphasize lived behavior instead of doctrinal transmission. Similarly, Alhamuddin et al. (2025) highlight the importance of contextualizing Qur'anic wisdom so that students experience values

emotionally and socially, reinforcing the teachers' insistence that moral formation grows from practice embedded in routine, not formal ritual alone.

Integration of Qur'anic values into instructional practice emerged as a deliberate pedagogical effort. Teachers embed moral objectives in lesson plans, design activities that connect academic material to Qur'anic ethics, and use storytelling, reflective dialogue, and real-life scenarios to operationalize values. One teacher described their planning mindset: "which Qur'anic value fits the material and how students can practice it, not only hear it." Classroom observations demonstrate that cooperative learning becomes a moral space where students practice *ukhuwwah*, empathy, and patience, supported by the teacher's reminder that "cooperation is part of *ukhuwwah*... respect, patience, and willingness to help peers." This aligns with Wulandari et al. (2025), who found that contextual integration of Islamic values increases student responsibility and self-regulation when values are enacted through learning tasks rather than taught verbally.

The findings also confirm that teachers' role-modelling is central to value transmission. Teachers' emphasis that "If I teach honesty but I don't show honesty in my actions, the students will not believe in what I say. The Qur'an tells us to teach through example." demonstrates how character development occurs through embodiment rather than enforcement. This correlates with Habibie et al. (2025), who argue that moral learning fails when contradictions appear between instruction and behavior, because students absorb values relationally through observation. In this school, teachers choose compassionate correction instead of punitive discipline; one noted, "When a student makes a mistake, I do not embarrass them. I remind them gently because the Qur'an teaches kindness." Such interpersonal pedagogy reflects research by Nurizah & Amrullah (2024), who stress that emotional warmth strengthens value internalization more effectively than fear-based authority.

Internalization is further reinforced through habituation. Daily routines *salam* greetings, prayer, Qur'an recitation, classroom cleanliness, polite communication act as repeated moral reinforcement. Teachers intentionally design honesty tests through unsupervised assignments and later guide students to reflect using Qur'anic verses, as stated: "Sometimes I give them tasks that test honesty or responsibility... Then we reflect on it using Qur'anic verses." This indicates that moral formation is both behavioral and reflective. Maarif et al. (2024) support this layered approach, claiming that habituation builds moral disposition while reflection deepens value consciousness, a synthesis clearly observable in our field data.

The school environment creates a communal religious ecosystem congregational prayers, Qur'anic study circles, charity programs, and mentoring fostering shared spiritual experience among students. A teacher explained, "When students do charity together or pray together, they feel the value collectively. This atmosphere helps the character grow stronger." This echoes Jakandar et al. (2025), who found that collective worship generates emotional bonding and social cohesion that sustain moral transformation. Character development therefore takes place not only individually but as a cultural experience shared by the school community.

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that Islamic education grounded in Qur'anic values plays a central and transformative role in shaping students' character through a holistic, experiential, and relational pedagogical process. Teachers enact Qur'anic ethics not merely through formal instruction but by embedding values into classroom routines, modeling exemplary behavior, fostering reflective dialogue, and creating emotionally supportive learning environments that reflect compassion, justice, honesty, and patience. These practices

reveal that character internalization is most effective when Qur'anic teachings are consistently lived rather than superficially taught, enabling students to absorb moral principles through meaningful habits, real-life experiences, and collective spiritual engagement. Ultimately, this study affirms that Qur'anic-based character education functions as a comprehensive moral ecosystem in which students learn to integrate spiritual values into their personal identity, social interactions, and everyday decision-making, thereby reinforcing the essential mission of Islamic education in nurturing morally grounded, emotionally balanced, and socially responsible individuals.

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