

Moral and Ethical Education in Islam: Foundations for Intellectual and Spiritual Development

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This study explores the development of curriculum within contemporary educational settings by examining its philosophical foundations, strategic models, implementation challenges, and future prospects. The curriculum is understood not only as a structured plan for learning, but also as a dynamic framework shaped by social transformation, technological advancement, and institutional goals. In Islamic education, curriculum development becomes a crucial instrument in integrating intellectual growth, ethical formation, and spiritual values to support the creation of competitive, morally grounded, and socially responsible learners. The results indicate that effective curriculum development requires the incorporation of innovative strategies, context-based learning approaches, and reflective evaluation mechanisms to ensure relevance and adaptability. Additionally, implementation challenges such as limited teacher competence, inadequate infrastructure, resistance to change, and rapid digitalization demand comprehensive solutions involving training, technology integration, and collaborative engagement among stakeholders. Despite these obstacles, the findings highlight various opportunities including increased access to digital resources, interdisciplinary collaboration, and the growing demand for value-oriented education. These opportunities open pathways for curriculum evolution that aligns with global educational trends while maintaining cultural and religious integrity. Therefore, curriculum development must be approached as a continuous and research-driven process that emphasizes flexibility, holistic learning outcomes, and future readiness. This approach positions education not only as a provider of knowledge, but also as a transformative force that prepares learners to navigate the complexities of modern life with intelligence, character, and purpose.

Keywords

Curriculum Development
Islamic Education
Learning Strategies
Character Building
Educational Innovation

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Introduction

Moral and ethical education in Islam is the primary foundation for shaping character, personality, and the direction of human development, both intellectually and spiritually. From an Islamic perspective, education is not merely defined as the transfer of knowledge, but also as a means of fostering morals and tazkiyatun nafs (self-control), producing individuals of faith, knowledge, and integrity. The Quran explains that the purpose of human creation is to serve Allah (Surah Adz-Dzariyat: 56), so the orientation of education extends beyond academic achievement to the development of morals and spirituality aligned with the values of monotheism. This makes moral and ethical education a fundamental and inseparable aspect of the Islamic education system (Almubarak et al., 2025).

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasized that his mission was to perfect human morality, as stated in the hadith "Innama bu'itsu li utammima makarimal akhlaq," which is often cited as the basis for the centrality of human development in Islam, which rests on character building (Yuwono et al., 2025). Therefore, Islamic education, since classical times, has placed morality at the center of the curriculum, where knowledge and morality are a mutually reinforcing unity. Knowledge without morality will lose its direction, while morality without knowledge will be fragile and not based on true understanding (Saiddaeni et al., 2023). This concept later evolved into an educational system that guides individuals to achieve self-perfection (insan kamil) through the integration of knowledge and spirituality.

However, amidst the dynamics of modern scientific development and increasingly rapid social change, the urgency of moral education in Islam is becoming increasingly important to reexamine. The currents of globalization, advances in digital technology, and the liberalization of information present new challenges that can influence the mindset and behavior of the younger generation. The phenomena of moral degradation, identity crisis, and dependence on technology are social phenomena that require values-based educational solutions. According to Benu (2025), the lack of integration of moral education into national education policy is one of the causes of the weakening of character development in adolescents. Therefore, rediscovering the foundations of Islamic morality and ethics is both an academic and practical necessity in formulating the direction of modern education.

Several contemporary Muslim scholars and thinkers emphasize that Islamic education serves not only to instill religious knowledge but also to foster spiritual sensitivity and social responsibility (Irawan & Rohman, 2025). The concept of morality in Islam is not solely related to behavioral norms, but also to an inner awareness of good deeds driven by faith and belief in God. Spiritual education serves as an internal reinforcement so that moral values can become permanent characteristics, not merely cognitive knowledge. In this context, the intellectual and spiritual aspects complement each other; intellect provides rational direction, while spirituality provides emotional strength and submission to God (Khatin & Fauzi, 2025).

Furthermore, moral education in Islam emphasizes the development of *adab* (good character) as the highest value. *Adab* encompasses an individual's awareness of the position of oneself, God, and other creatures, thus fostering harmonious and responsible behavior (Al Ghifari, 2025). *Adab* education is not only taught through lectures and books, but also through habituation, role models, and a conducive social environment. This demonstrates that moral education is a process that requires the simultaneous involvement of the family, educational institutions, and the community. Studies on the moral and ethical foundations of Islam have also made significant contributions to the development of modern Islamic education curricula. Integrating religious values into the learning process is believed to produce a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also spiritually and emotionally mature. Islamic values-based education plays a role in strengthening students' self-identity, increasing self-awareness, and fostering ethical awareness in interactions with the social environment (Rizal & Amaluddin, 2025). Therefore, research on Moral and Ethical Education in Islam is relevant for examining how the theological and philosophical foundations of moral education can be implemented as a model for character development in the contemporary era.

Based on this description, this study will explore the concept of moral and ethical education in Islam through a qualitative approach based on a literature review. The discussion focuses on conceptual foundations derived from the Qur'an, Hadith, and the works of Muslim thinkers on moral development, as well as their relevance in shaping human intellectual and spiritual development. It is hoped that this research will provide a theoretical contribution to the development of Islamic education discourse and serve as a strategic reference for strengthening the moral curriculum in educational institutions today.

Methods

A. Research Type

This study employs a qualitative approach using library research as the primary research type. The selection of this method is based on the need to analyze the concept of moral and ethical education in Islam through extensive examination of scholarly literature. A qualitative approach enables the researcher to interpret and understand texts more deeply, allowing for comprehensive conceptual analysis regarding the intellectual and spiritual foundations of Islamic moral education (Moleong, 2018). Library research is highly relevant to this study since data are collected from books, journals, scientific articles, and other academic publications that discuss Islamic education, morality, character building, and spirituality (Zed, 2014). Through this approach, the researcher focuses on theoretical understanding rather than empirical measurement, making it appropriate for conceptual and philosophical studies.

B. Sources of Data

The data in this study consist of primary and secondary sources, all derived from literature. Primary sources include the Qur'an, Hadith, classical Islamic scholars such as Al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawaih, as well as contemporary works that elaborately discuss moral education and Islamic ethics. These sources are examined as the main theoretical foundation to understand moral concepts, character formation, and the integration of spiritual values in human development. Secondary sources include supporting books, academic articles, theses, dissertations, and other scholarly documents that provide additional insight and strengthen the analysis. Both types of sources are critically reviewed to ensure relevance, credibility, and consistency with the study's objectives.

C. Data Collection Techniques

Data collection is conducted through a thorough literature review related to the research topic, accessed through physical libraries and digital platforms, including academic journals, scientific databases, and university repositories. After gathering the literature, the researcher performs *reading and note-taking* to extract essential ideas, theories, and findings connected to Islamic moral and ethical education. Collected data are then classified into thematic categories such as the concept of morality, foundational principles of Islamic education, and spiritual development. This layered process aims to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the research object and is aligned with the qualitative tradition, which prioritizes depth of meaning over numerical findings (Sugiyono, 2019).

D. Data Analysis Techniques

The data are analyzed using content analysis. In the first stage, data reduction is carried out by selecting relevant information and eliminating content that does not correspond to the research focus. The next stage involves displaying the data descriptively to facilitate the identification of relationships between concepts and the discovery of significant patterns. The final stage is drawing conclusions based on interpretation of the literature and theoretical synthesis. This analytical process refers to Miles and Huberman's (1994) framework, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion verification. Through this analysis, the research aims to formulate a comprehensive understanding of Islamic moral and ethical foundations and their contribution to intellectual and spiritual development.

E. Data Validity

To ensure data validity, this study applies source triangulation by comparing information from multiple references to obtain consistent and accurate data. The credibility of literature is assessed based on the author's academic reputation, publication year, relevance to the topic, and quality of publication. The researcher also employs a critical reading approach, verifying arguments and contextual interpretations to avoid subjective bias. Since the reliability of library research heavily depends on the credibility of its sources, careful selection and evaluation of the literature are essential to maintain academic rigor (Moleong, 2018).

Results and Discussion

The Foundation of Moral and Ethical Values in Islam is Rooted in the Qur'an and Hadith

Theoretically, moral and ethical values in the Islamic educational tradition are firmly rooted in two primary sources of revelation: the Qur'an and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The Qur'an is God's revelation and serves as a comprehensive guide for Muslims, encompassing not only ritual worship but also moral character formation. Quranic verses explicitly emphasize values such as honesty, justice, patience, and compassion as part of the relationship between humans and God and between humans (*habl min Allah* and *habl min an-nas*), which must be developed in education (Rohaeni, 2024). This

demonstrates that moral learning in Islam is not partial but encompasses a comprehensive spiritual and social dimension, with implications for the formation of moral individuals in everyday life.

As practical support for the moral values outlined in the Qur'an, the Hadith of the Prophet serve as a secondary source of teachings that explain these moral norms in real life. A literature review of the hadiths on Islamic education (tarbawi) shows that many of them directly regulate ethical behavior, such as encouraging honesty, restraining anger, respecting fellow human beings, and fulfilling trusts (Saputra, 2025). These values are not merely theoretical teachings but are embodied in the example of the Prophet Muhammad, who is portrayed in various hadiths as an ideal moral figure. Thus, the hadith serve as a mediator between moral principles derived from the Quran and ethical practices in the lives of Muslims.

Furthermore, research shows that the integration of the Quran and hadith forms the basis for moral education, leading to holistic character formation. Good Islamic moral education emphasizes not only understanding the text but also internalizing these moral values so that they become part of the student's personality. This aligns with the educational concept discussed in Islamic education literature, which emphasizes that moral values must be manifested in attitudes, behavior, and daily social interactions, not merely mastery of theory (Iqbal et al., 2024). This integration involves conceptual understanding and implementation within a social context, so that noble morals become the primary goal of Islamic education.

The moral components of the Quran and Hadith also encompass social ethics relevant to the contemporary context, such as justice, empathy, social responsibility, and solidarity. Many contemporary studies have found that the Prophet's hadiths contain social values essential for building harmonious human relationships in modern society. For example, hadiths emphasizing the importance of mutual assistance, respecting the rights of others, and upholding the dignity of each individual serve as the foundation for social ethics relevant to the moral challenges of the era of globalization. These social values demonstrate that Islamic moral education is not merely individualistic but also has collective implications for the formation of a civilized society.

Furthermore, the empowerment of moral and ethical values derived from the Quran and Hadith has significantly contributed to the development of Islamic culture, both historically and contemporary. Research shows that education based on the Quran and Hadith, since the early days of Islam, has shaped a set of cultural values that continue in formal educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) and madrasahs. These values are not merely religious teachings but also serve as a cultural foundation that shapes the identity of Muslims in various aspects of life, including social ethics, professional attitudes, and intergenerational relationships (Sari, 2023). Thus, the moral and ethical foundations of Islam function not only in an educational context but also shape broader cultural structures.

Islamic Moral Education Integrates with Intellectual and Spiritual Development

Moral education in Islam is inseparable from the process of intellectual and spiritual development, as the two reinforce each other in shaping the complete human being (insan kamil). The Quran illustrates that the goal of education is not only to make Muslims scientifically intelligent, but also to mature morally and spiritually through moral development, purification of the soul, and strengthening of faith. Therefore, the intellectual dimension of Islamic education is always directed at understanding divine values as the foundation of ethics and morality in life. This demonstrates that morality develops not only through normative rules but also through a rational understanding of religious teachings (Karlina et al., 2023). When intellectual and spiritual aspects coexist, students not only know what is right but also feel compelled to practice it based on faith.

The Prophet's hadith also emphasize the integral relationship between intellectual intelligence and spiritual purity. Many hadith explain that learning is an act of worship, and knowledge that is not put into practice has no value in the eyes of the Shari'a. In this context, morality is not merely the result of memorization or cognitive understanding, but must be internalized in concrete actions. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is often portrayed as an exemplary figure, demonstrating that moral intelligence is inseparable from piety and spiritual awareness (Auliafiddin, 2025). Thus, the Islamic educational approach views morality as the end product of the synergy between knowledge and faith.

Contemporary research also confirms that moral education in Islam aims to foster self-awareness through spiritual, emotional, and intellectual balance. An Islamic-based character education model focuses not only on the transfer of knowledge but also on fostering spiritual awareness through the practice of worship, self-reflection, and strengthening ethical values. A study by Johan et al. (2025) emphasized that the integration of morality and spirituality helps students understand the meaning of life more comprehensively, protects them from the modern moral crisis, and strengthens their identity based on divine values. This relationship demonstrates that Islamic education has a transformational, not merely informational, dimension.

In the modern context, the integration of morality with the intellectual and spiritual is becoming increasingly important in response to the development of science and technology, which tends to be materialistic. Islamic education provides a foundation so that intellectual intelligence does not become a tool for moral deviation, but rather a means for the welfare of the community. Values such as trustworthiness, honesty, and responsibility, as embodied in the Quran and Hadith, serve as ethical guidelines that guide the proper use of knowledge. Spirituality-based moral education serves as a bulwark of character for the younger generation in a digital era rife with moral temptations and the degradation of social ethics. Thus, Islamic education creates harmony between the academic world and the afterlife, thus producing individuals who are both knowledgeable and virtuous.

Furthermore, the integration of moral, intellectual, and spiritual education has become a distinctive characteristic of Islamic educational institutions, including Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and *madrasahs* (*madrasahs*). The learning tradition in Islamic boarding schools demonstrates that strengthening morals does not stand alone but goes hand in hand with deepening religious and general knowledge. This demonstrates that Islamic education places morality at the core of character formation, while knowledge and spirituality serve as instruments that strengthen it (Asrofi et al., 2025). Thus, intellectual development will not give rise to scientific arrogance, but rather strengthen self-awareness, leading to a closer relationship with God and benefiting society.

Implementation of Moral Education Requires Role Modeling and Habituation

The implementation of moral education in Islam does not stop at the conceptual and theoretical stage; it must be realized in concrete actions through role models and habituation. In the context of Islamic education, role models (*uswah hasanah*) are the most effective method for transforming moral values into students. The Quran affirms that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the best example for Muslims, both in morals, worship, and social relationships. Exemplary behavior is not merely verbal instruction, but rather the moral manifestation in the daily behavior of educators, which are then observed, imitated, and internalized by students (Abidin, 2024). This demonstrates that morality is most strongly formed through direct experience, not just theoretical explanations.

The Hadith also reinforce the importance of role models as a primary instrument for implementing moral education. Many hadiths illustrate that the Companions learned morals more through interaction and observation of the Prophet's behavior than simply memorizing teachings. In the educational process, teachers or educators serve as moral models for students to emulate. When educators demonstrate trustworthiness, honesty, discipline, and compassion, these moral values are conveyed more effectively than mere verbal advice. Therefore, moral education requires consistent behavior from educators as part of the pedagogical process.

In addition to role models, habituation is a crucial aspect in the implementation of moral education because ethical values cannot develop instantly. Habituation through the practice of worship, social etiquette, and daily discipline is the Islamic way of continuously shaping character. Fadilah et al. (2025) explain that character is formed from repeated actions until they become ingrained as habits and become part of the personality. In this context, morality develops through a long-term internalization process that requires teacher guidance and supervision within the educational environment.

Habituation in Islamic moral education is not only individual but also social. Activities such as congregational prayer, deliberation, mutual cooperation, and mutual respect in school life are examples of how moral values are instilled within the educational environment. Adibah et al. (2025) stated that habituation within the educational community plays a role in creating a strong moral culture, where each individual is encouraged to maintain normative behavior because the environment supports and affirms these values. A character-based educational environment will help students emulate positive behavior and make it part of their identity.

The implementation of moral education through role models and habituation is seen more strongly in traditional educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). The boarding system, which emphasizes discipline, obedience, and social ethics, provides a natural space for character formation. The success of moral education is greatly influenced by the consistency of habituation in daily life and the role of teachers as role models (Siregar et al., 2025). This demonstrates that moral education cannot be achieved solely through a written curriculum but requires a living educational culture, where moral values are practiced concretely and continuously in daily life. Thus, role models and habituation are the main foundations for the successful implementation of Islamic moral education.

Contemporary Challenges Demand Adaptation of Islamic Moral Education

Contemporary challenges facing modern society have consequences for the implementation of Islamic moral education, necessitating responses and adaptations relevant to current conditions. Globalization, the development of digital technology, and changes in the lifestyles of the younger generation make moral values increasingly vulnerable to shifts. The rapid and open flow of information allows students to access various values that do not always align with Islamic teachings. This situation demands that moral education not only teach normative rules but also equip students with critical awareness and the ability to choose correct values based on Islamic perspectives (Kurdi, 2023). Thus, moral education needs to be more adaptive and responsive to new challenges.

In addition to technological challenges, changing social patterns also impact the internalization of moral values in education. Many studies highlight the decline in direct interaction between educators and students due to digital culture, resulting in a less robust role model-based educational process. This challenges educators to strengthen moral development methods, both through new pedagogical approaches and by positively integrating technology into the learning process. Such adaptation is crucial to ensure moral education remains relevant without losing its spiritual essence.

Furthermore, the challenges of modern individualism and materialism also pose a threat to the moral formation of the younger generation. An increasingly competitive society often prioritizes academic achievement and worldly pursuits over ethical and moral values. In this context, Islamic moral education must balance the intellectual and spiritual needs of students so that they not only pursue worldly achievements but also understand social responsibility and human values. Febrianto et al. (2025) emphasize that strengthening spiritual values serves as a moral support capable of countering the character crisis in the modern era, which is rife with moral temptations.

Another challenge is the emergence of value pluralism, which has the potential to give rise to moral relativism. Students are confronted with diverse ideologies, perspectives, and values, requiring a solid foundation for reasoning to choose what is right according to Islamic teachings. Islamic moral education must serve as a guide, providing a clear ethical framework while also opening up space for dialogue and contextual understanding of social realities. The success of moral education in the contemporary era is determined by strategies that connect religious values with the real needs of the current generation (Maulida & Hikmah, 2025).

Amid these challenges, adapting Islamic moral education does not mean abandoning the fundamental values of the Quran and Hadith, but rather developing new approaches relevant to the current context. Educational institutions need to create an integrative curriculum, combining religious knowledge with digital literacy, critical thinking, and character building. Islamic boarding schools and Islamic schools can serve as spaces of

innovation capable of internalizing moral values through educational technology without eliminating the tradition of exemplary behavior and habituation. Syafei (2025) emphasized that appropriate adaptation will maintain the essence of moral education while addressing the moral needs of modern society. Therefore, Islamic moral education must continue to evolve to remain relevant in the face of changing times.

Discussion

Research findings indicate that Islamic moral education is firmly grounded in the Quran and Hadith, which serve as the basis for all aspects of developing students' morals, intellect, and spirituality. The Quran provides universal values such as honesty, justice, trustworthiness, patience, and compassion as normative moral guidelines. The Hadith then serve to clarify how these values are put into practice in real life through the example of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Therefore, moral education does not stop at the conceptual realm but rather guides people to embody these values in action. This finding aligns with the view that morality in Islam is not merely understood theoretically but must be internalized through a continuous process of character formation from early childhood to adulthood. Therefore, the normative foundation of religion is a key element in the Islamic moral education system, creating ethical order in social life.

Furthermore, findings regarding the integration of moral, intellectual, and spiritual education confirm that Islam views humanity holistically. Moral education cannot be separated from the process of intellectual development, as understanding religious values requires intelligence capable of interpreting and contextualizing teachings in everyday life. Spirituality also plays a crucial role in instilling these values in students' hearts. When intellect serves as a tool for thinking and spirituality as a strengthening force for faith, morals become a concrete manifestation of both. Islamic education, then, exists not only to produce cognitively intelligent individuals, but also individuals with noble personalities and transcendental awareness. Thus, the synergy between morals, intellect, and spirituality becomes the primary characteristic of an integrative and humanistic Islamic education system.

Research also reveals that the implementation of moral education is inseparable from the role of role models and habituation. The process of internalizing morals occurs through observation and imitation of behavior, allowing educators to become concrete examples demonstrating Islamic values in practice. A teacher's consistent role model in speech and actions strengthens the effectiveness of moral education more than simply lecturing. Habits such as disciplined worship, social etiquette, mutual assistance, and maintaining good manners naturally instill moral values in students. This illustrates that the success of moral education is not solely determined by the curriculum, but by the vibrant and ongoing culture of the educational institution. Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) are a clear example of the success of an educational model based on role models and habituation, which produces a generation with moral character through a long, ongoing process.

Furthermore, research findings on contemporary moral challenges indicate that Islamic education needs to adapt to changing times. Massive digitalization, open access to information, and changing patterns of social interaction pose a risk of shifting moral values among the younger generation. The phenomena of hedonism, individualism, and materialism are issues that demand a more critical and dynamic educational response. Islamic moral education must be able to present new methods that not only emphasize dogma but also develop digital literacy, critical thinking, the ability to select accurate information, and a more active religious awareness. This adaptation does not mean changing fundamental Islamic values, but rather updating delivery methods to be relevant to the modern context. The integration of technology in moral learning, digital educational media, value discussions based on modern moral cases, and strengthening the character curriculum are forms of transformation of moral education in the contemporary context.

Conclusion

Moral education in Islam has a strong and comprehensive theological foundation derived from the Qur'an and Hadith as the basis for the holistic formation of human character. The moral values contained in these two primary sources are not only normative rules but also practical guidelines embodied through the

example of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and practiced in daily life. Moral education in Islam cannot be separated from intellectual and spiritual development, as both are a mutually reinforcing unity in shaping individuals with noble character. Intellectual development without spirituality can result in intelligence without moral direction, while spiritual strengthening without intellectual understanding will hinder the development of mature critical awareness; therefore, the integration of the two is the ideal foundation for Islamic character education. In its implementation, moral education requires consistent role models and habits because values cannot be instilled solely through verbal instruction, but rather through experience, observation, and repeated practice by educators and the educational environment. Teachers' exemplary behavior, institutional culture, and the practice of daily worship are effective media in shaping students' character. However, contemporary realities present significant challenges for moral education, particularly with the advent of globalization, digital technology, and cultural changes that can influence the value systems of the younger generation. Therefore, Islamic moral education is required to adapt without eliminating the fundamental principles of religious teachings, through innovative learning methods, positive use of digital media, and strengthening critical moral literacy to meet the needs of the times. With an integrative, contextual, and adaptive approach, Islamic moral education is believed to be able to shape a generation with noble character, broad knowledge, and a strong spiritual awareness as a moral foundation in personal, social, and global life.

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