



Cultivating Intellectual-Mental Character through Islamic Moral Education: The Strategic Role of Aqidah Akhlak Teachers

Ainul Ikrom*, Kholilur Rahman, Imam Mashuri

Universitas Islam Ibrahimy Banyuwangi, Indonesia

Email : ainulikrom563@mail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61987/jemr.v5i4.2491>

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Intellectual Character;
Aqidah Akhlak
Teacher; Character
Education; Critical
Thinking

*Corresponding Author

This study aims to analyze the role of Aqidah Akhlak teachers in developing students' intellectual-based character and to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing the character formation process. The study employed a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through qualitative research procedures and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation. The findings reveal that Aqidah Akhlak teachers play several essential roles in intellectual-based character development, namely as role models (*uswatun hasanah*), character and moral builders, mentors and guides, educators in the digital era, and facilitators of learning through habituation practices. Intellectual-based character formation is implemented through positive daily habits, exemplary behavior, and discussion and question-and-answer methods that encourage students' critical thinking skills. Supporting factors include teachers' exemplary conduct and a religious and conducive school environment. Meanwhile, the main inhibiting factors are students' lack of discipline, negative peer influences outside school, and insufficient supervision from parents and teachers. The study implies that strengthening teachers' educational roles and fostering collaboration among schools, families, and communities are essential for promoting sustainable intellectual and moral character development among students.

Article History:

Received: March 2026; Revised: April 2026; Accepted: May 2026

Please cite this article in APA style as:

Ikrom, A., Rahman, K., & Mashuri, I. (2026). Cultivating Intellectual-Mental Character through Islamic Moral Education: The Strategic Role of Aqidah Akhlak Teachers. *Journal of Educational Management Research*, 5(4), 3849-3863.

INTRODUCTION

Character formation has become one of the most critical concerns in contemporary education because academic achievement alone is insufficient to prepare students for the challenges of modern society. The rapid development of technology, globalization, and digital communication has transformed the way

young people interact, learn, and construct their identities. Consequently, educational institutions are expected not only to develop students' cognitive abilities but also to cultivate moral values, responsibility, integrity, and critical thinking skills. Islamic education plays a strategic role in this process by integrating intellectual development with ethical and spiritual values. Previous studies have emphasized that character education contributes significantly to students' personal growth, social adaptation, and moral awareness (Komalasari & Yakubu, 2023; Irfan & Sain, 2024). Furthermore, Islamic Religious Education provides a foundation for nurturing religious and moral character among learners (Haerudin, 2025; Husein, 2025). Therefore, strengthening character education through Islamic learning remains essential for producing competent and morally responsible future generations.

Despite its importance, character development among adolescents faces numerous challenges in contemporary society. The increasing influence of social media, digital culture, consumerism, and peer pressure often weakens students' moral awareness and behavioral discipline. Many educational institutions continue to prioritize academic performance while paying insufficient attention to students' intellectual and moral character formation. As a result, various issues such as dishonesty, declining respect for teachers, lack of responsibility, and weak critical thinking skills continue to emerge among students. These conditions indicate that character education has not yet achieved its intended outcomes. In Islamic educational settings, the challenge becomes more complex because students are expected to demonstrate both academic excellence and strong moral conduct. Consequently, educators are required to implement effective strategies that integrate intellectual development with character formation. Addressing these challenges is essential because character education directly influences the quality of human resources and the future development of society.

Field phenomena observed in many Islamic educational institutions demonstrate that character education is frequently implemented through moral instruction and religious habituation activities. However, the development of intellectual mentality, including critical thinking, analytical reasoning, self-confidence, and mental resilience, often receives less attention than moral and behavioral aspects. Teachers generally focus on correcting students' behavior and strengthening religious values, while intellectual character development is not systematically integrated into classroom learning. This situation creates an imbalance between moral formation and intellectual growth. In practice, students may demonstrate obedience and discipline yet still experience difficulties in expressing ideas, solving problems critically, and making rational decisions. Such conditions indicate the need for educational approaches that

combine moral values with intellectual capacity development. Therefore, teachers, particularly Aqidah Akhlak teachers, are expected to serve not only as transmitters of religious knowledge but also as facilitators of students' intellectual and character development.

Numerous studies have examined character education from various perspectives within Islamic education. Research has highlighted the role of Islamic Religious Education in strengthening moral values and religious character among students (Alhamuddin & Asikin, 2025; Rohman & Khasanah, 2024). Other studies have focused on integrating character education into school culture and curriculum implementation (Fadilah et al., 2024; Fakhurrozi et al., 2023). Scholars have also explored teacher strategies for character building, emphasizing the importance of exemplary behavior, habituation methods, and religious learning activities (Azhari et al., 2025; Fauzan & Suryana, 2025). Furthermore, research demonstrates that Islamic education contributes significantly to students' psychological, social, and spiritual development (Fristyarini & Raihana, 2025; Irfan & Sain, 2024). These studies collectively confirm the central role of Islamic education in promoting character development. However, most investigations primarily concentrate on religious and moral dimensions while providing limited attention to the integration of intellectual mentality within character formation processes.

Further examination of previous literature reveals several research gaps. Studies concerning Aqidah Akhlak learning generally emphasize moral cultivation, religious values, and behavioral improvement among students (Dharin, 2025; Mahyuni & Tanjung, 2024). Research on the role of Aqidah Akhlak teachers similarly focuses on moral guidance and noble character formation (Jailani et al., 2025; Sayidah & Fatimah, 2025). Meanwhile, investigations addressing character education in the digital era emphasize digital literacy, technological adaptation, and religious values (Nasution et al., 2025; Rahman et al., 2025). Although these studies provide valuable insights, they rarely examine how Aqidah Akhlak teachers simultaneously foster intellectual mentality characterized by critical thinking, rational judgment, mental resilience, and ethical reasoning. Consequently, limited evidence exists regarding the integration of intellectual and moral dimensions within character education. This gap is significant because balanced development of intellectual and moral capacities is increasingly necessary in contemporary educational contexts.

This study offers a novel perspective by conceptualizing character formation as a process that integrates moral values with intellectual mentality. Intellectual-based character is understood not merely as academic intelligence but as the ability to think critically, make responsible decisions, maintain mental stability, and apply ethical principles in daily life. The study emphasizes the

multidimensional role of Aqidah Akhlak teachers as role models, character builders, mentors, facilitators of critical thinking, and educators who respond to contemporary educational challenges. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on moral or religious outcomes, this research explores the interconnected relationship between intellectual development and character formation. This perspective is important because students require both strong moral foundations and intellectual competencies to navigate increasingly complex social realities. Therefore, understanding how teachers contribute to this integrated process is essential for improving the effectiveness of Islamic character education.

Based on these considerations, this study investigates the role of Aqidah Akhlak teachers as educators in fostering intellectual-based character formation and identifies the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting this process. The study argues that effective character formation requires more than moral instruction; it also depends on the cultivation of intellectual mentality through critical reflection, guidance, discussion, and exemplary behavior. Teachers are expected to function as transformative educators who bridge cognitive, affective, and moral dimensions of learning. The research further assumes that supportive school environments, positive teacher role models, and consistent educational practices contribute significantly to successful character development, whereas weak supervision, negative peer influences, and limited student discipline hinder the process. By examining these issues comprehensively, this study contributes to the advancement of Islamic educational practices and provides insights for strengthening character education that integrates moral excellence with intellectual growth.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research approach with a descriptive design. A qualitative descriptive design was selected because it enables researchers to explore social phenomena in their natural settings and gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors. This approach is particularly appropriate for investigating the role of Aqidah Akhlak teachers as educators in fostering students' intellectual-based character development, as it emphasizes the interpretation of meanings and educational practices within their real-life contexts. Qualitative research allows researchers to obtain rich and comprehensive data regarding educational interactions, character-building processes, and the factors influencing their implementation (Bhangu et al., 2023; England, 2021).

The study was conducted at MTs Al-Azhar during the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year, from December 2025 to January 2026. The site was selected because it actively implements character education through Islamic

learning activities and provides a relevant context for examining the role of Aqidah Akhlak teachers in character formation. The researcher served as the primary research instrument and collected data through non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that informants possessed relevant knowledge and experience related to the research focus. Primary data were obtained from interviews and direct observations involving Aqidah Akhlak teachers and students, while secondary data were collected from school documents, institutional profiles, archives, and student behavioral records.

Data analysis followed the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. Data condensation involved selecting, simplifying, and organizing field data to focus on information relevant to the research objectives. The condensed data were then systematically presented through narrative descriptions and thematic categorizations to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn and continuously verified throughout the research process to ensure consistency and accuracy. To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, source triangulation was applied by comparing information obtained from different participants. Furthermore, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability criteria were employed to ensure the validity, reliability, and objectivity of the research findings (Miles et al., 2020; Bhangu et al., 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The Role of Aqidah Akhlak Teachers as Educators in Intellectual-Based Character Formation

The findings indicate that Aqidah Akhlak teachers play a strategic role in fostering students' intellectual-based character development. In Islamic education, teachers are not merely responsible for delivering subject content but also function as educators who guide, mentor, and cultivate students' moral and intellectual capacities. Character formation requires continuous interaction between teachers and students, where values, attitudes, and behaviors are internalized through educational experiences. Previous studies emphasize that Islamic Religious Education teachers significantly contribute to character development by integrating religious values into daily learning activities and educational interactions (Komalasari & Yakubu, 2023; Husein, 2025). Similarly, character education is most effective when teachers actively facilitate moral understanding and behavioral transformation among students (Alhamuddin & Asikin, 2025; Haerudin, 2025).

The role of teachers as educators extends beyond instructional responsibilities and includes the development of students' personality, morality, and intellectual maturity. This finding supports the view that character education should involve cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions simultaneously. Aqidah Akhlak teachers are expected to cultivate students' critical thinking abilities while strengthening their commitment to Islamic values. Such an approach is essential because intellectual-based character formation requires the integration of knowledge, ethical reasoning, and responsible action. Previous studies have highlighted that Islamic education contributes not only to moral development but also to the formation of reflective and responsible individuals capable of addressing contemporary challenges (Irfan & Sain, 2024; Fristyarini & Raihana, 2025).

The study found that Aqidah Akhlak teachers function primarily as role models (*uswatun hasanah*) for students. Teachers demonstrate exemplary behavior through punctuality, discipline, respectful communication, and consistent adherence to Islamic values. Students observe and imitate these behaviors, making teacher conduct an essential component of character formation. This finding is consistent with previous research demonstrating that exemplary methods and teacher modeling significantly influence students' character development and moral behavior (Hakim & Prasetyo, 2025; Jailani et al., 2025). Through continuous exposure to positive examples, students gradually internalize desirable values and transform them into habitual behaviors.

In addition to serving as role models, Aqidah Akhlak teachers act as mentors and guides who provide personal assistance to students facing behavioral or academic challenges. The findings reveal that teachers frequently offer advice, counseling, and motivational support to help students develop self-awareness and responsibility. Such mentoring activities strengthen students' confidence and encourage them to reflect critically on their actions and decisions. This result aligns with studies indicating that effective character education requires close teacher-student relationships and continuous moral guidance (Sayidah & Fatimah, 2025; Sholekah & Fatimah, 2026). Through mentoring, students receive opportunities to improve their behavior while simultaneously developing intellectual and emotional maturity.

The implementation of intellectual-based character formation was observed through various educational practices. Teachers integrated moral values into classroom instruction while encouraging students to participate actively in discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and reflective learning activities. These strategies were designed to stimulate critical thinking and analytical reasoning while reinforcing Islamic ethical principles. The findings support previous studies suggesting that active learning approaches enhance

students' engagement and facilitate the development of both intellectual and moral competencies (Rahmatika et al., 2025; Fauzan & Suryana, 2025). Consequently, character education becomes a dynamic process that combines intellectual growth with moral development.

Furthermore, the study found that character formation was strengthened through religious habituation programs implemented within the school environment. Activities such as congregational prayers, Qur'anic recitation before lessons, greetings, and respectful interactions were regularly practiced to reinforce positive behavior. These routines created a learning environment that encouraged students to apply Islamic values consistently in their daily lives. Previous research has similarly demonstrated that habituation and religious culture significantly contribute to students' character formation and behavioral consistency (Fadilah et al., 2024; Rohman & Khasanah, 2024). Therefore, character development is not limited to formal instruction but is continuously reinforced through school culture and daily practices.

Another important finding is that Aqidah Akhlak teachers increasingly perform their educational roles within the context of the digital era. Teachers attempt to guide students in responding critically to information obtained through digital media while promoting responsible online behavior. This role is particularly important because contemporary students are exposed to various influences that may affect their values and decision-making processes. Research has shown that digital literacy and Islamic values should be integrated to strengthen students' character and resilience in the Society 5.0 era (Nasution et al., 2025; Rahman et al., 2025). Accordingly, teachers must adapt their educational practices to address emerging technological and social challenges.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Aqidah Akhlak teachers play a comprehensive role in intellectual-based character formation by serving as role models, mentors, facilitators, motivators, and moral educators. Their contribution extends beyond knowledge transmission to include the cultivation of critical thinking, ethical awareness, emotional maturity, and spiritual development. Character formation is implemented through exemplary behavior, mentoring, habituation, religious activities, and interactive learning methods that encourage reflective thinking. These findings reinforce the argument that effective Islamic character education requires a balanced integration of intellectual, moral, emotional, and spiritual dimensions to prepare students for the complexities of modern life (Azhari et al., 2025; Sulaiman et al., 2025).

Intellectual-Based Character Formation

The findings reveal that intellectual-based character formation is understood as a process of developing students' personalities through the

integration of intellectual competence and moral values. This concept emphasizes not only cognitive achievement but also the ability to think critically, make rational judgments, and act ethically in various situations. Intellectual-based character encourages students to develop logical reasoning while maintaining moral responsibility in their daily lives. Such an approach is particularly important in contemporary education because students are expected to navigate increasingly complex social and technological environments. Previous studies have demonstrated that character education within Islamic education should integrate intellectual growth with moral and spiritual development to produce well-rounded individuals (Komalasari & Yakubu, 2023; Husein, 2025). Likewise, Islamic Religious Education aims to develop learners who are intellectually capable and morally responsible (Alhamuddin & Asikin, 2025; Haerudin, 2025).

Based on interviews conducted during the study, intellectual-based character was perceived as the ability to combine rational thinking with ethical behavior. Teachers emphasized that intellectual development should not be limited to academic achievement or intelligence quotient (IQ), but should also include the capacity to analyze situations objectively, solve problems wisely, and make decisions grounded in moral principles. This perspective highlights the importance of developing reflective and responsible individuals who continuously seek knowledge and truth. Such findings support previous research indicating that Islamic education promotes not only academic excellence but also critical awareness and ethical responsibility among students (Irfan & Sain, 2024; Fristyarini & Raihana, 2025).

The findings further suggest that intellectual-based character formation involves the development of intellectual virtues that guide students' thinking and behavior. These virtues include curiosity, honesty, responsibility, open-mindedness, and the willingness to evaluate information critically. Students are encouraged to become active learners who question assumptions, seek evidence, and reflect on the consequences of their actions. Such intellectual virtues are essential because they contribute to the formation of responsible citizens capable of making informed decisions. Previous studies have highlighted that Islamic character education should encourage intellectual engagement and reflective thinking rather than focusing solely on behavioral compliance (Rahmawati & Pratama, 2024; Suwito & Anwar, 2024).

Another important finding is that intellectual-based character formation in Islamic education requires a balance between cognitive, emotional, spiritual, and behavioral dimensions. Teachers explained that students should not only understand religious teachings theoretically but should also internalize and apply them in real-life situations. Therefore, intellectual growth is closely linked

with moral awareness and spiritual maturity. This integrated perspective aligns with studies showing that effective Islamic character education fosters holistic development by combining knowledge acquisition with ethical and spiritual cultivation (Hidayatullah & Karim, 2026; Mubarok & Fathurrahman, 2025).

The implementation of intellectual-based character formation was primarily conducted through positive habituation activities within the school environment. Students were encouraged to practice discipline, punctuality, respect, and responsibility through daily routines such as greeting teachers, maintaining classroom cleanliness, participating in congregational prayers, and reading the Qur'an before lessons. These habitual practices gradually strengthened positive behaviors and reinforced character values. Previous studies similarly indicate that habituation is one of the most effective strategies for embedding character values and promoting consistent behavioral development among students (Fadilah et al., 2024; Rohman & Khasanah, 2024).

The findings also demonstrate that exemplary behavior remains a fundamental method for character formation. Teachers consciously modeled positive attitudes and behaviors, including honesty, discipline, responsibility, and respectful communication. Through observation and imitation, students learned how Islamic values should be practiced in everyday life. The effectiveness of role modeling is consistent with previous research emphasizing that teachers' personal conduct significantly influences students' moral and character development (Hakim & Prasetyo, 2025; Jailani et al., 2025). Therefore, teacher behavior serves as an essential educational tool for shaping students' intellectual and moral character.

In addition to habituation and role modeling, teachers employed advice and guidance as important components of character formation. Through regular counseling, motivational conversations, and moral reminders, students were encouraged to reflect on their actions and develop greater self-awareness. These interactions helped students understand the importance of maintaining good character while pursuing academic success. Similar findings have been reported in studies showing that teacher guidance and continuous mentoring contribute significantly to students' moral growth and personal development (Sayidah & Fatimah, 2025; Sholekah & Fatimah, 2026).

The study further found that discussion-based learning and question-and-answer methods played a significant role in fostering intellectual-based character. Through classroom discussions, students were encouraged to express opinions, analyze problems, evaluate different perspectives, and justify their arguments logically. These activities promoted critical thinking while simultaneously teaching students to respect differing viewpoints and engage in constructive dialogue. Previous research has demonstrated that active learning

approaches effectively enhance students' critical thinking skills and strengthen their intellectual engagement in the learning process (Rahmatika et al., 2025; Fauzan & Suryana, 2025).

The integration of discussion and reflective learning methods also contributed to the development of responsibility and intellectual maturity among students. By participating in collaborative problem-solving activities, students learned to communicate effectively, evaluate evidence, and make reasoned decisions. Such experiences strengthened not only cognitive abilities but also social and ethical competencies. These findings support studies emphasizing that intellectual character formation requires learning environments that encourage inquiry, reflection, and meaningful participation (Azhari et al., 2025; Nasution et al., 2025).

Overall, the findings indicate that intellectual-based character formation has produced positive outcomes among students. Many students demonstrated increased discipline, responsibility, politeness, and critical thinking skills in both academic and social contexts. Although some students still require further guidance, the overall implementation shows that integrating intellectual development with character education can effectively support students' holistic growth. These findings suggest that intellectual-based character formation should be continuously integrated into all educational activities to ensure that students achieve academic competence while maintaining strong moral and Islamic values. Such an approach is essential for preparing future generations capable of responding wisely and responsibly to contemporary societal challenges (Sulaiman et al., 2025; Amirudin et al., 2026).

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Intellectual-Based Character Formation

Supporting Factors

The findings indicate that teacher exemplarity is one of the most influential supporting factors in the implementation of intellectual-based character formation. Aqidah Akhlak teachers serve as role models whose attitudes, behaviors, and interactions significantly influence students' character development. Through consistent demonstrations of discipline, responsibility, honesty, and respect, teachers provide concrete examples that students can observe and emulate in their daily lives. The findings reveal that students are more likely to internalize positive values when these values are consistently reflected in the behavior of their teachers. This result supports previous studies emphasizing that teacher modeling remains one of the most effective approaches in Islamic character education because students naturally imitate behaviors demonstrated by respected educators (Hakim & Prasetyo, 2025; Jailani et al., 2025). Therefore, the personal integrity of teachers serves as a fundamental element in shaping students' intellectual and moral character.

Another supporting factor identified in this study is the presence of a religious and conducive school environment. The school culture promotes Islamic values through congregational prayers, Qur'anic recitation activities, adherence to school regulations, and respectful interactions among members of the school community. Such an environment creates a positive atmosphere that encourages students to practice moral values consistently while developing intellectual awareness and responsibility. A supportive educational climate also enhances students' motivation to participate actively in learning activities and character-building programs. Previous research similarly demonstrates that religious school culture and positive educational environments contribute significantly to students' moral development and character formation (Fadilah et al., 2024; Rohman & Khasanah, 2024). Consequently, the school environment functions as an important medium for reinforcing values introduced through classroom instruction.

The findings further reveal that continuous habituation programs and parental support play crucial roles in strengthening intellectual-based character formation. Daily practices such as greeting others respectfully, maintaining discipline, participating in religious activities, and demonstrating responsible behavior gradually become embedded in students' routines. In addition, collaboration between schools and parents enables character values taught at school to be reinforced within the family environment. Parents who provide guidance, supervision, and moral education at home contribute significantly to students' character consistency. Previous studies have highlighted the importance of habituation and family involvement in sustaining character education outcomes and promoting students' holistic development (Agus & Cholil, 2025; Febrianti et al., 2025). Therefore, effective character formation requires synergy between educational institutions and families.

Inhibiting Factors

Despite these positive conditions, several inhibiting factors were identified during the implementation of intellectual-based character formation. One major challenge is the lack of student discipline and limited awareness regarding the importance of character development. Some students continue to demonstrate behaviors such as tardiness, lack of responsibility, low learning motivation, and difficulties in following school regulations. These behaviors hinder the effectiveness of character education programs because students are less likely to internalize positive values when self-discipline is weak. This finding aligns with previous studies indicating that character formation requires students' active commitment and self-regulation to achieve meaningful behavioral change (Komariah & Nihayah, 2023; Muzakki & Nurdin, 2022).

Another significant obstacle is the influence of negative social environments outside the school setting. The findings reveal that some students encounter peer groups and community environments that do not consistently support the values promoted by the school. As a result, students may experience conflicts between the positive behaviors encouraged within the educational environment and the attitudes encountered in their social interactions. Such conditions can reduce the effectiveness of character-building efforts and make it more difficult for students to apply moral values consistently in daily life. Previous research similarly emphasizes that external social influences play a critical role in shaping students' behavior and can either support or undermine character education initiatives (Hidayatullah & Karim, 2026; Mubarok & Fathurrahman, 2025).

The study also identified uncontrolled social media usage and digital exposure as important challenges to intellectual-based character formation. While technology provides access to valuable educational resources, excessive and unregulated use of digital media may negatively affect students' attitudes, communication patterns, and learning behaviors. Teachers reported that some students become less focused on learning activities, demonstrate reduced respect in interpersonal interactions, and imitate inappropriate behaviors encountered online. These findings support previous studies suggesting that the digital era presents both opportunities and risks for character education, requiring educators to integrate digital literacy with moral and religious guidance (Nasution et al., 2025; Rahman et al., 2025). Therefore, effective supervision and digital citizenship education are increasingly necessary within contemporary educational contexts.

A final inhibiting factor concerns insufficient supervision from parents and, in some cases, limited monitoring outside formal learning activities. Character development requires continuous reinforcement across different environments, including school, family, and community settings. When supervision and guidance are inconsistent, students may struggle to maintain positive behaviors and self-discipline. The findings suggest that stronger communication and collaboration between teachers and parents are essential for addressing behavioral challenges and ensuring the sustainability of character education efforts. Overall, the identified inhibiting factors demonstrate that intellectual-based character formation is influenced not only by internal educational practices but also by broader social and technological environments. Consequently, successful character education requires coordinated support from schools, families, and communities to address these challenges effectively (Sholekah & Fatimah, 2026; Sulaiman et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that Aqidah Akhlak teachers play a pivotal role in shaping students' intellectual-based character by serving as role models, mentors, and motivators who integrate moral guidance with critical thinking development through habituation, exemplary behavior, religious activities, discussions, and question-and-answer methods. The research underscores that intellectual-based character formation can effectively enhance students' discipline, responsibility, politeness, and analytical abilities, highlighting the practical and pedagogical value of integrating moral and cognitive development in Islamic education. From a scholarly perspective, the study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence on the dual role of Aqidah Akhlak teachers in fostering both intellectual and moral competencies, thereby addressing a gap in research that often emphasizes moral education alone. However, the study is limited to a single educational context, and future research should expand to multiple institutions, incorporate longitudinal designs, and explore the impact of socio-digital influences on intellectual-based character formation to develop more generalizable and comprehensive educational models.

REFERENCES

- Agus, M., & Cholil. (2025). Child character formation through Islamic religious education. *Ihsanika: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*. <https://doi.org/10.59841/ihsanika.v3i2.2365>
- Alhamuddin, & Asikin, I. (2025). The role of the Islamic religious education curriculum in character development: A study of challenges and educational impact in Indonesia. *Tarlim: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 8(2), 159–170. <https://doi.org/10.32528/tarlim.v8i2.3325>
- Amirudin, A., Muzaki, I., & Nurhayati, S. (2026). Reflective digital pedagogy in Islamic religious education and religious character formation in higher education. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*. <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.25.2.34>
- Azhari, M., Siregar, N., & Harahap, R. (2025). Islamic education teachers' strategies for character building in the digital era. *Fitrah: Journal of Islamic Education*, 6(1), 45–61.
- Dharin, A. (2025). Enhancing character development through Aqidah Akhlak education in Islamic elementary schools: A case study from Central Java. *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan*. <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v17i2.7252>
- Fadilah, S., Nurhayati, E., & Mulyadi, D. (2024). Integration of character education with Islamic religious education in school culture development. *At-Tarbiyat: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 7(2), 112–128.

- Fakhrurrozi, H., Minabari, M., Saguni, F., & Nadirah, S. (2023). Integration of Islamic education curriculum to enhance the social character of vocational high school students. *Ta'dib*, 26(1), 171–182. <https://doi.org/10.31958/jt.v26i1.7237>
- Fauzan, M., & Suryana, A. (2025). Islamic religious education learning strategies in shaping students' religious character. *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Islam*, 11(1), 25–40.
- Febrianti, E., Rahmat, M., Suresman, E., & Haramain, F. B. (2025). Moral formation efforts at Al-Bayyinah Islamic school through da'wah and character education. *Scaffolding: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam dan Multikulturalisme*. <https://doi.org/10.37680/scaffolding.v7i1.6882>
- Fristyarini, A., & Raihana, S. N. (2025). Dynamics of moral and ethical development in children through religious-based education. *Journal of Family Sciences*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.29244/jfs.v10i1.63071>
- Haerudin, D. A. (2025). Religious education in forming students' character. *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*. <https://doi.org/10.30868/ei.v14i01.8132>
- Hakim, L., & Prasetyo, A. (2025). The influence of example and habits methods on Islamic character formation. *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 14(2), 134–149.
- Hidayatullah, M., & Karim, A. (2026). Character education from the perspective of Islamic boarding schools. *Fikroh: Jurnal Pemikiran dan Pendidikan Islam*, 10(1), 77–95.
- Husein, R. (2025). Character building through Islamic religious education. *Al-Murabbi: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*. <https://doi.org/10.62086/al-murabbi.v3i2.1054>
- Irfan, I., & Sain, Z. (2024). The crucial role of Islamic religious education in shaping children's character: Psychological and spiritual review. *Qalamuna: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial, dan Agama*. <https://doi.org/10.37680/qalamuna.v16i1.4902>
- Jailani, Y. Al, Rizki, R. A., Ulfah, N., Syauroh, A. N., Nida, I., & Adabi, E. (2025). Aqidah Akhlak teacher strategies for cultivating noble character in grade IX students at MTs Ar Rahmaniyyah. *Sujana (Education and Learning Review)*. <https://doi.org/10.56943/sujana.v4i2.893>
- Komalasari, M., & Yakubu, A. B. (2023). Implementation of student character formation through Islamic religious education. *At-Tadzkir: Islamic Education Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.59373/attadzkir.v2i1.16>
- Komariah, N., & Nihayah, I. (2023). Improving the personality character of students through learning Islamic religious education. *At-Tadzkir: Islamic Education Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.59373/attadzkir.v2i1.15>

- Mahyuni, S., & Tanjung, E. F. (2024). The implementation of Aqidah Akhlak (Islamic moral and faith) learning in forming the character of students in Madrasah Aliyah Binjai. *Aksaqila International Humanities and Social Sciences (AIHSS) Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.30596/aihss.v3i1.425>
- Mubarok, A., & Fathurrahman, F. (2025). Religious character education based on local wisdom: A systematic review of studies from 2014–2024. *At-Thulab: Jurnal Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*, 9(1), 1–20.
- Muzakki, Z., & Nurdin, N. (2022). Formation of student character in Islamic religious education. *Edukasia: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran*. <https://doi.org/10.62775/edukasia.v3i3.219>
- Nasution, H. S., Basri, H., Batubara, W. W., & Mukhlisin, A. (2025). Islamic education teachers' strategies for character building through digital literacy based Islamic values in the Society 5.0 era. *Fitrah: Journal of Islamic Education*, 6(1), 259–271.
- Rahman, M. A., Abdullah, N., & Yusuf, F. (2025). Islamic character education in the digital age: A study of Indonesian state Islamic universities. *Edureligia: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 9(1), 15–31. <https://doi.org/10.33650/edureligia.v9i3.11905>
- Rahmatika, Z., Asfahani, A., Afriani, G., Saro'i, M., & Muhammadong, M. (2025). Implementation of character education through active learning for Islamic religious education teachers. *At-Tarbawi: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial dan Kebudayaan*. <https://doi.org/10.32505/tarbawi.v11i2.9417>
- Rahmawati, D., & Pratama, Y. (2024). Islamic character education: Research trends based on the Scopus database 2018–2023. *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 13(2), 201–218.
- Rohman, A., & Khasanah, U. (2024). Developing students' religious character through Islamic religious education learning. *Modeling: Jurnal Program Studi PGMI*, 11(1), 58–73.
- Sayidah, A., & Fatimah, M. (2025). The role of Aqidah Akhlak instruction in instilling character values among madrasah students. *Abjadia: International Journal of Education*. <https://doi.org/10.18860/abj.v10i4.37159>
- Sholekah, U. R., & Fatimah, M. (2026). The role of Islamic religious education teachers in forming students' religious character through learning ability and morality. *Abjadia: International Journal of Education*. <https://doi.org/10.18860/abj.v11i1.40510>
- Sulaiman, A., Hidayat, T., & Fauzi, M. (2025). Implementing character education strategies in Islamic educational institutions. *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 14(1), 88–104.
- Suwito, S., & Anwar, K. (2024). Trends in studies on Islamic education pedagogy and character development: A bibliometric review. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 13(1), 1–18.