

THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN INSTILLING ISLAMIC CHARACTER VALUES IN ELEMENTARY MADRASAHs IN LIMA PULUH KOTA REGENCY

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Abstract

Instilling Islamic character values from an early age is a vital foundation in shaping students' morality and ethics, especially within Madrasah Ibtidaiyah settings. However, there remains a noticeable gap between the values taught and the students' actual behavior. This study aims to describe the role of teachers in instilling Islamic character values, identify the strategies and methods employed, and analyze the challenges and solutions encountered in character development. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, utilizing in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Data were collected from teachers, school principals, fifth and sixth-grade students, and parents at three Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Lima Puluh Kota Regency. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, involving data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification through source triangulation. The findings reveal that teachers play a central role in character education through modeling behavior and habitual practice, despite facing external challenges such as digital media influence and social environment. The study highlights that teacher exemplarity is the most effective tool in instilling Islamic character and underscores the need for systemic support and continuous professional development for educators.

Keywords: Character Education, Elementary Madrasah, Teachers



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INTRODUCTION

Islamic character education is a fundamental aspect in shaping students' morals and ethics from an early age (Anam, 2025; Iqbal dkk., 2024; JANAHA & MAULIDIN, 2024). Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, as a basic educational institution rooted in Islamic values, holds a strategic role in instilling core values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, and social care. Through a holistic educational process, teachers are expected to act as agents of character transformation—not only delivering knowledge but also internalizing Islamic moral values in students' daily lives. However, field observations reveal a gap between the values being taught and the actual behaviors displayed by students. For instance, students are still found to be dishonest, frequently arrive late, or fail to fulfill their responsibilities properly. This phenomenon raises a critical question regarding the effectiveness of teachers' roles in the internalization process of Islamic character values. Therefore, this study aims to examine how teachers shape students' Islamic character in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, specifically in Lima Puluh Kota Regency—an area known for its strong religious identity.

Numerous previous studies have addressed the importance of character education within national education systems, including in the context of Islamic educational institutions. Several scholars argue that character education becomes effective when implemented through teacher role modeling, routine practices, and integration into subjects (Fahrudin, 2025; Kollo dkk., 2024; Sitorus & Achadi, 2025). However, most existing studies do not specifically explore the unique dynamics within Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, especially in regions with strong religious backgrounds like Lima Puluh Kota. Existing character education theories tend to be normative and often fail to illustrate the practical complexities found in real educational settings. Furthermore, there is a notable lack of comprehensive literature that investigates the role of teachers in facing contemporary challenges related to Islamic character education at the primary school level. This gap signifies an urgent research opportunity. Therefore, this study is positioned to fill the void in the literature and contribute empirical insights that are more contextually relevant.

The general purpose of this study is to describe the role of teachers in instilling Islamic character values at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Lima Puluh Kota Regency. More specifically, the study aims to: first, identify and elaborate on the various roles performed by teachers in promoting Islamic character values among students; second, examine the strategies and methods employed by teachers in embedding these values during learning processes and daily interactions; third, analyze the internal and external obstacles encountered by teachers, including limited time, teaching capacity, social influences, and digital media exposure. Lastly, the study seeks to explore alternative solutions adopted by teachers to address such challenges, thereby providing practical recommendations for more effective and context-sensitive Islamic character education in the future.

Based on the background and objectives above, this research is deemed essential as it provides a practical contribution to the development of Islamic character education models that are more aligned with field realities. The evident gap between the values taught and students' behavior indicates the need for more integrative and reflective approaches by teachers. By exploring the teacher's role comprehensively—including aspects of modeling, pedagogical strategies, and overcoming challenges—this study is expected to enrich the discourse on Islamic education at the primary level. The core argument of this research is that the successful internalization of Islamic character values is not merely determined by formal curriculum or programs, but is highly influenced by the teacher's active role as a model and primary educator. Therefore, this study responds to the urgent need to reinforce the teacher's role in building authentic and contextual Islamic character among Madrasah Ibtidaiyah students.

Character education is a systematic process of instilling moral and ethical values in students so that they can act in accordance with universally accepted principles of goodness (Amelya dkk., 2023; Armini, 2024; Hakim & Darajat, 2023). According to Thomas Lickona, character education is not only about teaching “what is right,” but also “why it is right” and “how to do it in action.” (Leming, 2023; Zajda, 2022; Zhang dkk., 2023) In the context of Islam, character education is closely tied to the development of noble morals (akhlaq), as reflected in the teachings of the Qur’an and Hadith. Values such as honesty, trustworthiness, humility, patience, and responsibility form the core pillars in shaping a well-rounded Muslim personality. Islamic character education is not merely theoretical but must be realized through concrete behaviors via habituation, role modeling, and spiritual reinforcement. Thus, character education aims not only to develop intellectual intelligence but also to nurture emotional and spiritual maturity. Therefore, character education holds a strategic position in building a generation that excels not only academically but also in moral integrity and responsibility before God.

The manifestations of character education can be categorized into personal, social, and religious values. Personal values include honesty, discipline, diligence, and responsibility. Social values involve respect, tolerance, cooperation, and care for others. Religious values encompass faith, devotion in worship, and personal and social piety. In Islamic education, character education is integrated into all learning activities, both formal curriculum and non-formal programs. This is evident in practices such as congregational prayer, Qur’an recitation, cleanliness routines, and respect for teachers and parents. Character education is also embedded in classroom teaching where teachers incorporate values into lessons through interactive methods. Furthermore, a conducive school environment and positive school culture strengthen character formation. Hence, the practice of character education is not partial, but holistic and integrative, covering the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains of learners.

A teacher is a central figure in education who plays dual roles as an instructor and a mentor in shaping students’ character. Etymologically, the word “guru” originates from Sanskrit, meaning one who dispels darkness, specifically the darkness of ignorance. In Islamic educational context, a teacher is not only a transmitter of knowledge (‘alim), but also a moral educator (murabbi) and a cultivator of manners (muaddib) (Aisyah, 2021; Faruqi dkk., 2023; Sahara dkk., 2024). The role of a teacher goes beyond delivering academic content; it includes nurturing moral behavior, habituating good conduct, and serving as a role model. Imam Al-Ghazali regards teachers as the heirs of the prophets due to their strategic function in nurturing a civilized generation. Teachers are therefore required to possess personal integrity, pedagogical skills, and strong spirituality to carry out their duties effectively. Understanding the concept of a teacher in Islamic character education is essential to illustrate the ideal role an educator should embody.

In educational practice, teachers can be categorized according to three primary roles: as role models, as learning facilitators, and as character builders. As role models, teachers exemplify behaviors that students imitate, including their speech, attitudes, and moral decision-making. As facilitators, teachers create a learning environment that encourages active, critical, and creative engagement while upholding character values. As character builders, teachers internalize moral values through daily practices, advice, and value reinforcement in every interaction. In the context of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, teachers also serve as spiritual mentors and religious guides, leading prayers, teaching Islamic practices, and instilling Islamic ethics. These manifestations show that teachers are not only educators but also holistic character shapers who nurture students to be both intelligent and morally upright individuals.

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah is a formal Islamic elementary education institution under the supervision of Indonesia’s Ministry of Religious Affairs. Functionally equivalent to general elementary schools, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah is distinguished by its strong Islamic identity. The curriculum integrates general subjects such as mathematics and Indonesian language with

religious studies like Qur'an-Hadith, Islamic Creed and Morality (Aqidah Akhlak), Jurisprudence (Fiqh), and Islamic Cultural History. The primary goal of these schools is to produce students who are not only academically proficient but also devout in faith, observant in worship, and moral in behavior. Historically, madrasahs have played a pivotal role in producing educated and pious Muslim generations. Madrasah Ibtidaiyah plays a significant role in the early socialization of Islamic values among children. Hence, understanding the concept of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah is crucial in the context of Islamic character education, as it serves as the primary arena for holistic student development.

The manifestations of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah can be observed through three key aspects: curriculum structure, school culture, and religious practices. From a curricular perspective, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah balances general and religious subjects to develop knowledgeable and character-driven students. The school culture fosters Islamic values such as greetings (salam), queuing, respect for teachers, and daily worship routines. Religious practices are a hallmark of madrasah life, including Qur'an memorization (tahfiz), collective dhuha prayer, and other religious activities that cultivate a spiritual environment. These aspects make Madrasah Ibtidaiyah an educational institution that not only emphasizes cognitive development but also nurtures students' spiritual and emotional dimensions. Therefore, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah functions as a strategic venue for the implementation of Islamic character education from an early age.

RESEARCH METHOD

The object of this research is the role of teachers in instilling Islamic character values in students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Lima Puluh Kota Regency. Islamic character education is a foundational element in shaping students' morals and ethics from an early age. As Islamic-based elementary institutions, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah play a strategic role in internalizing values such as honesty, discipline, and responsibility. However, in practice, a gap still exists between the values taught and the actual behavior of students, which often does not fully reflect those values. This discrepancy raises questions about the extent of teachers' effectiveness in the internalization of Islamic character values in madrasah environments. Therefore, this study seeks to portray in detail the processes and forms of teacher involvement in developing Islamic character among students within the madrasah setting.

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at providing an in-depth and comprehensive depiction of social phenomena without manipulating variables. The research relies on primary data collected directly from informants through in-depth interviews regarding the implementation of Islamic character education in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. It emphasizes the identified gap between the character values being taught and students' real-world behavior. In addition, secondary data are gathered from relevant literature, including academic journals, Islamic education textbooks, madrasah policy documents, and previous studies. These two types of data are used complementarily to enrich the analysis and provide a holistic understanding of how teachers fulfill their role in character education. This approach enables researchers to understand the context and social dynamics surrounding the character development process.

The participants in this study consist of various individuals directly or indirectly involved in the process of Islamic character education in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. The primary informants are homeroom teachers and Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers from three selected madrasahs in Lima Puluh Kota Regency. School principals are also included as key informants due to their role in formulating strategic character-building policies. Students from grades V and VI are involved as recipients of the character education process. Additionally, parents of students are interviewed as a means of triangulating the data and observing the students'

behavior outside of school. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique to ensure they possess relevant experience and insights into the research focus.

The data collection process was carried out in several systematic stages. The main techniques used include interviews, observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted with teachers, school principals, students, and parents to gather information about the strategies, methods, and challenges in instilling Islamic character values. Observations were conducted in a participatory manner, focusing on teaching and character development activities within the madrasah environment. Documentation involved collecting materials such as curriculum plans, lesson plans (RPP), and religious activity programs implemented at the school. These three techniques complement each other in providing rich and detailed data in line with the characteristics of qualitative research.

Data analysis in this study adopts the Miles and Huberman model, which includes three primary steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Al-ramahi dkk., 2024; Nguyen-Trung, 2025; Testa, 2025). Data reduction involves selecting and simplifying data relevant to the research focus. Data presentation is carried out through descriptive narratives that highlight patterns, trends, and relationships among social variables. The final step involves drawing and verifying conclusions to ensure the data's validity and consistency. To ensure data reliability, source triangulation is employed by comparing information from teachers, school principals, students, and parents. This approach enables researchers to obtain a comprehensive and objective understanding of the studied phenomenon and ensures that the research results are scientifically accountable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Character education in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Lima Puluh Kota Regency is implemented through daily routines and exemplary behavior. Based on interview data with teachers, most of them stated that Islamic character values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, and compassion are instilled through regular activities like joint prayer before class, dhuha prayer, and the morning greeting ritual of salutation, smile, and greeting. Teachers also emphasize these values through their personal behavior, such as punctuality, politeness, and honesty in interactions with students. However, some teachers noted challenges, especially external influences from outside the school and digital media that are not aligned with Islamic values. Some also proposed the need for regular training and reinforcement of character values based on the Qur'an and Hadith.

The inculcation of Islamic character values appears consistent in daily practices at the madrasah. Observations showed that teachers actively reinforced positive behavior, such as cooperation and honesty among students. Routine programs like "Blessed Friday" and "Morning Tahfiz" serve as media for cultivating religious character. Teacher-student interactions generally reflected empathy and affection. However, some students were observed to be passive and undisciplined in the absence of direct supervision from teachers.

The relation between interview and observation data shows alignment in the implementation of Islamic character education. Teachers' exemplary practices and habitual activities were evident in daily interactions and scheduled programs. Nevertheless, external constraints such as negative media influence and lack of family supervision remain obstacles. Documentation data supported these findings, showing that most lesson plans (RPP) included character value indicators, and program documents revealed character development efforts, although not yet fully integrated across all learning aspects.

Teachers play a prominent role in instilling Islamic character values by acting as role models for students. Interview results show that teachers consciously display Islamic behavior and strive to guide students personally. Teachers also drive habitual activities, such as promoting the culture of greeting and reminding students about honesty and responsibility.

Documentation of school activities indicates that teachers are actively involved in religious and character-building programs.

Teachers serve not only as educators but also as moral mentors who foster positive communication with students. Observations revealed that teachers provided direct feedback when students exhibited positive behavior and showed patience in addressing misconduct. Programs such as moral training, Islamic holidays, and social events are used by teachers to internalize character values. Attendance records and behavioral reports showed a systematic reward and sanction system applied progressively by teachers.

The connection between teacher-related data and the actual issues of character education indicates a strategic role played by teachers, although not yet fully optimized. Teachers have made efforts to internalize Islamic values, but external support from parents and the social environment is necessary for more effective outcomes. Inconsistent supervision and lack of regular training are seen as reasons for uneven success in character development programs across madrasahs.

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, as a basic Islamic educational institution, provides various facilities and programs to support character development. Based on interviews with school principals and teachers, internal programs such as Morning Tahfiz, Blessed Friday activities, and Islamic value literacy via visual media like character posters are implemented. The madrasah systematically records student attendance and behavior and organizes social activities that promote character growth, such as community service and commemorations of Islamic holidays.

Observations showed that the physical environment of the madrasah is generally clean and organized, with a religious atmosphere reflected through classroom decorations and information boards displaying Qur'anic verses and hadiths. Documentation revealed that lesson plans contain indicators of Islamic character values, and daily attendance and student behavior reports are part of the ongoing character development system. Internal programs such as moral training and social events are conducted regularly, although not all madrasahs implement them uniformly.

The relationship between data regarding the madrasah and the realities of character education issues shows that madrasahs have strong foundational intentions to foster character development, but implementation still needs consistency and comprehensive execution. There is still a gap between program planning and execution, particularly in integrating character values across all subjects and school activities. Therefore, a more integrated policy from the school and support from all stakeholders are needed to achieve the full objectives of character education. Below, the researcher presents research findings based on the results of observations, interviews, and documentation studies.

Table 1. Research Findings

No.	Research Objective	Main Findings	Descriptive Explanation
1	To describe the role of teachers in instilling Islamic character values among students	Teachers act as role models, facilitators, and character guides	Teachers consistently model behaviors such as discipline, honesty, and compassion; they facilitate daily religious routines such as communal prayers, Dhuha prayers, and the "greet-and-smile" culture
2	To identify the strategies and methods used by teachers in character	The main strategies include exemplary behavior (uswah hasanah), habituation, and character	Teachers integrate character values into lesson plans (RPP), conduct regular programs like "Blessed Friday," "Morning Tahfiz," and promote character through religious

	education	integration into instructional activities	and social activities
3	To analyze the challenges and solutions faced by teachers in instilling Islamic character values in the school environment	Major challenges arise from external influences and digital media; solutions include training and collaboration	Teachers face difficulties counteracting negative external influences; solutions involve training based on Qur'an and Hadith values, and strengthening collaboration with parents and the home environment

The findings reveal that Islamic character values in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah are instilled through role modeling, daily religious routines, and structured programs such as “Blessed Friday” and “Morning Tahfiz.” Teachers serve not only as instructors but also as role models whose behaviors reflect the values being taught. Although institutional documents show systematic efforts in character development, integration of these values across all learning components remains partial. External influences—particularly from digital media and the broader social environment—pose notable challenges, alongside the lack of continuous teacher training. Nevertheless, there is a shared awareness among teachers about the significance of embedding Islamic values rooted in the Qur'an and Hadith.

These findings both affirm and extend existing research. For instance, Suyadi (2021) emphasized the importance of role modeling in character education, yet paid less attention to the emerging threat of digital media. The strength of this study lies in its integration of field data with the growing digital context and its specific focus on madrasahs as formal Islamic education institutions. Furthermore, this study uniquely combines direct classroom observation and institutional documentation, providing a more comprehensive and nuanced analysis.

The findings reflect that Islamic character development is not merely a complementary aspect of the curriculum but a core mission of madrasah education. The role of the teacher as both moral educator and value-shaper is pivotal in cultivating an Islamic school culture. This reflection underscores the idea that successful character education depends heavily on consistent modeling and habituation of values, rather than on the delivery of theoretical knowledge alone.

The implications are far-reaching, both for policy development and classroom practice. From a policy perspective, madrasahs must develop more integrated systems that connect curricula, supervision, and character development in a cohesive manner. Practically, teachers need ongoing professional development and teaching resources that align with the digital era, ensuring that Islamic values remain relevant and applicable in contemporary contexts.

Such research outcomes are shaped by the socio-cultural dynamics surrounding madrasahs and the limitations in human resources. The pervasive influence of uncontrolled digital content has shaped students' critical and open mindsets, necessitating the use of creative and contextual approaches in character education. This explains why routine programs alone are insufficient without active teacher engagement in students' social-emotional development.

In response to these findings, concrete actions are needed, such as strengthening teachers' capacity in value-based pedagogy through workshops, mentoring, and reflective forums. Madrasahs should also design student character monitoring systems involving parents and the wider community. Additionally, fostering collaboration among teachers to share best practices in nurturing Islamic character represents a practical step toward improving character education quality at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah level.

CONCLUSION

The most striking finding of this study is that the role of teachers in instilling Islamic character values goes far beyond classroom instruction—its greatest influence stems from daily role modeling and informal interactions. This underscores a surprising truth: the real strength of character education does not lie in the formal curriculum, but in the teacher's personal integrity and presence in the students' everyday lives. Even more unexpected, the primary challenge does not come from within the madrasah system, but from the pervasive and uncontrollable influence of digital culture.

This research makes a significant contribution to the development of Islamic education both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it enriches the conceptual framework of character education by highlighting the affective and exemplary dimensions within the madrasah context. Practically, it offers concrete strategies for teachers to develop Islamic character education programs that go beyond formal activities and engage in more personal, emotional, and context-sensitive approaches relevant to today's challenges.

Although the study has yielded valuable findings, its scope is limited to Madrasah Ibtidaiyah within a single regency, which suggests that generalization should be made cautiously. This limitation does not signify a weakness; rather, it provides a solid foundation for future research, such as expanding the study to other educational levels, exploring the integration of digital technology in character education, or comparing madrasahs with public schools. Therefore, this research opens promising avenues for broader and more in-depth exploration in the future.

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