

Teacher Training in Islamic Contexts for Enhancing Moral and Ethical Education

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the effectiveness of teacher training in Islamic contexts for enhancing moral and ethical education. The research examines the preparedness of teachers, the challenges they face, and the alignment of the curriculum with Islamic moral principles. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study employed surveys and classroom observations across 10 Islamic schools to gather data on teacher training, curriculum content, and classroom implementation of moral education. The findings reveal that while a majority of teachers feel moderately prepared to teach Islamic moral values, many report a lack of practical training and institutional support. Cultural barriers and time constraints were identified as key challenges in effectively teaching moral education. Furthermore, only 50% of the curriculum explicitly incorporated moral and ethical teachings, with a greater focus on religious rituals. The study recommends improvements in teacher training programs, curriculum reform, and better institutional support to enhance the teaching of moral and ethical education in Islamic schools.

Keywords

Teacher Training
Islamic Moral Education
Curriculum Reform
Ethical Challenges

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Introduction

The integration of moral and ethical values in education has long been a cornerstone of Islamic educational philosophy. In Islamic contexts, moral education is not merely an optional or supplementary aspect of the curriculum; it is central to the overarching educational objectives, which focus on developing responsible, ethical, and spiritually conscious individuals. Islamic education seeks to guide students not only in intellectual growth but in becoming well-rounded individuals who can positively impact society and live in harmony with the values of Islam. In this view, education is not an isolated pursuit of knowledge but a holistic process where character development is as important as academic success.

Islam, as a comprehensive way of life, places a strong emphasis on values that promote both personal integrity and social harmony. Core principles such as siddiq (honesty), rahmah (compassion), 'adl (justice), and amanah (trustworthiness) are deeply embedded in the ethical framework of Islam. These values are considered timeless and universal, meant to guide individuals in every aspect of life, from personal interactions to societal responsibilities. Therefore, schools and educators in Islamic societies bear the critical responsibility of not only teaching these values but embodying them in their actions and interactions. Through effective moral education, Islamic educational institutions aim to produce students who are not only intellectually capable but who also exhibit a high standard of ethical behavior and contribute positively to the communities they serve (Khaidir & Suud, 2020).

However, the current era of globalization and rapid digital transformation has introduced new challenges to the traditional model of moral education in Islamic contexts. Students today are exposed to diverse worldviews, cultural norms, and values through global media, social networks, and digital interactions. This exposure, while offering opportunities for learning and growth, also brings potential conflicts with the traditional moral values upheld by Islamic teachings. Islamic educational institutions are therefore facing the complex task of preserving their moral and ethical teachings while adapting to a changing world (Taufik, 2020; Marjuni, 2022). In this context, the role of teachers becomes even more critical, as they are not only responsible for delivering knowledge but also serve as moral exemplars for their students. Teachers' behavior,

communication style, and overall conduct in the classroom are often regarded as reflections of the values that students are expected to learn.

Effective teacher training programs tailored specifically to Islamic values are essential for preparing educators who can embody and promote these ethical principles (Qadri et al., 2024). Such programs are designed not only to impart knowledge and develop pedagogical skills but also to foster the moral and ethical competencies that teachers need to fulfill their roles as role models. Training programs should ideally include guidance on embodying Islamic values in everyday interactions, understanding students' moral development, and creating a classroom environment that upholds and reinforces Islamic ethics. When teachers themselves are well-versed in and committed to Islamic principles, they are better equipped to inspire their students to internalize these values and apply them in their lives.

Despite this critical need, there are significant gaps in existing teacher training programs. These programs often place heavy emphasis on academic content and pedagogical techniques, with limited attention to the development of moral and ethical competencies based on Islamic teachings. For instance, while teachers may be trained in classroom management or instructional methods, they may not receive adequate training on how to integrate values such as patience, respect, and integrity into their teaching practice (Franklin & Harrington, 2019). This lack of focus on the moral dimension can result in teachers who are technically skilled but may struggle to fulfill their role as ethical and spiritual guides for their students.

Given these challenges, this study aims to address this gap by examining the current state of teacher training programs in Islamic educational contexts. Specifically, it seeks to assess how effectively these programs prepare teachers to deliver moral and ethical education in alignment with Islamic values. Additionally, the study will explore the perspectives of teachers and educational leaders on the efficacy of existing training frameworks, as well as the practical challenges teachers face in instilling Islamic ethics in students amid contemporary societal changes. By identifying areas where teacher training can be improved, this research hopes to contribute to the ongoing efforts to enhance moral and ethical education in Islamic settings. Ultimately, the goal is to ensure that teachers are fully equipped to foster the next generation of morally grounded, ethically aware, and spiritually conscious individuals who will contribute positively to society.

Problem of the Study

The primary problem addressed in this study is the apparent gap in teacher training programs within Islamic educational systems concerning moral and ethical education. While many programs prepare teachers academically and methodologically, they may not adequately address the need for comprehensive training on moral and ethical dimensions rooted in Islamic teachings. This gap has raised concerns among educational leaders and policymakers regarding the effectiveness of these programs in equipping teachers to foster moral character in students, a core objective of Islamic education.

Limitations of Study

This study, while aiming to offer meaningful insights into teacher training for moral and ethical education within Islamic contexts, encounters several notable limitations. First, the geographical scope of Islamic educational practices varies significantly across regions and countries, each of which has distinct cultural, social, and educational frameworks. This study may focus on specific areas where these frameworks influence the teaching of Islamic values in unique ways. As a result, conclusions drawn from one region may not fully represent the complexities or specific practices of Islamic education in other parts of the world. This geographic limitation requires a careful approach to generalizing the study's findings across different Islamic educational contexts, as its insights might not be universally applicable.

Additionally, data collection constraints represent another challenge, as this study relies primarily on self-reported data from teachers, educational administrators, and other stakeholders. While such data is valuable, it is often influenced by personal perceptions, biases, and even the desire to provide socially acceptable responses, especially on sensitive topics like moral and ethical education. These influences may limit the objectivity of the findings, as participants may consciously or unconsciously skew their responses to align with

what they believe are the expected or appropriate answers. This reliance on self-reported data could affect the accuracy and depth of the insights, as it introduces an element of subjectivity that can be difficult to control.

The cultural variability inherent in Islamic education further complicates the study. Islamic values are interpreted and practiced across a wide range of cultural settings, each with its own understanding of what constitutes moral and ethical education. Certain principles may be emphasized in one community and de-emphasized or differently applied in another. This variability means that while this study aims to focus on widely accepted Islamic ethical principles, it may not capture every cultural nuance or specific interpretation. This limitation could impact the depth of the study's analysis, as universal principles may not fully account for the unique ways different communities approach moral education.

Lastly, resource constraints impose limitations on the comprehensiveness of this study. Like many academic projects, this research is subject to restrictions in time, funding, and access to resources, all of which limit the ability to conduct an exhaustive analysis across a broad range of teacher training programs. These constraints may result in a focus on a select number of programs or institutions, potentially narrowing the richness and diversity of insights available. Consequently, the study may offer a more limited view of the overall state of teacher training for moral and ethical education in Islamic settings than initially intended.

Literature Review and Previous Studies

In Islamic educational philosophy, moral and ethical education holds a central role, often referred to through key concepts such as *akhlak* (morality) and *adab* (proper conduct). These principles emphasize character development alongside intellectual growth, aiming to produce balanced individuals who are equipped to fulfill both worldly and spiritual responsibilities. According to Al-Attas (1980), the ultimate goal of Islamic education is to foster not only knowledge but a refined character, as it is believed that intellectual development without ethical grounding may fail to contribute positively to society. Scholars agree that integrating *akhlak* and *adab* into the curriculum does more than improve academic outcomes; it enhances students' understanding of social responsibility, respect, and self-discipline, essential qualities for their roles as ethical citizens (Muhammad, 2020; Ramdani et al., 2024).

Effective moral and ethical education requires teachers who are knowledgeable in Islamic ethical principles and skilled in methods for conveying these values in meaningful ways (Risnawaty, 2023). Research highlights a gap in formal teacher training programs within Islamic educational institutions, as these programs often emphasize academic competencies and religious knowledge but may overlook modules specifically focused on moral and ethical education (Ahmad & Hussain, 2017). Demirel Ucan & Wright (2029) advocates for an approach where teacher training includes practical strategies that enable educators to model Islamic values in the classroom, moving beyond a solely theoretical understanding of ethics. The absence of these training components could hinder teachers' ability to inspire moral and ethical development in their students.

Teachers face several challenges when teaching moral and ethical values, especially within the context of modern, multicultural societies. As digital media and global connectivity expand, students are increasingly exposed to diverse cultural perspectives, which can sometimes be at odds with Islamic values. For instance, Aderibigbe et al. (2023) found that teachers struggle to maintain students' engagement with Islamic ethical values, as some students perceive these teachings as less relevant to contemporary issues. Additionally, a lack of standardized curricula and educational resources for moral education in Islamic contexts often leaves teachers without adequate support, adding to the complexity of their task (Amin et al., 2021; Saada, 2022).

Some studies have identified specific models that show promise for effectively integrating moral education into teacher training. For example, proposed a model emphasizing immersive training experiences where teachers not only learn about Islamic ethics but also participate in practical activities that encourage self-reflection, empathy, and ethical decision making. Similarly, Nor et al. (2024) advocate for collaborative workshops and mentorship programs as means of enhancing teachers' ability to integrate Islamic values into their teaching practices. These models demonstrate the potential of experiential learning and mentorship in fostering teachers' confidence and ability to teach Islamic ethical principles.

Although numerous studies underscore the importance of moral and ethical education in Islamic schooling, there remains a limited body of research focused specifically on the effectiveness of teacher training programs in fostering these values. Additionally, few studies address the need for adapting teacher training programs to keep pace with the evolving social and technological landscape that influences students' ethical perspectives. There is a growing recognition among scholars that future research should explore innovative strategies for moral education in the digital age, particularly within Islamic contexts, where traditional values may sometimes conflict with contemporary influences.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of teacher training in moral and ethical education within Islamic contexts. The methods used include semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with teachers, program administrators, and curriculum developers to explore their experiences and challenges in implementing Islamic moral values. Additionally, document analysis of training materials, curricula, and institutional policies is conducted to assess their alignment with Islamic ethical principles. Classroom observations are also performed to see the direct application of moral education in everyday teaching. All collected data will be analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key themes related to the effectiveness of the training, challenges, and suggestions for improvement in the moral education programs.

Results and Discussion

Effectiveness of Teacher Training Programs

The study found that a significant proportion of teachers felt moderately prepared to teach moral and ethical principles based on Islamic teachings. Specifically, 72% of the 50 teachers surveyed across 10 Islamic schools reported feeling somewhat prepared for teaching moral values, while 28% admitted feeling inadequately trained. Teachers who felt prepared cited the theoretical knowledge they gained through their training, but also expressed a need for more practical methods to teach these values effectively. A common concern among teachers was the gap between the theoretical knowledge of Islamic ethics and the lack of practical strategies for implementing this knowledge in the classroom. As one teacher mentioned, "While I understand the Islamic moral principles, I often struggle to translate them into real-life examples that my students can relate to."

In terms of the content of the training, many teachers reported that the programs they participated in were largely theoretical and did not include enough interactive or hands-on approaches. This finding suggests that while the foundation of the training provided a solid understanding of Islamic ethics, there is a need to incorporate more practical elements, such as case studies, role-playing, and classroom management techniques, to help teachers apply these principles in real-life teaching contexts. Moreover, some teachers mentioned that they would benefit from receiving training that focuses on addressing the ethical dilemmas students might face in daily life, and how teachers can guide students through these issues from an Islamic perspective.

Challenges Faced by Teachers in Implementing Moral Education

Teachers identified several key challenges that hinder their ability to effectively teach moral and ethical education. One of the most common barriers cited was the lack of institutional support. Approximately 60% of the teachers surveyed stated that their schools did not provide sufficient resources or guidance in teaching moral education. These teachers often reported feeling unsupported in their efforts to apply Islamic ethical teachings, with some indicating that there was no clear framework or policy from their schools to guide the integration of ethics into their lessons.

In addition to institutional support, cultural barriers emerged as another significant challenge. 40% of teachers mentioned that cultural differences, both within the student body and the broader community, made it difficult to consistently teach and apply Islamic moral values. For example, in multicultural classrooms,

teachers reported challenges in balancing Islamic ethical principles with students' varying beliefs and values. This highlights the complexity of teaching moral education in diverse settings, where students may not share the same cultural or religious background. Teachers also expressed concern about the resistance they faced from some parents and community members who questioned the relevance of certain ethical lessons or how they were being taught.

Alignment of the Curriculum with Islamic Ethical Principles

The analysis of the curriculum revealed that only 50% of the Islamic school curricula explicitly included content related to moral and ethical teachings. In many cases, the curriculum focused more on religious rituals, such as prayer and fasting, rather than on the ethical underpinnings of these practices. This suggests that while Islamic schools emphasize the religious practices associated with Islam, there is room for improvement in terms of incorporating Islamic ethical principles into the curriculum. Teachers mentioned that the lack of ethical content in the curriculum left them to fill the gap themselves, often without the proper guidance or resources.

This misalignment between the curriculum and ethical teachings raises important questions about the educational priorities of these schools. While the religious rituals are undoubtedly an essential aspect of Islamic education, it is equally important that the curriculum emphasizes the moral and ethical principles that should guide students' behaviors, both inside and outside the classroom. Islamic ethical teachings, such as honesty, kindness, and justice, should be embedded within the curriculum to ensure that students receive a holistic education that aligns with Islamic values.

Teacher's Application of Training in Classroom Settings

Classroom observations revealed that 65% of the teachers attempted to integrate ethical discussions into their lessons. However, these discussions were often brief and limited due to time constraints. Teachers reported that the heavy focus on academic subjects, such as mathematics and science, left little time for in-depth discussions on ethical issues. As one teacher noted, "I try to bring ethical discussions into my lessons, but with the limited time, it's difficult to focus on these topics without sacrificing other subjects." This indicates that while teachers are aware of the importance of teaching moral values, they are constrained by the curriculum demands and time limitations.

Furthermore, observations revealed that many teachers lacked a structured approach to teaching moral education. In some classrooms, ethical discussions were often sporadic and not integrated into the broader subject matter. Teachers noted that they would like to have more dedicated time to engage students in discussions about ethics, but the rigidity of the school timetable prevented this. The lack of a structured framework for teaching ethics also contributed to the inconsistency in how these discussions were approached.

The results highlight several key areas where teacher training programs, curricula, and institutional practices can be improved to enhance the teaching of moral and ethical education in Islamic contexts. While many teachers feel moderately prepared to teach moral principles, the lack of practical training, institutional support, and cultural sensitivity creates significant challenges in the classroom. It is clear that teachers need more than just theoretical knowledge; they require training that equips them with concrete strategies and real-life examples to teach Islamic ethics effectively.

The findings also point to the need for curriculum reform. While religious rituals are central to Islamic education, it is equally important that the curriculum provides a strong foundation in ethical principles. This would ensure that students are not only learning about religious practices but also about the ethical values that underpin those practices. The incorporation of Islamic ethics into the curriculum should be done in a structured way, with clear learning objectives and teaching materials that align with the moral and ethical teachings of Islam.

Additionally, the challenges faced by teachers in multicultural settings emphasize the need for culturally sensitive approaches to teaching moral education. Teachers must be equipped with the skills and knowledge to navigate the diverse beliefs and values that students bring to the classroom, while still staying true to the core principles of Islamic ethics. This could be achieved through training that emphasizes cultural competence and provides teachers with tools to foster inclusive, respectful discussions about ethics.

Finally, the study suggests that schools should allocate more time for discussions on Islamic moral values and provide teachers with the resources and support needed to integrate these discussions into their lessons. By doing so, Islamic schools can create an environment where ethical education is given the attention it deserves, and students are provided with the tools to develop into morally responsible individuals guided by Islamic values.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that teacher training in Islamic contexts for enhancing moral and ethical education has a significant impact, but there are several challenges that need to be addressed to achieve greater effectiveness. The majority of teachers feel somewhat prepared to teach Islamic moral principles, yet they express a need for more practical, real-world training methods. Theoretical training alone is insufficient in preparing teachers to address the real challenges of teaching moral values and ethics in the classroom. The main challenges teachers face are the lack of institutional support and cultural barriers that complicate the teaching of moral values. Many teachers report that they do not receive adequate resources or clear guidelines from their schools to teach ethics effectively. Additionally, cultural differences among students affect how moral values are taught, with some teachers finding it difficult to reconcile Islamic teachings with the diverse cultural backgrounds of their students. In terms of the curriculum, it was found that only about 50% of the material taught in Islamic schools explicitly included moral and ethical teachings. This indicates that the curriculum still emphasizes religious rituals more than moral education, suggesting the need for curriculum reform to ensure that students learn not only about religious practices but also about the ethical values that underpin these practices.

Despite these challenges, many teachers strive to incorporate moral education into their lessons, but time constraints often limit the depth of these discussions. Therefore, schools should consider allocating more time for teachers to teach Islamic moral values in a systematic and structured manner. Overall, this study recommends that teacher training be more focused on practical and interactive approaches, that the curriculum be updated to explicitly integrate Islamic moral and ethical teachings, and that greater institutional support be provided. By addressing these areas, moral and ethical education in Islamic schools can be taught more effectively, helping to shape a generation that not only understands religious rituals but also has a strong foundation in the moral and ethical values that can be applied in everyday life.

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