



# Islamic Education: Factors that Affect Teachers in Building Student's Islamic Character

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## Article Information

Received: June 30, 2021  
Revised: September 12, 2021  
Accepted: October 12, 2021  
Online: November 15, 2021

## Keywords

*building of akhlaq, supporting factors, Islamic education teacher*

## ABSTRACT

*In school, teachers are the most critical factor and should inculcate moral values among their students. This study seeks to identify the factors that support the strategies of Islamic Education teachers in akhlāq (character) building among students in an Islamic Private Secondary School. The research applied qualitative design with in-depth semi-structured interviews; the data were gathered from five Islamic education teachers to explore the supporting factors of teacher strategies of Islamic education and ensure the strengths and weaknesses of these factors. The teachers were purposively selected based on their experiences in teaching and learning. Moreover, the study revealed that the results identified the main supporting factor in the implementing of teacher strategies in Islamic education in akhlaq building among students was the school discipline, co-curricular activities of Islamic school, student (diversity in learning), and teachers as a role model as well as parental involvement in akhlāq building. The finding also asserted that the social environment is one of the supporting factors in implementing teacher strategies of Islamic education in akhlaq building among students. Based on the findings, the researcher recommends the future study, including examining other participants of the school, namely students, staff, principal of school, and parents, to enrich data from different views.*

## INTRODUCTION

Religious education is known as Islamic education, which is an effort to maintain and develop human nature towards the formation of a whole man (*Insan Kamil*) by the norms of Islam. Islamic education plays a significant role in a Moslem's life, as [Syed Ali Ashraf \(1985:24\)](#) asserted. He defined Islamic education as "an education which trains the sensibility of pupils in such a manner that in their attitudes to life, their actions and decisions and approach to all kinds of knowledge, they are governed by the deeply felt ethical values of Islam." The emphasis of Islamic education is to educate Muslim students on Islamic understanding features and instill the Islamic faith in them ([Hasan Langgulung, 1998](#)). Islamic principles are the way of life prescribed in the Qur'an that goes beyond the acts of worship.

Moreover, religion regulates human relationships with God, man's relationship with man, man's relationship with nature, and man's relationship with himself. It also regulates the balance and harmony in human life, both as individuals and as members of society, to achieve physical and spiritual happiness. That is why Islamic education is an integral part of education as a whole. It preserves all aspects of noble attitudes and values embodied in Islam.

According to [Hilda Sabri Sulisty \(2010\)](#), the decrease in morals, ethics, and cultural values were due to the lack of character education. Therefore, it indicated a need to re-evaluate schools' roles, especially Islamic education teachers, in teaching and learning values and *akhlāq*. One way to overcome the problem of *akhlāq* among students is for an Islamic educated teacher to play a more significant role in forming students' characters so that students are not trapped into more profound moral deterioration. This situation will only change when teachers use appropriate strategies to teach moral values in an education system because teachers are an essential element in education and greatly influence the effectiveness of education. [Hamid \(2007\)](#) found that the teacher's task is not limited to transferring knowledge but involves concern for the students' rounded development, including the personality, character, decision-making capacity, and good behavior. Hence, as the most critical factor in school, teachers should inculcate moral values among their students.

Furthermore, one of the keys to the success of learning activities, especially *akhlāq*, was the provision of creative teacher learning designs when teachers wanted to teach Islamic education. In learning implementation designs, there are various strategies relevant to lesson topics. Hence, a teacher must be able to choose and use appropriate learning strategies according to specified times. Previous research at a private secondary school by [Nursal Effendi \(2013\)](#) also stated that limiting factors in the moral development of students were family environments, the environmental society, and the flow of modern globalization. All of these factors significantly affected the lives of all students.

Many studies on character education have been conducted, such as the importance of teachers' roles, efficacy, belief, and perception in implementing character education ([Lucas, 2009](#)). Moreover, students' interest and awareness of learning Islamic religious education, especially religious activities at school, are supporting factors in the *akhlāq* building among students. Two types of interest have been the primary focus of educational research: situational and individual interest ([Hidi & Renninger, 2006](#)). Meanwhile, to enhance students' interest, these two types of interest need to be considered by educators in teaching. The situational factors were: (1) parents' influence, (2) Islamic education teachers' influence and, (3) the Islamic education curriculum.

On the other hand, individual factors were: (1) initial interest within each individual and (2) learner diversity in learning. More supporting factors are still needed to build the morals of students in schools. Therefore, the present study seeks to identify the factors that support the strategies of Islamic Education teachers in *akhlāq* building among students in an Islamic Private Secondary School.

## METHODS

This research applied a qualitative approach and involved collections of data through interview sessions. A qualitative approach is appropriate in a study that requires a detailed understanding or in a situation that needs exposition ([Yin, 2003](#)). According to [Cresswell \(2009\)](#), qualitative researchers study activities in natural settings and describe the experience using participant perspectives. A case study is the researcher's approach as it provides a detailed perspective of the participants and their experiences in the involvement of the schools. The research applied qualitative design with in-depth semi-structured interviews; the data were gathered from five Islamic education teachers to explore the supporting factors of teacher strategies of Islamic education and ensure the strengths and weaknesses of these factors.

The sample of the study, i.e., the participants, consisted of only teachers. The participants of the study were five teachers of Islamic education in a secondary school. The ages of the chosen teachers in this research ranged between 30 and 45 years, which indicated that they were an average age for a teaching career. The reason for using a small sample size in this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the issue. Principals assisted the selection of participants based on their achievements during the teaching and learning process. According to [Fraenkel and Wallen \(2006\)](#), qualitative researchers mainly engage in purposive sampling, as they feel it yields the best understanding of what they are studying. [Creswell \(2012\)](#) reported that purposive sampling is the best to assist a researcher in discovering, gaining insight, and having an in-depth understanding of a school through a participant's perspective. The participants of this study were purposive sampling because it is the best to assist a researcher to discover, gain insight, and have an in-depth understanding of a school through the perspective of a participant to identify the supporting factors in the implementation of teacher

strategies of Islamic education in *akhlāq* building among students in the private secondary Islamic school.

Moreover, the data gathered was directly from interview questions that have been sent to the secondary school's teachers in Islamic Secondary School who teach Islamic education subjects. Consequently, codes were used for the participants. Meanwhile, the instrument's reliability and validity were tested by an expert, and the data were analyzed by thematic content analysis developed by [Nik Suryani \(2008\)](#).

## RESULTS

In this study, the study participants were five teachers of Islamic education in a secondary school—the chosen teachers in this research based on their teaching career. Based on the interviews data analysis, the researcher generated three themes: school, Parental Involvement, and Social environment. Thus, there were seven sub-themes, namely discipline in a school (rules or regulations), co-curricular Islamic activities in a school, and teachers (*qudwah hasanah* and creative teaching), students (the background of students and achievement), parents as a role model and giving motivation as well as Islamic and a traditional environment. The data can be referred to in Table 1.

**Table 1. Themes and Sub-Themes of the interviews question**

No	Themes	Sub- Themes
1	School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Discipline in a School (Rules or Regulations)</li><li>- Co-curricular Islamic activities in a school (Islamic camping, <i>Halaqah</i>(study circle), Celebration of the Islamic Holy Day, competence events, and developing skilled Islamic students).</li><li>- Teachers (<i>qudwah hasanah</i> and creative teaching)</li><li>- Students (The background of students and achievement)</li></ul>
2	Parental involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Parents as a role model</li><li>- Giving motivation</li></ul>
3	Social environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Islamic and a traditional environment</li></ul>

### **Themes 1: School Factors**

From the interviews, the researcher could identify three factors that influenced the *akhlāq* building of students in school: discipline in schools, co-curricular Islamic activities in a school, and teachers.

#### **Sub-Themes 1: Discipline in Schools**

School is the second environment for *akhlāq* building after the family environment. [Kinggudu Herbet \(2009\)](#) noted that all headteachers have school rules and regulations that govern students' behavior. Therefore, it becomes the duty and responsibility of all teachers, especially teachers of Islamic education, to guide their students' morals, so the goal of Islamic education is achieved. During the session interviews, the researcher found that all teachers agreed that school regulations and discipline positively contributed to students' *akhlāq*. However, they thought that schools should take necessary precautions to reduce or prevent the influence of harmful elements from outside. For example, the respondents said:

*The school should emphasize to students that they should first obey school rules. Schools that have good discipline will produce good students in terms of morals or achievements. As I see, when discipline is maintained, akhlāq building can be carried out easily (R3/DU32).*

Another respondent also supported the argument above. They agreed that when the rules in the school were obeyed, it established a comfortable school environment. In addition to having a

comfortable atmosphere in school, discipline can also shape the superior morality of children because they will be accustomed to obeying rules. He said:

*The most supportive factor in moral character building is the school rules itself, meaning discipline. Discipline should be applied to teachers and students and all the components that exist in a school. So it is because discipline is constructive for teachers in akhlāq building of students. Additionally are also forms a school that is comfortable (R5/DU38).*

### **Sub-Themes 2: Co-Curricular Islamic Activities in Schools**

Co-curricular Islamic activities in schools positively contribute to building *akhlāq* of students. According to [Tamuri \(2007\)](#), teachers can ascertain that all co-curricular activities suit Islamic teachings. From the interviews data analysis, the researcher generated the few co-curricular activities that influenced the *akhlāq* building, such as Islamic camping, *Halaqah* (study circles), a celebration of the Holy Day of Islam, competence events, and developing skilled Islamic students). Four of the respondents agreed that Islamic activities in a school played an essential role in the *akhlāq* building. One of the respondents gave the opinion that:

*The co-curricular activities that this school holds also support the implementation of the akhlāq building of students well because the activities in this school are also Islamic. Of course, science can be our main priority as teachers, but akhlāq building through activities in school is also significant (R2/DU34).*

In addition to this, other respondents stated that school activities could motivate students to have more morals.

*...these school activities will support the process of implementing the morality of students. Moreover, as I mentioned earlier, these school activities greatly help children be better because they will be motivated to compete to be good or 'fastabiquil khairat' (R3/DU32).*

Another respondent stated that this activity could foster the spirit of the students' souls in a better and stronger direction in a fair, honest, and competent way.

*In my opinion, Islamic school activities will help or improve children's souls to move in a better direction. For example, the competitions held in this school which welcomes the month of Ramadan or the Maulid of the Prophet, the games that contain Islamic values will build the soul of a child to have good morals such as adzan competitions, lectures, tilawatil Qur'an, shahmil Qur'an and tahfiz and so forth. They will encourage students to be children who excel and have noble characters (R1/DU34).*

### **Sub-Themes 3: Teachers**

Every teacher is an essential element in school education. The teacher's task is not limited to transferring knowledge but involves concern for the students' rounded development, including the personality, character, decision-making capacity, and good behavior ([Hamid, 2007](#)). Therefore, they have a significant role to play in a student's *akhlāq*. The future of students depends on teachers. Teachers who are intelligent, wise, positive, and sincere with their work will guide students to have a positive attitude toward lessons and their daily lives. From the interviews, all of the respondents claimed that teachers are an essential factor that can support the strategies of Islamic education teachers in the *akhlāq* building of students. For example, one of the respondents stated:

*...and the teacher is also one of the supporting factors that are very influential. A teacher can be a good role model for students. Teachers can practice or realize knowledge daily so that students can follow it... (R2/DU34)*

Moreover, personalities, attitudes, ways of life, even the way of dressing and talking carried out by an educator also has a significant relationship with the process of education and for ongoing guidance of students' morals. Another respondent said:

*A teacher should also be an excellent example for students. They should be wise with giving out advice and wise in their daily lives. It is how they should socialize with the community. Our speech should be well guarded, and our dress should also be Islamic. Therefore, the teacher has become a public figure for his/her students (R5/DU38).*

In addition to being a role model for students, a teacher must also create an exciting atmosphere for learning so that students are interested in learning, especially in learning morals. According to [Mohd & Ahmad \(2012\)](#) states that the characteristics of teaching pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) involve at least three main components: 'knowledge of content,' 'knowledge of teaching strategies, and 'knowledge of understanding students' combined with the values highlighted in Islamic Education. Therefore, teachers should be creative in teaching and use different learning methods and utilize different Media for learning. In addition, educators must improve the morals and personalities of students who come from broken families and provide coaching to students.

*In addition to this, teachers also have to excel in the field of teaching. In the sense that teachers should be creative when teaching children, especially with the use of methods and learning media that can assist them in the akhlāq building of students (R4/DU34).*

Based on the interviews data analysis, it is clear that educators in schools play a significant role in guiding the character and personality of children through the development and learning of Islamic education to students. Moreover, being a role model and creative teacher teaching plays a vital role in affecting the student's *akhlāq*.

#### **Sub-Themes 4: Students**

In *akhlāq* building at schools, students also play an essential role in improving their morals after being taught. When students know how necessary it is to have noble *akhlāq* in their religious lives, they will change by themselves. Based on interviews with the respondents, one of the teachers stated that a factor that supported a child's moral development was the background of a child's family and whether they came from an Islamic family. The statement was:

*The factors that support the implementation of moral coaching are the parents of the students. If the students' background is good, i.e., their parents are educated in an Islamic way, it will make it easier for children to understand morality (R2/DU34).*

Also, it was found that the achievement of children was also able to support a positive change of morality of the students. One of the respondents believed that students who had exemplary achievements and interests would find it easier to learn.

*One of the supporting factors I noticed was the child's achievement. Children who excel academically and have skills are more likely to have good morals because they understand what they learn; they will feel ashamed if they do wrong (R4/DU34).*

The above statement demonstrates that students also play a role in supporting the moral guidance of students in schools with an Islamic backgrounds. Thus, some respondents believe that these two points can support their strategies to teach morals.

#### **Themes 2: Parental Involvement**

Parents have the first and principal responsibility for the guidance of the morality and personality of a child. Parents can nurture and shape the morality and personality of children through their attitudes and ways of life. Parents are subconsciously a form of primary education for the child.

However, attention and affection from parents cannot be separated from efforts to shape the morals and personality of a person. When children are accustomed to good morals at home, they will also have good morals at school or in the community. It is also one of the prominent supporters of teachers' strategy in carrying out moral character building. From the interviews, some respondents believed that parental involvement was one of the supporting strategies that could build students' akhlaq.

### **Sub-Themes 1: Parents as Roles Model**

Parents are very influential in building moral education process, in the way if parent's lead good lifestyle; a child's personality will be good, which is a supporting tool for the guidance of students' morals. Aijaz, as cited in [Zaiton \(2012\)](#), stated that parents' role is vital in the upbringing of their children by the teaching of Islam. Thus, parents must show good examples, primarily supporting their children's learning and the *akhlaq* building at home. In addition to this, parents have to know their children better. One of the respondents said:

*Not just a teacher should be a public figure; parents must also set an example for their children. Furthermore, we must also see the moral development of our children, and if we do not care about their moral changes, then the child will also not care about his character (R5/DU38).*

Another respondent also supported the above statement that the involvement of parents was able to facilitate teachers in a school and help them guide the morality of students. He said:

*A family environment where parents educate children to have good intelligence and spirituality will help teachers in schools in the implementation of *akhlaq* building (R3/DU32).*

### **Sub-Themes 2: Giving Motivation**

From the interviews, the researcher found that the parents could further support their children in the *akhlaq* building by motivating them to learn, especially about the *akhlaq* building. For example, one respondent believed that parents have to motivate their children to study by using different strategies, such as praising them and rewarding them. One of the statements of the respondents was:

*...a good supporting actor for the morality of his son is the ability to provide motivation. Therefore, there should be punishments if a child makes a mistake and rewards for achievements (R5/DU38).*

The statement meant that by motivating their children, parents play a significant role in supporting strategies of Islamic education teachers in the *akhlaq* building of students in schools.

### **Themes 3: Social Environments**

The last factor that supported the strategy of Islamic religious teachers in the guidance of students' morals is their social environment. A community environment cannot be ignored if one wants to form *akhlaq* and nurture the personality of someone. A child who lives in a suitable environment will also grow to be a good individual. Conversely, if the person lives in a broken environment with no morals, he will be affected by the hostile atmosphere. Two of the respondents argued that the community environment significantly affected morals that then became habits in school from the interviews.

#### **Sub-Themes 1: Islamic and Traditional Environments**

In reality, the community environment was not an environment responsible for the development of children's morality. Indeed, it was only an element of influence, but norms and values are sometimes more bindings in nature. Sometimes influences can play a more significant role in developing the religious soul of a child, either positively or negatively. For example, a community environment with solid religious traditions will positively affect the development of the religious spirit of a child. However, a community environment with less religious traditions will hurt the development of the religious soul of a child. One of the respondent's statements is as below:

*Sometimes an environment that follows Islamic traditions or is against Islamic Sharia values can be seen. For example, some people ignore the obligatory prayers at wedding parties, and some still carry out their duties. So, it is very influential on the morality of children. However, if an environment is Islamic or religious, a child is accustomed to doing well (R1/DU32).*

Another respondent also argued that he believed that an environmental influence on the child was helpful to teachers in a school in the formation of *akhlāq*.

*Furthermore, the community environments of students also affected the development of the morals of children. If the child can choose good friends that invite them to do well or motivate each other to learn and have morals in their daily lives, they will get used to doing good things wherever they are (R5/DU38).*

## DISCUSSION

The present study's findings showed three themes for the second objective based on the interviews. The first theme was school, which contained three sub-themes: discipline in schools and co-curricular Islamic activities. This study showed that all the teachers agreed that school regulations and discipline positively contributed to students' *akhlāq*. They thought that schools should take necessary precautions to reduce or prevent the influence of harmful elements from outside. [Goodman \(2006\)](#) noted that schools also need to purify and strengthen the relationship between school objectives and discipline. Offenses against school rules must be distinguished from moral wrongs, such as cheating and forgery. The obscuring of ethical distinctions is highly unhelpful to children's moral development. The second sub-theme which was a supporting factor for the *akhlāq* building of students was co-curricular activities. The present study found that a majority of the teachers believed that Islamic activities in schools played an essential role in the *akhlāq* building of students. The reason for this was that with the Islamic school activities, students felt motivated to foster the spirit of the students' souls in a better and stronger direction fairly and honestly anytime and anywhere. It was consistent with the findings of the study by [Tamuri \(2007\)](#), who argued that co-curricular activities positively contributed to the students' *akhlāq*. In Islamic secondary schools, teachers could ascertain that all co-curricular activities were suitable with Islamic teachings.

Moreover, most teachers' had the point of view that personality, attitudes, ways of life, dress sense, talking, and teaching methods carried out by educators also had a significant relationship with education and guidance on students' morality. It is consistent with a recent study by [Halstead \(2004\)](#) emphasizes that to upbringing the teenager and develop their spiritual and moral awareness, their lives, beliefs, character, and moral integrity are the special responsibility of teachers as crucial as their academic expertise. A teacher's duty was to be a man of learning that delivered knowledge and a good model of values whose morals would be imitated by students. This finding was aligned with [Zaiton and Hishamuddin \(2012\)](#), who argued that teachers played an important role in conveying moral values to students because teachers are the second person a student meets after their parents in their day-to-day lives. Meanwhile, the researcher found that the background of the student's family, student's interest, and the achievement of children were also able to support a positive change of morality of the students. This finding was supported by [Zaiton and Hishamuddin \(2012\)](#) state that students' interest needs to be inculcated in the increasing of Islamic education in the learning process so that the students can study and practice it.

In addition to this, the next theme was about parental involvement. It is easier to teach if students come from an excellent Islamic background. They can also help their children to achieve the aims of Islamic education. According to [Abdullah, Seedee, Alzaidiyeen, Al-Shabatat, Alzeydeen, and Al-Awabdeh. \(2011\)](#), parental support plays a vital role in children's education in a broad range of activities at home, as well as at school. [Menon \(2013\)](#) found that parental support played a significant role in a child's development. Thus, in the present study, most teachers stated that parents played an essential role in the *akhlāq* building.

Moreover, teachers should not stand alone in carrying out increasing students' learning and moral development. Teachers are entitled to invite parents to share roles in providing better education for

students. The last supporting factor was the role of the community. The present study data showed that Islamic environments could play an essential role in the process of akhlāq building of students; it can also negatively affect the development of students' *akhlāq*. This finding was aligned with a previous study by [Tamuri \(2007\)](#), who found that some members of the Muslim society neglected their obligations to develop students' *akhlāq*.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of the present study was to identify the factors that support the strategies of Islamic Education teachers in akhlāq building among students in an Islamic Private Secondary School. The results of the present study identified that the main supporting factor of strategies in Islamic education teachers was the school discipline, co-curricular activities of Islamic school and teachers as role models, and parental involvement in the akhlāq building. Parental involvement in the akhlāq building should be empowering. There should be collaboration from both schools and families, or the concept of school-partnerships should be practiced in school. The teachers within this study proposed strategies to solve their problems to improve implementation strategies in moral coaching among students. The finding also asserted that the social environment is one of the supporting factors in implementing teacher strategies of Islamic education in akhlāq building among students. The implications of the findings can be used to reference other schools that face similar issues on character education. Finally, the researcher provided recommendations for further study, which were provided to enrich the issues surrounding moral values and further contribute to schools.

## *Funding and Conflicts of Interest*

The author declares that there is no funding and conflicts of interest for this research.

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