Research Article

Development of Islamic Character Education Model to Overcome Students Moral Decadence at MTSN 1 Bandar Lampung

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Abstract: This study aims to describe the implementation of Islamic character education at MTsN 1 Bandar Lampung and analyze its role in overcoming students' moral decadence. It uses a qualitative descriptive approach with data collected through in-depth interviews with five respondents. The focus of the interviews was on five key aspects: the implementation of character education, the core values instilled, the effectiveness of the program, challenges faced, and suggestions for improvement. The study finds that Islamic character education at MTsN 1 Bandar Lampung is integrated through the habituation of worship, the application of Islamic values-based discipline, teacher examples, the integration of character education materials into the curriculum, and the support of counseling services. The five key character values emphasized are honesty, discipline, responsibility, social care, and politeness. The program is considered quite effective in reducing disciplinary violations and enhancing students' moral awareness. However, the program faces challenges, such as the influence of social media, peer pressure, limited learning time, and insufficient teacher training. These challenges hinder the full potential of the program, but despite these barriers, it has still managed to positively impact the students' moral development. The study concludes that Islamic character education can significantly contribute to addressing moral decadence among students, though continuous efforts to address challenges are necessary to further improve its impact.

Keywords: Character values; Moral decadence; Peer pressure; Student discipline; Teacher training

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of moral decline among Indonesia's young generation today is a serious concern for various parties, both academics, educators, policymakers, and the wider community (Hayatuddin & Hamid, 2024). Deviant behavior by learners shows an alarming trend. Forms of moral decadence that are often reported include brawls between students, bullying both directly and through social media (cyberbullying), cheating habits, excessive consumptive behavior, use of impolite language, and risky behaviors such as drug abuse and promiscuity (Syawaluddin, 2024). This phenomenon not only damages the image of the world of education, but also threatens the quality of Indonesia's human resources in the future.

Empirical data reinforce the urgency of this problem. The Indonesian Child Protec-tion Commission (KPAI) reported that the number of student brawls increased from 12.9% in 2017 to 14% in 2018, indicating an escalation of violence between students in the educational environment (Firmansyah, 2018). The National Narcotics Agency (BNN) re-vealed quite worrying data, namely that as many as 312,000 Indonesian teenagers have been exposed to narcotics (Sari, 2025). Not only that, independent research shows that many teenagers are often tempted to access internet pornography (Sugiharti, 2024). This data reflects a moral crisis that cannot be ignored.

This situation is even more paradoxical when compared to Indonesia's demographic potential. BPS data (2025) shows that around 23% of Indonesia's total population is teenagers, which is theoretically a demographic bonus that has great potential to drive the nation's progress. However, the demographic bonus will only be an advantage if the younger generation has intellectual intelligence that is balanced with moral and spiritual maturity. Without adequate character development, this great potential can actually turn into a serious social burden, triggering an increase in juvenile crime rates, technology abuse, and low work ethic for future generations.

Education has a strategic role in shaping the character of the younger generation. According to Abrori, et al. (2024), the function of education is not only to transfer knowledge (knowledge transformation), but also to instill values (value transformation) that shape the attitudes, behaviors, and personalities of students. Character education is a tan-gible manifestation of this second function. Character education based on Islamic values provides a clear and solid moral framework, which is sourced from the Qur'an and Sunnah, and strengthened by Islamic scientific traditions (Sabrifha, 2025). Values such as honesty (shidq), trust, responsibility, discipline, and social concern are the main pillars in building a generation with good morals.

Theoretically, the concept of character education developed by Lickona (1991) con-tains three main dimensions: knowing the good , loving the good , and doing the good . This concept is in line with the views of classical scholars such as Al-Ghazali, who emphasized the importance of habituating good behavior and controlling lust as the core of character formation (Gifra & Aprison, 2025). Fa'idah, et al., (2024) also emphasized that character is formed from intentions that are manifested in behavior consistently, so that it becomes a habit that is inherent in a person.

Various previous studies have shown the effectiveness of character education inte-grated into school curricula and activities. Ma'arif & Hamid (2018) prove that the integration of character values in all subjects in madrasas can form students who excel academically as well as have noble character. Taulabi & Mustofa (2019) emphasized the importance of the systemic and sustainable involvement of all teachers, parents, and community stakeholders to ensure the success of character education. Meanwhile, the research of Galuh, et al. (2021) highlights the important role of Civic Education subjects in instilling moral and ethical values, which can be strengthened with a faith-based approach.

However, there are research gaps that need to be addressed. Many schools and madrassas have launched character education programs, but their implementation is often ceremonial, not thoroughly integrated in the learning process, and lacks measurable eval-uation (Inayah, et al., 2025; Dakir, 2019). As a result, the internalization of character values in students does not run optimally. At the operational level, teachers often face time con-straints, administrative burdens, and limitations of effective learning methods to internalize these values (Fitriah, 2023). In addition, the influence of the out-of-school environment such as social media, peer groups, and popular culture is often more dominant in shaping student behavior than formal education at school (Saputra, et al., 2023).

In the context of MTsN 1 Bandar Lampung, this challenge is very relevant. As one of the Islamic-based secondary education institutions, MTsN 1 has great potential to instill Islamic values in its students. The school environment is full of religious activities and re-ligious teachings are a strong capital. However, its effectiveness in overcoming deviant behavior of students needs to be studied in depth. Has the Islamic character education strategy implemented been integrated into the curriculum, school culture, and daily habits of students? To what extent does this approach reduce negative behavior and form a virtuous personality? These questions are important to answer in order to formulate an effective and applicable model of Islamic character education.

Based on this background, this study aims to: (1) analyze the implementation of character education based on Islamic values in MTsN 1 Bandar Lampung, and (2) examine its implications in overcoming moral decadence among students. This study uses a quali-tative approach with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation analysis, accompanied by triangulation of techniques, sources, and time to ensure the validity of the data. The findings of this study are expected to provide a theoretical contribution in the form of enrichment of literature on Islamic character edu-cation, as well as practical contributions in the form of implementation recommendations that can be applied in other schools or madrasas that face similar problems. Thus, this research is not only beneficial for the development of education, but also has social sig-nificance in building a young generation that is intelligent, characterful, and ready to face the challenges of the times without losing their moral and spiritual identity.

2. Literature Review
2.1. Islamic Character Education
Islamic character education is a planned effort to form the personality of students to have noble morals based on Islamic values sourced from the Qur'an, Sunnah, and the example of the Prophet PBUH. Al-Ghazali, one of the great scholars, emphasized that morality is not formed instantaneously, but through a process of habituation (ta'dib) and consistent control of lust (Gifra & Aprison, 2025). Thus, Islamic character education is an integration between cognitive teaching, affective habituation, and continuous behavior coaching.

Theoretically, Islamic character education is in line with the concept of general char-acter education put forward by Lickona (1991), namely knowing the good, loving the good, and doing the good. However, Islamic character education is unique because all the values taught are sourced from religious teachings. These values include honesty (shidq), trust, discipline, responsibility, social concern, politeness, and tawadhu (Alfani, et al., 2024). These values are the foundation for the formation of kamil people who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also have spiritual and moral maturity. Therefore, Islamic character education is seen as the most comprehensive approach in preparing a superior and moral generation.

A number of previous studies have confirmed the effectiveness of Islamic character education. Ma'arif and Hamid (2018) found that the integration of character values in the madrasah curriculum is able to form students who excel academically as well as have noble character. Taulabi and Mustofa (2019) show that the character education approach that involves all school stakeholders, parents, and the community is systemically able to sup-press deviant behavior of students. Meanwhile, the research of Husna and Hamid (2025) emphasizes the importance of the hidden curriculum, which is the internalization of values through school habits and culture that are not always written in the formal curriculum. Through habituation of worship, example, curriculum integration, and strengthening counseling, Islamic character education is able to form a generation that is not only knowledgeable, but also has high morality.

2.2 Moral Decadence
Moral decadence is a phenomenon of declining moral and moral qualities characterized by deviating from religious, social, and legal norms (Syarif, 2025). This phenomenon is a serious concern because it concerns the future of the young generation as an asset of the nation. According to Syawaluddin (2024), the moral decadence of adolescents is currently shown by the increase in negative behaviors such as bullying, social media abuse, consumption of pornographic content, and decreased respect for teachers and parents. This behavior not only damages the school environment, but also has a wide impact on society.

The factors that cause students' moral decadence can be categorized into internal and external factors. Internal factors include weak self-control, low religious motivation, and lack of moral awareness in students (Safitri, & Fahmy, 2024). Meanwhile, external factors come from the influence of the family environment, association with peers, and the rapid flow of information from social media and popular culture (Wijayanti & Abdurrahman, 2025). Farid's research (2023) shows that social media has a great influence on adolescents' mindsets and behaviors, so digital literacy is important in efforts to prevent moral decadence.

From the family side, the lack of parental attention in accompanying children also worsens the situation. Many students end up looking for role models outside the home, and often those role models come from social media figures who don't always set a positive

example. This is in line with Bronfenbrenner's developmental ecological theory (Astari, et al., 2025), which emphasizes that microenvironments such as families and peer groups have a significant influence on the moral formation of a child.

The impact of students' moral decadence is very serious, both for individuals and society. For individuals, deviant behavior can damage academic achievement, interfere with mental health, and hinder future achievement (Baharuddin, 2024). For the school environment, moral decadence triggers conflict, indiscipline, and reduces the quality of learning (Insani, 2024). On a broader scale, the moral decadence of adolescents has the potential to damage the social order and reduce the quality of Indonesia's human resources in the future.

3. Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the main data collection technique in the form of in-depth interviews. This approach was chosen because the problems studied are contextual and require a comprehensive understanding from the perspective of education actors at MTsN 1 Bandar Lampung. The research subjects were determined through purposive sampling, which is the deliberate selection of respondents based on their direct involvement and relevance to the focus of the research. The five key re-spondents consisted of the Head of the Madrasah, the Deputy Head of Student Affairs, the Teacher of Islamic Religious Education/Moral Faith, the Guidance and Counseling Teacher, and one student representative. The selection of these five speakers considered the principle of data sufficiency in qualitative research, so as to allow an in-depth exploration of the experiences and views of each respondent.

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner using the same question guide to all respondents to maintain data consistency. The five main questions asked in-clude: (1) how to implement Islamic character education in MTsN 1 Bandar Lampung today; (2) what values are the main focus, and how to instill strategies for students; (3) the extent to which the program is effective in overcoming negative behavior or moral deca-dence; (4) the biggest challenges faced in the implementation of Islamic character education in schools; and (5) suggestions or improvements deemed important for this program to run better in the future. Each interview lasts approximately 30 minutes, is recorded with the respondent's permission, and is equipped with field notes to capture the non-verbal con-text that arises during the interview process. The data from the interview results were then analyzed inducively to find the main themes relevant to the focus of the research.

4. Results and Discussion

Based on in-depth interviews with five respondents, namely Respondent 1 (Head of Madrasah), Respondent 2 (Deputy Head of Curriculum), Respondent 3 (Islamic Religious Education/Akidah Akhlak Teacher), Respondent 4 (Guidance and Counseling Teacher), and Respondent 5 (Student Representative), a comprehensive picture was obtained of the implementation of Islamic character education at MTsN 1 Bandar Lampung. These findings are discussed in five major themes according to the interview question guide.

4.1 Implementation of Islamic Character Education

Respondent 1 explained that Islamic character education at MTsN 1 Bandar Lampung is integrated into the school culture through habituation in learning, example, and civilized projects. Activities such as Dhuha prayers, congregational Zuhur prayers, tadarus before lessons start, flash pesantren programs become routines that form a religious environment. Respondent 2 added that the application of strict discipline and discipline including the appropriate time to enter class, the obligation to dress according to sharia, the provision that it is not allowed to carry mobile phones in the school environment and the use of polite language are one of the pillars of character cultivation. Respondent 3 emphasized the in-tegration of character values into learning, especially the subject of Moral Faith, which contains topics such as trust, discipline, and social care applied with an attitude of caring, civility, and mutual cooperation. Meanwhile, Respondent 4 underlined the importance of the role of counseling guidance in assisting students who face moral problems, with a persuasive approach and individual counseling, counseling guidance teachers do not only play the role of listeners but are more focused as facilitators who can help students find solutions as well as rebuild positive values that can reflect good character. From the per-spective of students, Respondent 5 admitted that school religious activities have a positive influence so that

students become accustomed to it, even though the temptation from the environment outside the school is still strong.

This implementation reflects a character education model that is in accordance with the concept of hidden curriculum, where values are not only taught formally, but also instilled through daily experiences and interactions (Husna & Hamid, 2025). This is in line with the research of Ma'arif & Hamid (2018) which shows that religion-based habituation is effective in instilling character values. However, as Al-Ghazali points out, the process of moral formation takes a long time and consistency, which means long-term success depends heavily on the continuity of the program (Gifra & Aprison, 2025).

4.2 Key Values and Planting Strategies

All respondents agreed that the main focus values were divinity, honesty, discipline, responsibility, social concern, and politeness. Respondent 1 emphasized that these values are instilled through daily school activities and civilization projects that are carried out three times a year. Respondent 2 highlighted the role of strict supervision of student behavior in the school environment. Respondent 3 integrates character material into learning, for example through the discussion of moral cases that are relevant to students' lives and also provides a good example so that it can be an example for students directly. Respondent 4 adopted a value-based counseling approach, in which students were invited to reflect on the consequences of deviant behavior. Respondent 5 assessed that the teacher's example was the most influential factor, because students tended to imitate the behavior seen directly, which was related to respondent 3's statement.

The strategies put forward by the respondents are in accordance with Albert Ban-dura's social learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of modeling in shaping be-havior (Tarsono, et al., 2025). Teacher example is key, because students learn through observation and imitation. Taulabi & Mustofa (2019) also emphasized that effective char-acter education requires a whole school approach, in which all parties in the school are actively involved.

4.3 Effectiveness of the Program in Overcoming Negative Behavior

Respondent 1 reported a significant decrease in the number of code violations over the past two years, especially related to delays and unauthorised absences. Respondent 2 attributed this decline to the strengthening of discipline and habituation of religious activi-ties that are routinely implemented by schools, these efforts are supported by the prohibi-tion of carrying mobile phones that has been implemented since a year ago. Respondent 3 observed that students were more open to talking about moral dilemmas in class, which showed an increase in awareness. Respondent 4, while acknowledging progress, empha-sized that negative behaviors such as the use of foul language still emerge, especially outside of teacher supervision. Respondent 5 admitted that although positive behavior is increasing in schools, the influence of peers and social media remains a big challenge, so the influence of the ban on carrying mobile phones has a significant impact on the school environment.

These findings show that Islamic character education at MTsN 1 Bandar Lampung has a positive impact, although it has not completely overcome all negative behaviors. This is consistent with Al-Ghazali's view in Gifra & Aprison (2025) that character formation is a gradual process influenced by internal (intention and will) and external (environment) factors. These findings also corroborate the study of Galuh, et al., (2021) which showed that the success of character education is highly dependent on environmental support outside of school.

4.4 Challenges in the Implementation of Islamic Character Education

Respondent 1 identified the influence of social media as a major challenge, as unfil-tered access to information can affect students' values. Respondent 2 added that the limited learning time hindered the optimal integration of character material. Respondent 3 high-lighted the lack of teacher training in character education strategies so that sometimes it is still not optimal in its implementation. Respondent 4 emphasized that a less supportive family background is an obstacle, while Respondent 5 revealed that pressure from peer groups often makes it difficult for students to maintain positive behavior because they are still easily influenced by changes in their environment.

The challenges expressed by the respondents reflect the complexity of character education in the digital era. Research by Farid (2023) shows that social media has a great influence on adolescent behavior, so character education strategies need to involve digital literacy. In addition, family involvement is a crucial factor, as stated by Bronfenbrenner in the

theory of developmental ecology, that microenvironments such as family and peers greatly influence the moral development of children (Astari, et al., 2025).

4.5 Suggestions for Improvement

Respondent 1 suggested increasing the intensity of worship habits, integrating character values in all subjects and the application of teachers in becoming good role models through attitudes and words. Respondent 2 emphasized the need for closer co-operation with parents in student development. Respondent 3 proposed teacher training on innovative character learning methods by enriching skills and understanding more in the field of technology. Respondent 4 suggested a preventive counseling program based on Islamic values. Respondent 5 expects more creative coaching activities, such as Islamic outbound or fun group discussions, this kind of approach makes students more enthusiastic and gains a deeper inculcation of moral and religious values.

This suggestion is in line with the whole school reform approach, where the success of character education requires the involvement of all components of the school, parents, and society (Irfan & Usman, 2023). Research by Pranata et al., (2025) emphasizes that sustainability and program innovation are determining factors for the effectiveness of char-acter education. By combining formal, informal, and non-formal approaches, Islamic values can be more easily internalized by students..

5. Conclusion

The results of this study show that the implementation of Islamic character education in MTsN 1 Bandar Lampung has been systematically pursued through the integration of Islamic values into school culture, formal learning, and habituation of positive behavior. The five main values that are the focus are divinity, honesty, discipline, responsibility, social care, and politeness. The cultivation of these values is carried out through the habit of worship such as congregational prayers and tadarus, example from teachers, the application of consistent discipline, the integration of character materials into learning, and rein-forcement through counseling guidance.

Respondents assessed that this program had a positive impact on reducing disci-plinary violations, increasing moral awareness, and forming polite behavior among stu-dents. However, the influence of the environment outside of school, especially social media, popular culture, and peer pressure is still a serious challenge. Other obstacles identified in-clude limited learning time, lack of teacher training related to character education strategies, and lack of family support for some students. This research contributes to the development of Islamic-based character education theory by presenting an implementation model that combines hidden curriculum (habituation and example), formal curriculum (integration in learn-ing), and personal counseling approach. This model reinforces Lickona's (1991) theory of knowing the good, loving the good, and doing the good, with Islamic nuances that emphasize the source of value from the Qur'an and Sunnah. In addition, the results of this study also validate previous findings (Ma'arif & Hamid, 2018; Taulabi & Mustofa, 2019) regarding the effectiveness of habituating religious-based values, but adding the dimension of the chal-lenges of the digital era as an important variable that needs to be anticipated.

These findings can be a reference for schools or madrasas in designing more structured Islamic character education programs. Identified strategies—such as the en-forcement of Islamic values-based discipline, habituation of worship, integration of values in subjects, and reinforcement of counseling—can be adopted or modified according to the local context. This research also underlines the importance of teacher training, inno-vation in learning methods, and increased cooperation with parents so that character values are easier to internalize by students.

Socially, this study reinforces the view that Islamic character education is not only beneficial for increasing positive behavior of students in the school environment, but also has the potential to reduce deviant behavior in society. By forming students who have high moral awareness, the social environment will get a young generation that is not only intel-lectually intelligent, but also noble in character.

Based on the findings and limitations of this research, there are several research opportunities that can be developed. First, further research can be carried out through cross-institutional observational studies, for example in madrassas or schools with dif-ferent socio-cultural backgrounds to see the suitability and variation in the effectiveness of Islamic

character education in various contexts. Second, follow-up research can use quan-titative approaches or mixed methods, by measuring the impact of the program more objectively, such as through positive behavior scores, violation rates, or religious indicators of students before and after the program. Third, given the great influence of technology, further studies are needed that examine the extent to which social media and digital literacy can be an integral part of Islamic character education. Fourth, further research can also explore the role of family, community leaders, and the surrounding environment in in-fluencing the success of Islamic character education. Fifth, future studies can develop character education models that are adaptive to the digital era, namely by integrating Islamic values through technology-based approaches such as interactive learning media, worship habituation applications, and bold discussion platforms with Islamic nuances.

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