



CULTIVATING STUDENT CHARACTER THROUGH ISLAMIC AND MORAL EDUCATION: PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES IN AN INDONESIAN PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Article Info

Received: 02-03-2026

Revised: 26-03-2026

Accepted: 01-04-2026

Keyword

Role, Islamic Religious

Education, Student

Personality.

Abstract

Early personality development is crucial for student learning success, yet guiding young learners toward moral norms remains a complex challenge in primary education. This study aims to investigate the role, pedagogical methods, supporting factors, and inhibiting factors of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in shaping student personality at SDN 5 Buntok. Utilizing a qualitative case study design, data were gathered from school educators and students through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, subsequently evaluated via thematic qualitative analysis techniques. The findings reveal that IRE teachers continuously foster student character by serving as supervisors, mentors, role models, and evaluators using lectures, discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and exemplary behavior. While accessible media facilities (LCD projectors, textbooks, and student workbooks) support instruction, individual student inattentiveness during learning presents the primary barrier. This study underscores the vital synergy between teacher modeling and structured learning media in optimizing character education within primary schools.



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PARTICIPATION

Early childhood and primary education serve as the foundational pillar for national development, where early character formation heavily dictates long-term socio-emotional maturity and academic trajectories. The cultivation of positive behavioral habits during early learning stages establishes a structural framework for individual responsibility, self-regulation, and civic engagement. However, primary educational settings face a critical challenge: a noticeable surge in student behavioral deviations, ranging from classroom disengagement to moral and social violations. Scholarship indicates that such misbehaviors frequently stem from insufficient religious literacy and

weak moral internalization, which directly undermines academic achievement and social integration. [1]

Furthermore, personality development is not an instantaneous occurrence, but rather a long-term process shaped through continuous environmental interactions across family, community, and school settings. [2] While school-based character initiatives are widely recognized as pivotal interventions, a distinct gap remains in empirical literature. Existing research predominantly examines character education in secondary contexts, or focuses broadly on general pedagogy without dissecting how specialized educators operationalize their multifaceted identities, acting simultaneously as knowledge transmitters (*mutsaqqaf*), moral exemplars (*qudwah*), spiritual mentors (*murabbi*), and instructional innovators (*mujaddid al-ma'rifah*).

As crucial determinants of the overall educational system, Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers are tasked with cultivating a supportive learning environment that directly shapes student personality and noble character. [3] Given that the primary duty of an educator is to direct and guide students toward holistic growth. [4] evaluating the targeted instructional strategies and behavioral modeling employed by IRE teachers offers a practical solution to standardizing character education in elementary schooling. This study is motivated by the urgent necessity to explore how frontline religious educators translate abstract ethical doctrines into actionable daily habits within real-world primary school classrooms.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the roles, instructional methods, supporting factors, and operational barriers experienced by IRE teachers in shaping student personality at SDN 5 Buntok. The significance of this study lies in its dual contribution: theoretically, it expands character education literature by contextualizing religious pedagogical roles in primary education; practically, it offers school leaders and policy makers evidence-based strategies for leveraging teacher modeling and instructional media to foster moral resilience in young learners.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research approach with a case study design, operating within a naturalistic setting to systematically investigate social interactions and contextual behaviors. [5] A case study framework was selected to enable an in-depth, holistic examination of the contemporary background, environmental interactions, and real-time practices surrounding character development within a specific educational unit. The research was conducted at SDN 5 Buntok, focusing on primary research subjects selected through purposive sampling, which included Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers directly responsible for moral instruction, supported by school administrators and elementary students to provide a comprehensive observational context.

Data were gathered through three integrated collection techniques to ensure a robust empirical foundation. First, systematic non-participant observations were conducted using structured observation guides to monitor and record daily activities, instructional methods, and the practical implementation of religious and moral values during the classroom learning process. [6] Second, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were administered to key informants using pre-developed protocols, facilitating direct dialogue to explore pedagogical motives, individual perspectives, and operational experiences. [5] Third, document analysis was utilized to evaluate primary administrative records including school historical profiles, geographic data, educator and student demographics, facility inventories, and ongoing activity logs to contextualize the empirical setting.

To establish the trustworthiness, credibility, and validity of the research, source and method triangulation were implemented by cross-verifying interview responses against direct classroom observations and archival records. The collected qualitative data were systematically analyzed through interactive analysis techniques involving three concurrent streams: data condensation (categorizing and abstracting raw field notes), data display (structuring findings into coherent narrative forms), and conclusion drawing or verification to ensure the findings are fully verifiable and methodologically sound for potential replication.

FINDINGS

Empirical data reveal four key dimensions of character cultivation at SDN 5 Buntok. Teacher Roles: Islamic Religious Education (IRE) educators operate as supervisors, mentors, moral exemplars (*uswatun hasanah*), and evaluators issuing rules-based rewards and punishments. Institutional character modeling is further reinforced through co-curricular programs including afternoon congregational prayers (*Salat Ashar*), Quranic recitation (*Tadarus*), scouting (*Pramuka*), flag-raising units (*Paskibra*), sports, and Islamic youth activities (*Rohis*). Instructional Methods: Educators employ interactive and reflective practices specifically lectures, question-and-answer sessions, student-led discussion groups, drill exercises, habituation, and behavioral reinforcement. Supporting Factors: Character development is facilitated by functional instructional media and school infrastructure, including LCD projectors, standard textbooks, and student workbooks (*LKS*). [7] Inhibiting Factors: The primary operational barrier is student inattentiveness during class, exacerbated by fatigue during afternoon scheduling shifts.

DISCUSSION

The empirical findings underscore that effective personality and character development in primary education requires an integrated pedagogical matrix combining multi-role teacher engagement, active learning methodologies, and appropriate media integration. The enactment of IRE teacher roles as supervisors, mentors, and behavioral exemplars aligns directly with Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which posits that children internalize moral values primarily through observing and imitating adult models within their immediate environment. By embedding *uswatun hasanah* across the broader institutional faculty and solidifying it through structured extracurricular activities like *Tadarus* and *Pramuka*, the school builds a continuous moral eco-system that extends learning beyond formal classroom instruction. This holistic approach ensures that abstract moral expectations are consistently reinforced as concrete, observable social norms.

Furthermore, the strategic shift from purely didactic lecture methods toward active student involvement such as student-led discussions and Q&A sessions, represents a critical pedagogical evolution in elementary religious education. Active learning modes encourage primary students to verbalize, debate, and internalize moral principles rather than passively memorize doctrines. This shift cultivates student agency, critical thinking, and social responsibility, addressing the historical criticism that religious instruction often suffers from overly abstract or rote learning models.

The utilization of educational technology, particularly LCD projectors and structured workbooks (*LKS*), acts as a vital cognitive anchor for young learners. In early childhood and elementary pedagogy, visual media and structured tasks reduce cognitive load, sustain visual interest, and make conceptual religious values more tangible and accessible. [7] Adequate instructional media thus serves not merely as a technical aid, but as a crucial pedagogical bridge that sustains active engagement during moral and ethical instruction.

Finally, the identified challenge regarding student inattentiveness particularly during late-day scheduling highlights the physiological and cognitive limits of young learners. Late-day fatigue leads to attentional decay, which directly threatens the absorption of complex character lessons. This operational barrier demonstrates that moral instruction cannot rely solely on curriculum content; it demands adaptive instructional pacing, multi-sensory teaching techniques, and supportive school scheduling. Ultimately, optimizing student character development in primary schools depends on aligning teacher modeling, interactive methodologies, and resource allocation to maintain learner focus and foster deep moral internalization.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers at SDN 5 Buntok shape student personality by executing four interconnected pedagogical roles acting as supervisors, mentors, behavioral role models, and evaluators through structured discipline and rewards. To operationalize these roles, educators employ a combination of interactive and habit-forming instructional strategies, including student-led discussions, question-and-answer sessions, moral modeling, continuous drill exercises, and reflective lectures. This character-building framework is significantly enhanced by instructional infrastructure and learning media such as LCD projectors, standardized textbooks, and student workbooks which sustain visual engagement and clarify abstract ethical concepts.

Conversely, the primary operational barrier stems from internal student behavioral dynamics, specifically inattentiveness and diminished focus during teaching-learning activities. Ultimately, these findings demonstrate that successful character cultivation in primary education requires a balanced synergy between exemplary teacher modeling, active instructional techniques, and functional technological resources to overcome internal learner barriers. Practically, school administrators are advised to continuously support character education by upgrading classroom multimedia facilities and optimizing instructional schedules to mitigate student fatigue. Scientifically, this research enriches early childhood character frameworks by demonstrating how specialized religious pedagogy operates within primary school settings; future studies should build upon these empirical insights by expanding the scope to multi-site comparative designs across diverse institutional contexts to assess the long-term impact of teacher modeling on student moral maturity.

DECLARATION OF AI USE:

During the preparation of this work, the author(s) utilized generative AI technologies (including [insert tool name, e.g., Gemini / ChatGPT]) solely to assist with language translation, structural formatting, and academic style refinement. Following the use of these tools, the author(s) thoroughly reviewed, verified, and edited the text to ensure scientific accuracy and original intent. The author(s) accept full responsibility for the final content, interpretations, and integrity of the published manuscript.

FAUNDING:

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST:

The authors declare no conflict of interest regarding the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

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