Islamic Education Teachers' Strategies in Instilling Character Education at MTs Al-Ahsan Bogor

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A B S T R A C T

The rapid development of digital technology has significantly influenced the lives of young people, particularly Generation Z. Social media, as part of the digital lifestyle, brings both positive and negative impacts on the character formation of students. This study aims to explain the strategies implemented by Islamic Education teachers in instilling the values of faith (aqidah), morality (akhlaq), and proper etiquette (adab) among Generation Z students at MTs Al-Ahsan Bogor. The background of this research lies in the increasing negative influence of social media, which potentially threatens the character and spirituality of adolescents. This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection methods consisting of observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that Islamic Education teachers at MTs Al-Ahsan apply the strategy of internalizing faith values through role modeling in attitude and behavior, as well as habituation of adab through practical implementation within the school environment. Furthermore, parental involvement and collaboration with the school play a significant role in supporting students' character development. The consistent and gradual integration of Islamic values has shaped students' personalities to become morally upright, strong in faith, and ethically responsible in using social media. These findings demonstrate that character education based on Islamic values is both relevant and effective in protecting the younger generation from the harmful effects of the digital world.

Abstrak

Perkembangan teknologi digital yang pesat telah memberikan pengaruh signifikan terhadap kehidupan generasi muda, khususnya Generasi Z. Media sosial sebagai bagian dari gaya hidup digital membawa dampak positif sekaligus negatif terhadap pembentukan karakter peserta didik. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan strategi yang diterapkan oleh guru Pendidikan Agama Islam dalam menanamkan nilai-nilai akidah, akhlak, dan adab kepada peserta didik Generasi Z di MTs Al-Ahsan Bogor. Latar belakang penelitian ini adalah semakin maraknya pengaruh negatif media sosial yang berpotensi mengancam karakter dan spiritualitas remaja. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan metode pengumpulan data berupa observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru Pendidikan Agama Islam di MTs Al-Ahsan menerapkan strategi internalisasi nilai akidah melalui keteladanan dalam sikap dan perilaku, serta pembiasaan adab melalui praktik nyata di lingkungan sekolah. Selain itu, keterlibatan orang tua dan kerja sama dengan pihak sekolah juga berperan signifikan dalam mendukung pembentukan karakter siswa. Integrasi nilai-nilai Islam yang dilakukan secara konsisten dan bertahap telah membentuk kepribadian siswa agar berakhlak mulia, memiliki iman yang kuat, serta bertanggung jawab secara etis dalam menggunakan media sosial. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan karakter berbasis nilai-nilai Islam relevan dan efektif untuk membentengi generasi muda dari pengaruh buruk dunia digital.

1. Introduction

The rapid development over the past two decades demonstrates that advances in information and communication technology have brought about significant transformations in various aspects of human life, including the educational sector, which serves as a strategic arena for shaping the nation's character (Saripudin & Komalasari, 2015). These technological advancements have shifted conventional modes of education that were previously dominated by face-to-face and traditional classroom activities into digital-based learning models. This shift not only affects the method of delivering learning materials but also significantly influences the mindset, values, attitudes, and behaviors of students in their daily lives (Carr, 2017). Teaching and learning processes now rely heavily on online platforms, interactive media, and communication technologies that are integrated into the educational system. This reality makes students increasingly accustomed to the digital world, where their interaction with information occurs quickly (Vaccarezza & Niccoli, 2019), widely, and dynamically. However, this transformation also poses serious implications for education. While it provides easier access to knowledge and innovation, it simultaneously challenges educators to maintain moral values and character development. Thus, advances in information and communication technology on the one hand offer broad opportunities for innovative learning, but on the other hand create challenges in maintaining a balance between knowledge acquisition and the cultivation of noble character as the essence of education.

Within the context of Islamic Religious Education, the challenges arising from digitalization become more complex and multidimensional. Islamic education, which fundamentally serves as a primary instrument for shaping the character (Zurqoni, Retnawati, Rahmatullah, Djidu, & Apino, 2020), morality, and spirituality of students, can no longer be perceived merely as a medium for transferring Islamic knowledge on a cognitive level. More importantly, it must play a strategic role as a moral shield that can protect students from the overwhelming flow of global information that is often unfiltered and uncontrollable. Islamic education has a significant role in providing moral and spiritual guidance, making its presence highly relevant in addressing the massive wave of digital information (Lapsley & Woodbury, 2016). This challenge becomes more critical when it is confronted with Generation Z, those born between 1997 and 2012, whose lives are closely tied to the digital ecosystem. This generation has grown up in a fast-paced environment, is accustomed to social media usage, and is nearly inseparable from communication technologies in their everyday activities. Consequently, teachers are required to integrate Islamic values into the digital lifestyles of their students by implementing adaptive, creative, and contextual learning strategies. Therefore, the challenge of Islamic education in the digital era lies not only in methodological aspects of teaching but also in embedding Islamic moral and ethical values that remain relevant to the social realities of Generation Z.

The massive phenomenon of social media usage among youth highlights the growing challenges faced by education, particularly Islamic education (Oguguo et al., 2020). Recent surveys indicate that Indonesia has more than 191 million social media users (Khaola, Musiiwa, & Rambe, 2022), with the majority consisting of young people, predominantly from Generation Z. This generation is not only consumers but also active producers of digital content across popular platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube (C. Lai, 2019). Their intensive activity in the digital sphere makes social media the primary space for shaping identity (Pimdee, Ridhikerd, Moto, Siripongdee, & Bengthong, 2023), values, and even social behaviors (Novianti, 2017). However, excessive social media use without sufficient digital literacy—especially concerning Islamic ethics and spirituality—creates serious risks of value degradation. Negative impacts may include excessive consumerist behavior, the spread of unverified information leading to hoaxes, exposure to pornography, the proliferation of hate speech, and the penetration of foreign ideologies that contradict Islamic values (Wagner, Pindeus, & Ruch, 2021). This situation demonstrates that without strong guidance from religious education, social

media may pose real threats to the quality of students' character and morality (Sivakumar, Jayasingh, & Shaik, 2023). For this reason, digital literacy integrated with Islamic values has become essential in equipping Generation Z to resist the negative consequences of technological development.

This challenge is further exacerbated by the lack of effective guidance provided by both parents and educational institutions, which often leaves students navigating the digital sphere without sufficient control (Bates, 2019). Many parents allow unrestricted access to gadgets and the internet without providing direction, supervision, or ethical guidance. This practice makes children more vulnerable to harmful influences from social media that are inconsistent with Islamic teachings (Taufik, 2020). On the other hand, many schools still adopt conventional one-way teaching models that fail to adapt to the interactive and visual learning styles of the digital generation. Such conditions create a gap between the religious knowledge delivered by teachers and the actual realities students face in their digital lives (Bonnett, 2017). As a result, students often perceive religious education as less relevant to their daily experiences, reducing its effectiveness in character building. Therefore, innovations in strategies of Islamic Religious Education are urgently needed, in which teachers must combine traditional approaches with digital technology while involving parents more actively in accompanying their children. Through such approaches, Islamic education can reassert its role as a central pillar in shaping a generation that is faithful, morally upright, and wise in navigating the challenges of digital globalization.

The professionalism of teachers holds a highly significant role that cannot be overlooked in shaping students' morals and character (Aningsih, Zulela, Neolaka, Iasha, & Setiawan, 2022). A professional teacher is not merely responsible for delivering knowledge but also serves as a role model capable of instilling moral and spiritual values in learners. Students' high learning motivation directly influences the quality of their morals (Dishon & Goodman, 2017), skills, and academic achievements in the future (M. K. Lai et al., 2018). Therefore, Islamic Religious Education teachers bear a dual responsibility: as educators and as moral guides who bring Islamic values into daily educational practices. Along with the progress of time, teachers are also required to transform into facilitators who are adaptive to the needs of the digital generation. Teachers do not only teach theories but also guide students to connect religious teachings with the social realities they face in everyday life, including challenges arising from the use of social media (Komalasari & Saripudin, 2018). In this regard, interactive, contextual, and value-based learning strategies become essential as tools for instilling strong faith, morals, and manners (Roberson, McKinney, Walker, & Coleman, 2018). Through such approaches, Generation Z is expected to possess a solid moral foundation, preserved spirituality, and wisdom in navigating the rapid flow of digital information. Thus, teachers are not only instructors but also agents of change who can guide students toward holistic development, both intellectually and morally.

The main objective of this study is to conduct an in-depth analysis of the strategies employed by Islamic Religious Education teachers in instilling character education values among Generation Z students, particularly in addressing the increasingly complex negative influences of social media. As an inseparable part of young people's lives, social media often brings adverse impacts such as moral degradation, consumerist behavior, and weakened spiritual ties. Therefore, this study seeks to respond to the need for religious education strategies that are relevant to contemporary developments while remaining rooted in the fundamental principles of Islamic values. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the academic literature on the role of teachers in character education in the digital era and serve as a foundation for developing integrative learning models. Practically, the findings of this study may serve as a reference for teachers, schools, and parents to build collaboration in shaping a young generation that is faithful, morally upright, and wise in facing the challenges of modernity. Furthermore, this research is expected to contribute to the development of curricula that are responsive to changing times and to provide concrete strategies for Islamic Religious Education instruction. In this way, Generation Z will not only be proficient in utilizing technology but also

equipped with the spiritual and moral resources needed to face an increasingly competitive global reality.

2. Methods

This research was conducted at MTs Al-Ahsan Bogor using a descriptive qualitative approach. This approach was chosen because it is considered capable of depicting social phenomena in a naturalistic, contextual, and in-depth manner without manipulation from the researcher. The study focused on the strategies employed by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in instilling character education among Generation Z students. The research subjects included PAI teachers, eighth-grade students, and parents who were directly involved in the educational process. The researcher's role in this study was as the primary instrument as well as the main data collector. In practice, the researcher directly interacted with informants through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation of learning activities. Observations were carried out by monitoring both classroom and extracurricular learning activities, while interviews were conducted to explore teachers' experiences, strategies, and challenges in guiding students. Documentation was obtained from school archives, learning records, and student activity outputs relevant to character education. Altogether, these data served as the foundation for comprehensively describing how character education strategies were implemented in the school context.

Data analysis in this study followed the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and inductive conclusion drawing. Data reduction was conducted by selecting, focusing, and simplifying raw data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation so that it aligned with the research objectives. The data were then presented in descriptive narratives, enabling the researcher to identify patterns, relationships, and meanings within the studied phenomena. Conclusions were drawn inductively, beginning from field data and moving toward conceptual findings. To ensure data validity, this study employed triangulation techniques, including source triangulation, technique triangulation, and time triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing data from teachers, students, and parents, while technique triangulation was carried out by cross-checking the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. Meanwhile, time triangulation was used to confirm data consistency through repeated observations and interviews at different times. These efforts were undertaken to ensure that the research findings achieved a high level of credibility, dependability, and confirmability, thereby making them academically and scientifically accountable.

3. Results and Discussion

Results

The role of Islamic Education teachers in shaping students' Islamic character is both a moral and professional obligation that extends beyond the delivery of religious knowledge. Teachers are regarded not only as transmitters of information but also as moral guides and character builders who shape students through their example and daily practices (Hermino & Arifin, 2020). In this context, character education is not effective if limited to theoretical explanations; it requires teachers to embody the values they seek to instill (Birhan, Shiferaw, Amsalu, Tamiru, & Tiruye, 2021). At MTs Al-Ahsan, Islamic Education teachers take on the role of facilitators, mentors, and role models who integrate Islamic values into the entire learning process. Their responsibility extends beyond the classroom to the broader school environment, where they influence students' behavior, attitudes, and social interactions. By presenting themselves as living examples of Islamic ethics, teachers foster credibility and authenticity in their instruction. This method of teaching by example and habituation ensures that Islamic values are internalized rather than superficially memorized. In essence, the teachers' professional integrity and personal conduct become inseparable aspects of effective character education. Through this holistic approach, Islamic Education teachers ensure that character formation becomes a lived experience for students rather than an abstract concept.

In shaping Islamic character, contextual and interactive approaches play an essential role, particularly for Generation Z students who are highly engaged with digital culture and modern social realities. Teachers at MTs Al-Ahsan design their lessons to connect the timeless teachings of Islam with contemporary issues faced by students, such as the influence of social media, peer interactions, and technological challenges. By making learning relevant and relatable, students are more motivated to apply Islamic values in real-life contexts. Interactive learning strategies such as discussions, case studies, and reflective practices are used to strengthen students' moral awareness and decision-making skills. In this model, the teacher is not just a lecturer but a mediator of values who guides students to reflect, analyze, and internalize Islamic principles within their lived experiences. Such an approach helps bridge the gap between religious teachings and the practical realities students face daily. Furthermore, teachers encourage students to critically engage with media and technology while remaining rooted in Islamic values. The adaptability of these methods ensures that Islamic character education remains meaningful, practical, and transformative for young learners. Ultimately, contextualization provides a pathway for Islamic Education teachers to transform abstract values into guiding principles for life.

The cultivation of Islamic character at MTs Al-Ahsan is not confined to classroom instruction but is systematically embedded within the entire school ecosystem. Teachers collaborate with principals, parents, and the wider community to create a supportive environment that nurtures moral, spiritual, and social values. Daily routines such as morning Qur'an recitations, congregational prayers, and student study circles serve as practical exercises in habituating Islamic conduct. Classroom management is also aligned with character-building goals, where discipline, respect, and cooperation are emphasized as core values. Beyond this, teachers adopt mentoring roles, engaging with students in both academic and non-academic settings to provide continuous guidance. Through these practices, students are exposed to an integrated system of values that strengthens their faith (Aqidah), morality (Akhlaq), and proper conduct (Adab). Such strategies enable students to internalize Islamic teachings in their attitudes, speech, and actions, making character development a lived reality. By combining role modeling, habituation, and internalization, Islamic Education teachers ensure that students are prepared to face the challenges of modern life without compromising their identity and values. In this sense, the school environment becomes not only a place of learning but also a training ground for the holistic development of character.

Faith (Aqidah) as the Foundation of Character Education in the Digital Era

Faith (*Aqidah*) in Islam serves as the foundational pillar upon which all aspects of life are built, shaping a person's belief in Allah and guiding their behavior, decisions, and worldview. Within the context of education, strengthening *Aqidah* is not merely about memorizing theological principles but rather about internalizing faith so that it becomes the basis of thought and action. Teachers of Islamic Education at MTs Al-Ahsan Bogor understand that instilling *Aqidah* requires a dynamic, contextual, and applicable approach, especially when dealing with Generation Z, who are deeply immersed in the digital world. This generation encounters endless streams of information through social media platforms (Pang & Wang, 2020), many of which are not aligned with Islamic values. As such, teachers must bridge the gap between timeless Islamic teachings and the rapidly changing digital environment in which students live. By presenting *Aqidah* in ways that connect with their lived realities, teachers ensure that faith does not remain abstract but becomes a guiding principle that regulates students' online and offline behavior. Thus, *Aqidah* education becomes a shield that protects students from harmful influences while simultaneously nurturing a strong sense of identity as Muslims in the modern world.

One of the strategies employed by Islamic Education teachers at MTs Al-Ahsan is linking the concept of *Aqidah* with students' daily digital practices. For example, when teaching about belief in Allah, the teacher goes beyond delivering definitions and textual evidence by encouraging students to reflect on how their social media use aligns with Islamic responsibility (León-Gómez, Gil-Fernández,

& Calderón-Garrido, 2021). Students are invited to analyze the type of content they consume, assess whether it is beneficial or harmful, and evaluate their interactions with others online as a reflection of their faith. Through guided discussions, teachers emphasize that responsible digital behavior is part of fulfilling one's duty to Allah and maintaining accountability for one's actions. This approach encourages self-reflection, critical awareness, and personal responsibility among students. Teachers also assign tasks such as writing reflective journals about social media activities (Boahene, Fang, & Sampong, 2019), which are later evaluated through the lens of Islamic ethics. Such methods encourage students to actively apply Islamic principles to their real-life experiences rather than viewing *Aqidah* as detached from daily practices. By combining theory with lived application, teachers cultivate a deeper and more personal connection to faith that resonates with the challenges students face in the digital era.

In addition to contextual learning, teachers adopt dialogical and reflective methods to strengthen students' understanding of *Aqidah*. This involves engaging them in open discussions about viral phenomena or controversial issues circulating online and connecting these to concepts of monotheism (*Tauhid*), belief in divine decree (*Qadar*), and trust in Allah's wisdom. For instance, when discussing cases of cyberbullying, misinformation, or exposure to inappropriate content, teachers highlight the Islamic perspective that every action is accountable before Allah and that faith should guide ethical decision-making in both virtual and real environments (Peterson, 2020). The teacher's role as a role model also becomes crucial in this process. Students observe how their teacher embodies patience, consistency, and sincerity in daily interactions, which reinforces the values taught in class. This lived example demonstrates that *Aqidah* is not only taught but practiced, making its internalization more authentic and effective. The dialogical process, combined with consistent modeling of values, allows students to see how Islamic faith functions as a compass for navigating moral dilemmas, building resilience against negative influences, and cultivating integrity in the face of societal pressures.

Observations indicate that students who experience this contextualized approach to *Aqidah* begin to exhibit noticeable changes in their digital behavior and attitudes (Suissa, 2015). They become more selective in choosing content, avoiding materials that conflict with Islamic teachings, and show greater awareness of the potential consequences of their online actions. Many students report spending less time passively consuming entertainment and more time engaging in productive activities such as studying, reflecting (Allen & Bull, 2018), or participating in religious practices (Walker, Roberts, & Kristjánsson, 2015). This shift reflects the effectiveness of linking *Aqidah* education with real-life challenges, as it not only deepens students' understanding of faith but also equips them with the tools to apply it in practical (Baehr, 2017), everyday decisions. The strengthening of *Aqidah* through contextual strategies thus proves to be a powerful means of nurturing spiritual resilience, enabling students to withstand the temptations and distractions of the digital world. Ultimately, the holistic integration of belief, reflection, and practice results in students who are not only knowledgeable about faith but also live by it consistently. This outcome demonstrates that character formation through *Aqidah* education is both possible and sustainable when teachers creatively adapt Islamic teachings to the realities of contemporary student life.

Moral Values (Akhlaq) as a Manifestation of Faith

In the context of Islamic education, moral values as a manifestation of faith must be instilled through the exemplary conduct of teachers in their words, attitudes, and actions. When teachers consistently embody Islamic principles in their daily behavior, students naturally find it easier to accept and imitate those values in their own lives. The teacher of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at MTs Al-Ahsan Bogor plays a crucial role not only in delivering theoretical material but also in becoming a living role model whose noble character can be emulated by the learners. For Generation Z, who are often more easily influenced by their environment and the figures they admire, teachers serve as primary sources of moral guidance (Hidayati, Waluyo, Winarni, & Suyitno, 2020). A student observing the patience of a teacher in handling classroom dynamics or the honesty in administrative

dealings may find those qualities more convincing than any theoretical explanation in the textbook (Wright, 2015). In this way (Jeynes, 2019), the cultivation of morality becomes inseparable from character building, where teaching is not limited to the classroom but extends into the overall atmosphere of interaction between teachers and students.

The strategies employed by teachers in instilling moral values are primarily grounded in behavioral modeling, both inside and outside the classroom. Teachers at MTs Al-Ahsan Bogor demonstrate patience, honesty, discipline, and courtesy in every interaction, setting standards that students gradually adopt. For example, when faced with minor violations or conflicts among students, teachers refrain from harsh punishments or reactive measures. Instead, they approach such incidents through dialogue (Diana, Chirzin, Bashori, Suud, & Khairunnisa, 2021), gentle correction, and reinforcement of positive values (Dewia & Alam, 2020). This method not only resolves the immediate issue but also teaches students the importance of handling conflicts with wisdom and respect. As a result, students are more likely to replicate these behaviors in their daily interactions, recognizing that the teacher's calmness and fairness are qualities worth following. This indirect method of teaching morality through action is often more impactful than explicit instruction, since it builds an environment where values are lived rather than merely preached.

In religious instruction, teachers go beyond verbal explanation of virtuous conduct by embodying those values in real-life practices. A teacher who consistently greets students with respect, shows courtesy toward colleagues (Lee, 2016), and speaks with refined manners during classroom discussions provides living evidence of what good moral character entails. Over time, these small but consistent practices become habits that students internalize and reproduce in both offline and online settings (Taufik, 2020). For instance, students who see teachers maintaining decorum in speech are encouraged to mirror that practice when communicating on social media or engaging in digital discussions (Yoo, Yang, & Cho, 2016). Such habituation underscores the principle that morality is not simply memorized as theory but must be repeatedly practiced until it becomes part of one's character. Through consistent modeling, teachers transform moral instruction from abstract lessons into concrete experiences, thereby shaping students' character in a gradual yet enduring manner.

Interviews with students at MTs Al-Ahsan reveal that they admire teachers who display consistency between words and deeds, and they find it easier to internalize values from teachers who practice what they preach. Students expressed that they feel more respected and motivated to follow moral guidance when the teacher demonstrates fairness, patience, and kindness in addressing mistakes rather than resorting to anger. This shows that moral education through example holds strong influence, particularly for Generation Z students who are highly sensitive to discrepancies between theory and practice. Furthermore, the school environment reinforces this strategy by creating an Islamic atmosphere that nurtures respectful communication, encourages apologizing and thanking, and builds a culture of mutual respect (Tohri, Rasyad, Sururuddin, & Istiqlal, 2022). Such practices turn the school into a living laboratory for morality, where teachers function as the central role models. In this holistic system, character education becomes not only an academic goal but also a lived reality, fostering harmony between teachers and students while strengthening the moral identity of the younger generation.

Habituation of Adab as an Islamic Ethical Framework in School and Digital Environments

Adab, as the expression of Islamic ethics in social interaction, represents one of the central pillars of character education in schools and madrasahs. The cultivation of adab cannot be sufficiently achieved through theoretical instruction alone but requires consistent habituation in daily practices that reflect respect, politeness, and spiritual awareness. At MTs Al-Ahsan Bogor, the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers becomes essential in shaping student character through routines that internalize Islamic values. This is manifested in practical forms such as greeting teachers with salam, using polite language, maintaining the cleanliness of the classroom environment, and showing respect to peers. Religious activities also serve as integral components of this habituation process. For

instance, students regularly engage in Qur'anic recitation before lessons, collective supplications, and congregational dhuha prayers. These practices, while appearing as routine religious rituals, are fundamentally educational and aimed at nurturing consistent moral awareness. Such habits gradually embed ethical values into students' daily behavior, ensuring that adab is not merely conceptual knowledge but a lived and embodied practice within the educational setting.

Beyond classroom rituals, teachers extend their guidance to encompass the realm of digital interaction, recognizing that Generation Z students are deeply immersed in online platforms and social media (Lin, Hu, Alias, & Wong, 2020). In this regard, Islamic Religious Education teachers emphasize the importance of digital etiquette by reminding students to maintain politeness when communicating online, to avoid the use of offensive language, and to refrain from spreading unverified information or hate speech. This approach highlights that the teaching of adab must evolve alongside societal transformations, particularly in an era when digital culture heavily influences the construction of identity and morality among youth (Suartama et al., 2020). The school environment as a whole reinforces these lessons by fostering an Islamic culture grounded in role modeling and daily practices. Principals, teachers, and staff consistently demonstrate greetings, smiles, and respectful exchanges, thus making ethical interaction a shared culture across the institution. Through these practices, the values of adab are transmitted not only through explicit lessons but also through the hidden curriculum of daily life, where ethical behavior becomes part of the atmosphere of the school. Such systemic consistency ensures that students internalize Islamic ethics both in physical and virtual spaces.

Findings indicate that the strategy of habituation contributes significantly to the moral and social development of students, particularly in strengthening their awareness of the importance of maintaining respectful speech and behavior. Many students report that they have begun applying Islamic manners within their family settings, such as kissing their parents' hands before leaving for school, speaking politely at home, and refraining from quarrelsome or harsh words. This illustrates that habituation, when carried out repeatedly and within a supportive environment, becomes deeply ingrained in students' personalities. Compared to methods that rely primarily on theoretical transmission, habituation proves to be more effective because it directly engages students in active participation and practice. Moreover, the integration of routine religious practices and interpersonal interactions ensures that character education penetrates the affective and behavioral domains, not only the cognitive (Halimah, Arifin, Yuliariatiningsih, Abdillah, & Sutini, 2020). Thus, the formation of Islamic personality through adab becomes holistic, producing individuals who can embody Islamic values in everyday life. In this sense, the habituation of adab does not stop at school boundaries but extends to familial and social environments, reflecting the comprehensive nature of Islamic ethical education.

Nevertheless, the pervasive influence of social media in the lives of adolescents requires strong collaboration between teachers and parents in supervising and guiding students' behavior (Kim, Wang, & Oh, 2016). At MTs Al-Ahsan Bogor, PAI teachers not only assume responsibility for classroom instruction but also engage in continuous communication with parents to ensure consistent guidance regarding digital use at home. This collaboration is facilitated through regular parent–teacher meetings as well as communication channels such as WhatsApp groups, which function as platforms for sharing student progress, discussing behavioral concerns, and offering educational advice on healthy media practices. In turn, parents actively provide feedback about their children's habits at home, including patterns of internet and social media use (Hosen et al., 2021). This reciprocal communication strengthens the monitoring of students' moral development and fosters coherence between school values and family upbringing. Such collaboration reflects the tripartite model of education that emphasizes the role of school, family, and society in shaping holistic individuals. In practice, it ensures that Islamic manners and ethics are cultivated in both online and offline contexts, preparing students of Generation Z to navigate modern challenges while remaining rooted in Islamic spiritual and moral values.

Discussion

The process of internalizing the values of *aqidah*, *akhlaq*, and *adab* among Generation Z students presents increasingly complex challenges in the contemporary digital age. Teachers of Islamic Education (*PAI*) are confronted with the pervasive and massive influence of social media (Boyle, LaBrie, Froidevaux, & Witkovic, 2016), which often contradicts the Islamic principles they aim to instill in their students. The circulation of digital information without effective filtering exposes students to negative content such as hate speech, implicit pornography, unregulated relationships, and even extremist ideologies that deviate from Islamic teachings (Jacobs & van Jaarsveldt, 2016). These conditions make it evident that students are highly vulnerable to adopting behaviors or ideas inconsistent with Islamic values (Sakti, Endraswara, & Rohman, 2024). Furthermore, the limited classroom time allocated for Islamic Education is perceived as insufficient to comprehensively nurture students' character compared to the overwhelming influence of digital platforms that occupy their attention throughout the day (Suri & Chandra, 2021). This situation confirms the working hypothesis that formal religious education alone is not adequate to shape students' character but requires continuous reinforcement through other learning contexts, including family involvement and community-based programs (Muhtar & Dallyono, 2020). It also resonates with prior studies that emphasize how digital culture has become a determinant factor in shaping youth identity, often conflicting with traditional religious teachings (Brown, McGrath, Bier, Johnson, & Berkowitz, 2023). Thus, the challenge for educators is not only about transmitting knowledge but also creating sustainable strategies that can compete with, and ideally surpass, the influence of digital media in shaping moral consciousness.

In addressing these challenges, collaborative efforts between teachers, parents, and the school community emerge as essential (Zin, Thant, Pwint, & Ogino, 2021). Teachers recognize that their role in shaping students' character cannot stand in isolation, especially when digital exposure outside the classroom is far more dominant than formal education (Jerome & Kisby, 2022). Parental involvement becomes crucial (Yang, Clendennen, & Loukas, 2023), particularly in monitoring and guiding students' interactions with social media, ensuring that digital engagement aligns with Islamic ethical principles. At the same time, Islamic schools such as MTs Al-Ahsan provide systemic reinforcement through religious programs, routine worship practices, and school cultures that emphasize discipline, mutual respect, and *adab*. Nevertheless, students' diverse backgrounds, including socio-economic differences, family parenting styles, and varying levels of digital control at home, significantly influence the effectiveness of value internalization. For instance, students from families with minimal supervision tend to be more vulnerable to absorbing digital culture that contradicts Islamic norms. These findings indicate that adaptive and context-sensitive teaching strategies are required, ones that not only provide theoretical knowledge but also address the lived realities of students in a digitalized environment. Therefore, character education becomes effective only when supported by a holistic ecosystem that integrates teachers, parents, and school policies to consistently reinforce the intended values across multiple aspects of student life.

Islamic Education teachers have thus responded by developing adaptive pedagogical strategies that bridge Islamic teachings with the everyday digital experiences of students. Among the most effective approaches is contextual learning, where lessons on *aqidah*, *akhlaq*, and *adab* are directly related to real-life issues faced by students online. For example, discussions on the ethics of digital communication, the proper way to comment respectfully on social media, and the importance of maintaining an Islamic identity in virtual spaces allow students to perceive religion as relevant and applicable to their daily lives. Teachers also prioritize affective methods by modeling exemplary behavior, adopting open communication styles, and building emotional connections with students, ensuring that Islamic values are not only memorized but internalized into their moral awareness. These strategies highlight the broader implication that effective character education in the digital age

requires more than cognitive transmission of knowledge; it demands emotional engagement, authentic role modeling, and ethical guidance. Furthermore, this study's findings open opportunities for future research on the long-term effectiveness of such strategies, particularly in influencing students' online behavior and their spiritual resilience amid globalized digital culture. Comparative research across different Islamic schools and socio-cultural contexts could provide valuable insights into best practices for integrating Islamic ethical frameworks into digital literacy education, ensuring that Muslim youth are equipped not only with knowledge but also with moral strength to navigate the challenges of modernity.

4. Conclusion

The results of this study reveal that the role of Islamic Education teachers in instilling *aqidah*, *akhlaq*, and *adab* in Generation Z students is both urgent and highly complex, particularly in the context of rapid digital development. Teachers face substantial challenges caused by the widespread influence of social media and the internet, which often conflict with the Islamic values being promoted in the classroom. The findings indicate that exposure to unfiltered digital content makes students vulnerable to negative influences, while limited instructional hours in Islamic Education restrict teachers' ability to comprehensively develop students' character. Nevertheless, the study highlights that Islamic Education teachers at MTs Al-Ahsan have adopted adaptive teaching strategies, such as connecting Islamic teachings with real-life digital practices, discussing online ethics, and promoting Islamic identity in cyberspace. These strategies not only make Islamic values more relevant to students' daily lives but also ensure that moral principles are internalized rather than memorized, positioning character education as a lived experience rather than abstract theory.

Furthermore, the study emphasizes the significance of collaboration between teachers, parents, and schools in creating a holistic framework for character education. Parents play a crucial role in monitoring and guiding their children's engagement with digital platforms, while schools reinforce this guidance by cultivating an Islamic atmosphere through regular religious practices such as collective prayers, Qur'an recitations, and ethical-based school culture. Teachers strengthen this ecosystem by modeling exemplary behavior, maintaining open communication, and building emotional bonds with students, thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice. The integration of these elements demonstrates that effective character formation cannot rely solely on formal classroom learning but requires a systemic approach that aligns the educational environment, family upbringing, and social influences. Such a comprehensive model provides students with a moral compass to navigate the digital world without losing their Islamic identity, highlighting the transformative role of Islamic Education in shaping resilient and ethically grounded individuals.

In terms of implications, this research offers several important directions for practice and future studies. Practically, teachers should continue to innovate by embedding digital literacy within Islamic Education, ensuring that values such as responsibility, respect, and modesty are applied in students' online interactions. Schools are advised to design integrative policies that strengthen partnerships with families, thereby maintaining consistency in students' moral development across different environments. Policymakers may also consider expanding the role of Islamic Education in the curriculum by integrating ethical digital practices to address contemporary challenges more effectively. For future research, longitudinal studies could be conducted to measure the sustained impact of these strategies, while comparative analyses across diverse educational settings could provide broader insights into best practices. In conclusion, this study affirms that Islamic Education, when delivered through adaptive, collaborative, and contextually relevant approaches, has the potential to empower Generation Z students with the spiritual, moral, and social foundations necessary to thrive in the complexities of modern life.

Declarations

Author Contribution Statement

Nuraini contributed to the conception and design of the study and drafted the initial manuscript; Bahrum Subagiya conducted the data analysis and refined the research methodology; and Samsul Basri supervised the overall research process, provided critical revisions, and finalized the manuscript for submission. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declaration of Interests Statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

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