

# The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Shaping Students' Religious and Responsible Character in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the pivotal role of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in shaping students' religious and responsible character at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Bojongsari District, Indonesia. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were gathered through observation, interviews, and document analysis. The findings reveal that IRE teachers contribute significantly to character development through habituation, role modeling, and the integration of Islamic values into daily school activities. Despite challenges such as limited parental involvement and diverse student backgrounds, IRE teachers remain key agents in fostering students' moral awareness and accountability. This study underscores the importance of collaborative efforts between schools, families, and communities to strengthen character education and recommends further research on sustainable strategies for character formation in primary education.

**Keywords:** Islamic Religious Education, teacher's role, religious character, responsibility, character education, madrasah ibtidaiyah

## INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of technology and globalization in the 21st century has brought significant changes to education systems worldwide. These changes demand not only cognitive competence but also strong moral integrity and social responsibility from future generations. In Indonesia, the implementation of character education has been prioritized to ensure that students develop into intelligent, spiritually grounded, and socially responsible individuals [1], [2].

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) plays a critical role in instilling these values, particularly in primary schools such as Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Religious character reflects a student's consistent adherence to Islamic teachings in both personal and social contexts. Responsibility, as a core character trait, highlights a student's ability to be accountable for their actions and obligations, both at school and in daily life [5]. However, recent studies have reported a decline in students' moral awareness, discipline, and respect in educational settings across Indonesia [6]. This situation underscores the need for effective character-building strategies.

Teachers, especially those entrusted with teaching Islamic values, are regarded as moral agents and role models who can influence students' behavior and attitudes [7]. Their role extends beyond academic instruction to include fostering spiritual, ethical, and social development in students. Yet, despite numerous initiatives to embed character education in schools, challenges remain—particularly in maintaining students' religious practices and responsible behaviors outside the classroom environment.

Previous research has examined various approaches to character education, including the integration of moral values into curricula and the importance of teacher modeling [10], [14]. However, few studies have focused specifically on how IRE teachers in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah navigate the challenges of fostering both religious and

responsible character in diverse socio-cultural contexts. This gap highlights the need to explore the strategies employed by IRE teachers and their impact on student character formation.

This study aims to investigate the role of IRE teachers in shaping students' religious and responsible character in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah within Bojongsari District, Indonesia. It seeks to identify the specific practices and challenges teachers encounter in embedding Islamic values into students' daily lives and to provide insights into how these practices can be strengthened to support holistic character development.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Islamic education is more than the transmission of knowledge; it seeks to shape students' faith, character, and worldview in accordance with Islamic philosophy [8], [9]. This philosophy highlights the holistic purpose of education in Islam, which integrates spiritual, moral, and intellectual development. Islamic Religious Education (IRE), therefore, plays a critical role in embedding these values in students from an early age.

Lickona (1991) conceptualized character education as comprising three interrelated components: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. These dimensions align closely with Islamic teachings on *iman* (faith), *amal* (action), and *akhlak* (ethics), forming the foundation for the development of religious character. Religious character, in this context, refers to consistent behavior guided by Islamic principles, including worship practices, honesty, compassion, and respect for others [14], [15].

IRE teachers serve not only as transmitters of religious knowledge but also as moral exemplars whose behaviors influence students both consciously and unconsciously [11]. Their role extends beyond classroom instruction to include modeling Islamic values in daily school activities and guiding students toward ethical and responsible behaviors [12], [13]. Modeling and habituation are widely recognized strategies in character education, as supported by Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of role models in shaping behavior.

Responsibility, as a character trait, involves students' awareness of and accountability for their duties at school and in the community. Teachers play a vital role in nurturing this trait through consistent reinforcement, assigning leadership roles, and fostering environments that promote accountability [16], [17]. Studies by Wahyuni (2018) and Fitriyah et al. (2020) highlight the significance of teacher-student relationships and parental involvement in supporting character formation.

However, despite growing attention to character education, challenges persist in effectively implementing these programs in primary schools, especially in contexts where family support and community engagement vary significantly [19], [27]. Existing studies have largely focused on general approaches to character education but have not sufficiently examined the specific contributions of IRE teachers in shaping both religious and responsible character within the unique socio-cultural context of Indonesian madrasahs.

This gap underscores the need for research exploring how IRE teachers operationalize their roles and overcome challenges to foster holistic character development in students. The current study addresses this gap by focusing on Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Bojongsari District, where teachers face diverse student backgrounds and varying levels of parental support.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the role of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in fostering students' religious and responsible character. This approach was chosen to provide in-depth insights into teachers' strategies, experiences, and perceptions in the natural context of primary education. The research was conducted at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Hidayatul Athfal, located in Bojongsari District, Depok, Indonesia. The participants consisted of the headmaster, IRE teachers, and selected students from grades four to six. Purposive sampling was applied to ensure that participants directly involved in character education processes were included, allowing for the collection of relevant and meaningful data.

Data were collected through observation, interviews, and document analysis. Observations were carried out during classroom teaching and school-wide religious activities such as congregational prayers, Qur'an recitation, and daily rituals. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with IRE teachers and the school principal to examine their strategies, challenges, and perceptions regarding character formation. Document analysis, which included reviewing lesson plans, school programs, and character education policies, was used to triangulate findings and strengthen data validity.

The data analysis process followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which involved data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. To ensure credibility and trustworthiness, triangulation of methods and data sources was implemented. Member checking was also conducted by sharing preliminary findings with participants to verify accuracy. Ethical considerations were observed by obtaining informed consent from all participants and maintaining confidentiality throughout the research process.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed that Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers played a crucial role in shaping both religious and responsible character in students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Hidayatul Athfal in Bojongsari District. Several observable practices and challenges were identified during the data collection process.

The manifestation of students' religious character was evident in their daily behaviors and participation in religious activities. Observations showed that students consistently greeted teachers with Islamic salutations, recited prayers before and after lessons, and actively took part in congregational prayers and the recitation of asma'ul husna. During Islamic holiday celebrations and school-wide religious events, students demonstrated enthusiasm and involvement, reflecting the success of habituation practices employed by teachers [23], [24]. However, interviews with teachers indicated that not all students were able to sustain these religious practices outside of the school environment, highlighting the critical role of family involvement in reinforcing these values at home [25], [29].

Students' sense of responsibility was also observed in their punctuality, adherence to school rules, and willingness to complete assigned tasks both individually and in groups. Teachers assigned leadership roles to students, such as leading prayers or managing classroom cleanliness, to foster accountability and self-discipline [16], [17]. Nevertheless, students from less supportive family backgrounds tended to exhibit lower levels of responsibility and required more frequent guidance and motivation from teachers [26], [32].

IRE teachers employed multiple strategies to embed religious and moral values in students' lives. Modeling was identified as one of the most effective methods, with teachers serving as role models in their speech, actions, and attitudes [31]. Habituation techniques, such as repetitive practices of Islamic etiquette and daily rituals, reinforced the internalization of values [21]. Integration of Islamic teachings across subjects and activities further strengthened students' understanding and application of these values in various contexts [11], [12].

These findings align with Bandura's social learning theory, which emphasizes the role of observation and imitation in behavior development [31]. Students were found to learn not only from explicit instruction but also from the consistent and authentic example set by their teachers. This supports the argument that teachers act as moral agents who influence students' character formation both directly and indirectly [7].

However, challenges were also identified in implementing character education. Limited parental support, socio-economic disparities, and behavioral inconsistencies among students created obstacles for teachers [19], [27]. Teachers noted that while the school provided a structured environment for character building, reinforcement at home was often lacking. This observation echoes findings from Fitriyah et al. [26], which highlighted the importance of family involvement in supporting character education efforts at school.

From a broader perspective, this study underscores the need for collaboration among teachers, parents, and communities to ensure the sustainability of character education initiatives. The role of IRE teachers is undeniably central, but without complementary support systems, the impact of school-based interventions may remain

limited. These findings contribute to the discourse on holistic character education, as emphasized in Indonesia's National Education System Law No. 20/2003 [2], which calls for the development of students' intellectual, moral, and spiritual capacities.

## CONCLUSION

This study highlights the vital role of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in shaping both the religious and responsible character of students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Bojongsari District. Through modeling, habituation, and the integration of Islamic values into daily school activities, teachers have successfully instilled essential moral values and a sense of accountability in students. These findings emphasize that the role of IRE teachers extends beyond knowledge delivery to include serving as moral agents and role models who influence students' behavior and attitudes both within and beyond the classroom.

However, challenges such as limited parental involvement, socio-economic disparities, and inconsistent student behavior suggest that character formation requires a collaborative effort. Schools, families, and communities must work together to ensure that the values taught in educational settings are reinforced at home and in society. Strengthening school-family partnerships and developing holistic character education programs are essential steps to achieving this goal.

Future research is recommended to examine the long-term impacts of religious character education and to explore comparative studies across different madrasah environments or cultural contexts. Such studies could provide insights into scalable and sustainable strategies for character formation in primary education.

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