



Research Article

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Development of a Character Education-based Curriculum for Islamic Religious Education at the Junior Secondary School Level

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ABSTRACT

Background: Character education has become a critical priority in contemporary education, particularly within Islamic Religious Education at the junior secondary school level, which plays a strategic role in shaping students' moral and spiritual development. However, the integration of character values into the curriculum remains limited and often unsystematic.

Objective: This study aims to analyse the development of a character education-based curriculum for Islamic Religious Education at the junior secondary school level within the framework of the school-based Curriculum. **Method:** This research employs a qualitative approach, using a library research design, to examine relevant literature on character education, Islamic Religious Education, and curriculum development. Data were analysed through critical review and conceptual synthesis. **Results:** The findings indicate that an effective curriculum integrates character values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, and empathy into learning objectives, content, instructional strategies, and assessment practices. Contextual and value-based learning approaches support meaningful internalisation of these values. **Conclusion:** A systematically designed curriculum can strengthen both religious understanding and character formation in a balanced manner.

Contribution: This study provides a conceptual framework for developing a more holistic Islamic Religious Education curriculum that integrates character education comprehensively.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education in the 21st century is expected to produce individuals who are not only academically competent but also possess strong moral character, integrity, and social responsibility (Utamirohmasari, 2024). Schools function as holistic learning environments that integrate cognitive development with affective and moral formation (Fayzullaevna & Ravshanovich, 2025). Within this framework, Islamic religious education at the junior secondary school level holds a strategic role, as it is inherently oriented toward the internalization of religious values, ethical behavior, and character development. The Islamic religious education curriculum should not only transmit religious knowledge but also systematically cultivate values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, tolerance, and empathy through meaningful and contextual learning experiences (Warsah & Istan, 2025).

However, empirical conditions indicate a gap between these ideal expectations and actual practices in schools. The implementation of character education within Islamic religious education remains inconsistent and often limited to normative or theoretical instruction, without being fully integrated into the learning process and students' daily behaviour (Komalasari & Yakubu, 2023). The previous implementation of the school-based Curriculum (KTSP)

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provided schools with flexibility to design contextually relevant curricula, including the integration of character values. Nevertheless, in practice, several challenges persist, including teachers' limited understanding of character education concepts, insufficient integration of character values into instructional materials, time constraints, and the lack of consistent role modelling by educators (Sumar et al., 2024). As a result, character education is often fragmented and has not yet been systematically embedded in the curriculum.

This condition gives rise to a critical research problem: how to design and develop an Islamic religious education curriculum that effectively integrates character education in a systematic, structured, and sustainable manner at the junior secondary school level. The issue is not merely about adding character values to the curriculum, but about how these values can be meaningfully internalized through curriculum design, learning strategies, and assessment practices aligned with character development goals.

Several previous studies have emphasized the importance of character education in improving educational outcomes (Sanjani, 2024; Mawaddah et al., 2025). Research findings indicate that well-implemented character education enhances students' academic achievement, strengthens moral awareness, and reduces deviant behaviour (Harahap, 2025; Anisah, 2023). Other studies highlight that integrating character values into subject matter, including Islamic religious education, can foster students' sense of responsibility, empathy, and social awareness (Kholidah, 2022; Firdaus & Suwendi, 2025). In addition, several scholars have underscored the importance of contextual and value-based learning approaches to ensure that character education is not merely theoretical but also practical and experiential.

Despite these contributions, most previous studies tend to focus on the outcomes of character education or its general implementation, rather than on the systematic development of a curriculum model that explicitly integrates character values within Islamic religious education. Furthermore, limited attention has been given to how curriculum components such as objectives, content, learning strategies, and assessment can be cohesively designed to support character formation. This indicates a clear gap in the literature, particularly in developing a comprehensive and integrative framework for a character-education-based Islamic religious education curriculum at the junior secondary school level.

Based on this gap, this study aims to develop a conceptual framework for a character education-based curriculum in Islamic Religious Education at the junior secondary school level. Specifically, this study seeks to analyze existing curriculum structures, identify relevant character values, and formulate strategies for integrating these values into curriculum design and instructional practices. By doing so, this research is expected to contribute to the enrichment of theoretical perspectives on curriculum development, as well as to provide practical guidance for teachers and policymakers in designing more meaningful, value-oriented, and sustainable educational practices.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative approach, characterised by a natural setting as the direct source of data. In qualitative research, the process is considered more important than the outcome. The analysis is conducted inductively, and meaning is regarded as the most essential aspect of the research process. This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research design. This approach is selected because the study focuses on a conceptual analysis of the development of a character education-based Islamic religious education curriculum, without involving direct field data collection. This research is classified as descriptive qualitative research with a library research design. Qualitative research emphasises an in-depth understanding of phenomena through the analysis of meanings, concepts, and interpretations derived from various scholarly sources. The library research design enables the researcher to examine, compare, and synthesise theories and findings from previous studies relevant to the development of a character-based Islamic religious education curriculum.

2.2 Data Collection

The data sources in this study consist of: 1) Primary data, including books, national and international academic journals, and official documents discussing character education, Islamic religious education curriculum, curriculum policies such as the School-Based Curriculum (KTSP); 2) Secondary data, including supporting materials such as scholarly articles, previous research findings, and other relevant literature.

Data are collected through documentation techniques that involve identifying, reviewing, and analysing relevant literature. This process includes: 1) Identifying credible and relevant sources; 2) Selecting literature aligned

with the research focus; 3) Organising data based on thematic categories; 4) Recording key information related to theories, concepts, and research findings.

2.3 Data Analysis

Data are analysed using a qualitative content analysis approach. The analysis process includes: 1) Data reduction: selecting and simplifying data relevant to the research focus; 2) Data display: organising data into a systematic descriptive narrative; 3) Conclusion drawing: interpreting findings to develop a comprehensive understanding of character-based Islamic religious education curriculum development. The analysis is conducted inductively, meaning that conclusions are drawn from patterns and insights identified in the reviewed literature.

2.4 Data Validity

To ensure data validity, this study applies source triangulation, which involves comparing information from multiple sources such as books, academic journals, and official documents to ensure consistency and reliability.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

This study demonstrates that developing a character education-based Islamic religious education curriculum at the junior secondary school level requires a comprehensive, systematic framework. The findings derived from the literature review are categorised into four key aspects: conceptual foundations, development strategies, integration pathways, and instructional implementation.

First, the conceptual foundation of character-based curriculum development emphasises the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. The Islamic religious education curriculum is not limited to the transmission of religious knowledge; it also aims to shape students' moral character. Character values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, tolerance, and social awareness are essential components that must be embedded within curriculum objectives, content, and learning processes.

Second, the study identifies several strategic approaches to curriculum development, including role modelling, discipline cultivation, habituation, and the creation of a conducive learning environment. These strategies highlight that character education must be implemented through consistent practice and example rather than solely through theoretical instruction.

Third, integrating character education into the Islamic religious education curriculum can be achieved through two primary pathways: intracurricular and extracurricular activities. Intracurricular integration occurs through the incorporation of character values into subjects such as *aqidah*, *akhlaq*, *fiqh*, the Qur'an and Hadith, and Islamic history. Meanwhile, extracurricular activities provide opportunities for students to apply character values in real-life social interactions, thereby reinforcing moral development.

Fourth, the findings indicate that several instructional models are effective in supporting character formation. These include Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), Cooperative Learning, Inquiry Learning, PAKEM (Active, Creative, Effective, and Enjoyable Learning), modelling (*Usah Hasanah*), and affective learning approaches. These models emphasise student engagement, active participation, and the internalisation of values through meaningful learning experiences.

Overall, the results suggest that a character-based Islamic religious education curriculum must be designed holistically, integrating values across all aspects of the educational process to ensure that students not only understand moral principles but also practice them in their daily lives.

Table 1. Summary of Research Findings on Character-Based Islamic Religious Education Curriculum Development

No	Aspect	Key Findings	Description
1	Conceptual Foundations	Integration of learning domains	The Islamic religious education curriculum integrates cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains to ensure balanced student development.
		Character value orientation	Core values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, tolerance, and social care are embedded in curriculum components.
		Alignment with national goals	Curriculum development aligns with national education objectives emphasizing moral and intellectual development.
2	Development Strategies	Role modeling	Teachers act as primary role models in demonstrating moral and religious values.

No	Aspect	Key Findings	Description
3	Integration Pathways	Discipline cultivation	Consistent rule enforcement fosters responsibility and self-regulation.
		Habituation	Repetition of positive behaviors strengthens character formation.
		Conducive environment	A supportive school climate enhances value internalization.
4	Instructional Models	Intracurricular integration	Character values are embedded in Islamic religious education subjects (aqidah, akhlaq, fiqh, Qur'an and Hadith, Islamic history).
		Extracurricular integration	Activities outside the classroom support social, emotional, and moral development.
4	Instructional Models	Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL)	Connects learning content to real-life situations for meaningful understanding.
		Cooperative Learning	Promotes teamwork, respect, and shared responsibility.
		Inquiry Learning	Encourages critical thinking and independent learning.
		PAKEM	Enhances active, creative, effective, and enjoyable learning experiences.
		Modeling (Uswah Hasanah)	Reinforces character through exemplary behavior.
		Affective Learning	Focuses on attitude formation and emotional engagement.

Table 1 indicates that the development of a character education-based Islamic religious education curriculum is a holistic process involving conceptual, strategic, and practical dimensions. The integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains demonstrates that character formation must be embedded within all aspects of learning rather than treated as an additional component. The identified strategies, such as role modelling, habituation, discipline, and the creation of a supportive environment, highlight that character education requires consistent practice and reinforcement in everyday school life. Furthermore, integrating intracurricular and extracurricular activities ensures that character values are experienced both academically and socially. At the same time, the use of student-centred instructional models strengthens value internalisation through active engagement. Overall, the findings confirm that effective character-based curriculum development depends on systematic integration, practical application, and a supportive educational environment.

Table 2. Character Values and Their Integration in Islamic Religious Education Subjects

No	Islamic Religious Education Subject Area	Integrated Character Values	Implementation Focus
1	Aqidah	Honesty, responsibility	Strengthening faith and moral accountability
2	Akhlaq	Social care, cooperation	Building ethical behavior in social interactions
3	Qur'an and Hadith	Religiosity, tolerance	Internalizing religious teachings and respect for differences
4	Fiqh	Discipline, consistency	Practicing rules in daily worship and life
5	Islamic History	Nationalism, appreciation	Learning from exemplary figures and historical values

Table 2 shows that character values are systematically integrated into each component of the Islamic religious education curriculum, with each subject area contributing to specific aspects of students' moral development. Aqidah emphasises honesty and responsibility as foundational values, while akhlaq focuses on social care and cooperation, reflecting the importance of interpersonal ethics. The Qur'an and Hadith component promotes religiosity and tolerance, encouraging students to apply religious teachings in ways that respect diversity. Fiqh strengthens discipline and consistency by applying rules in daily life, linking knowledge with action. Meanwhile, Islamic history fosters nationalism and appreciation by presenting exemplary figures as moral references. This structured integration demonstrates that character education in Islamic religious education is comprehensive and multidimensional, ensuring that students develop not only religious understanding but also consistent ethical behaviour.

3.2 Discussion

a) The Concept of Character Education Curriculum Development

Development derives from a root meaning "to grow" or "to become more refined." In the educational context, development refers to a deliberate, systematic, and continuous effort aimed at achieving more optimal outcomes

than before. It is a purposeful process that involves improvement, adjustment, and innovation in response to changing educational needs and societal demands. Therefore, curriculum development can be understood as a conscious effort to design, refine, and perfect educational frameworks so that they remain relevant, effective, and aligned with predetermined goals. This process includes evaluating existing curricula, identifying gaps, and making strategic improvements to enhance the overall quality of education.

According to educational scholars, a curriculum is an educational program provided by schools for students (Aydin et al., 2017). Through well-structured programs, students engage in a range of learning experiences that support their intellectual, emotional, social, and moral development. More comprehensively, a curriculum is a systematic set of plans that includes objectives, core content, instructional materials, methods, and learning strategies that guide the teaching and learning process (Bahadir & Tuncer, 2020). In this sense, the curriculum serves not only as a technical guideline but also as a strategic framework that determines the direction and quality of education. It shapes what is taught, how it is delivered, and how learning outcomes are assessed, making it a central element in achieving educational success.

In the context of Islamic Religious Education, curriculum development is directed toward forming individuals who are faithful, pious, and possess *tafaqquh fiddin*, or a deep understanding of religion (Rabbani et al., 2024). This development must consider students' developmental stages to ensure that learning is appropriate and meaningful. At the same time, it should respond to societal needs, national education goals, and the advancement of science and technology, while remaining grounded in Islamic teachings. The concept of character in Islam is closely related to *akhlak*, which refers to habitual good conduct that emerges from inner moral awareness (Tambak et al., 2021). As explained by Al Ghazali, true character reflects behaviour that originates from a purified heart. Therefore, character-based curriculum development in Islamic education involves integrating moral values into all aspects of the curriculum so that students not only understand religious teachings but also practice them in their daily lives.

Islamic character education emphasises the formation of attitudes and behaviours that enable individuals to contribute positively to themselves and society (Komalasari et al., 2025). The relationship between individuals and society in Islam is reciprocal and guided by ethical principles that promote harmony, responsibility, and justice. To support this process, curriculum development must incorporate effective educational strategies, such as role modelling, discipline cultivation, habit formation, and the creation of a supportive learning environment. These strategies ensure that character education is not merely theoretical but is consistently practised and reinforced in everyday school life. As a result, the curriculum becomes a comprehensive tool for developing individuals who are morally grounded, socially responsible, and capable of responding to contemporary challenges.

b) Strategies for Developing a Character-Based Curriculum

Human beings are created with diverse potentials, encompassing intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions that must be nurtured and developed in a balanced manner. These potentials enable individuals to fulfil their role as stewards of the earth, carrying responsibilities not only toward themselves but also toward society and the environment. In this context, education serves as a vital process for actualising these inherent capacities, ensuring that individuals grow into well-rounded and responsible human beings (Aithal & Srinivasan, 2024). Therefore, character formation becomes a fundamental aspect of education, shaping how individuals think, behave, and interact with others (Maccarini, 2016). Without strong character development, intellectual advancement alone may not yield positive contributions, underscoring the essential role of character education in achieving the true purpose of education.

Islamic teachings place strong emphasis on moral refinement as a central goal of human development (Sholichah et al., 2025). The Prophet Muhammad stated in well-known hadith that he was sent to perfect noble character, highlighting the significance of ethical conduct in Islam. This perspective positions character education as a core component of Islamic education, where the cultivation of virtues such as honesty, responsibility, compassion, and integrity becomes a primary objective. Character education in Islam is not limited to theoretical instruction but involves the internalisation of values that guide behaviour in daily life (Munif, 2025). Through this process, individuals are expected to develop a strong moral compass that enables them to contribute positively and constructively to society, fostering social harmony and upholding ethical principles in all aspects of life.

Several strategic approaches can be implemented in character-based curriculum development: 1) Role Modelling. Exemplary behaviour is the most powerful educational method. Teachers and parents serve as living examples whose actions reflect moral and religious principles. Without authentic role modelling, moral instruction risks remaining theoretical rather than transformative; 2) Cultivating Discipline. Discipline represents conscious obedience to established rules and responsibilities. Through consistent application of rules within the school environment,

students internalise values such as responsibility and integrity; 3) Habituation. Repeated positive actions gradually form stable character traits. A supportive environment that consistently reinforces good behaviour fosters long-term moral development; 4) Creating a Conducive Environment. A positive school climate encourages the formation of ethical values. All individuals within the educational environment must collectively support character-building efforts.

c) Pathways for Developing the Islamic Religious Education Curriculum to Strengthen Character

Character reinforcement in Islamic religious education can be implemented through two primary pathways:

1) Integration Through Subject Instruction

Character education is embedded within classroom instruction and incorporated into lesson plans. Teachers integrate character values into learning objectives and activities. In Islamic religious education subjects, this integration includes: 1) Aqidah (Islamic Creed): Emphasises honesty and responsibility; 2) Akhlaq (Morality): Promotes cooperation and social care; 3) Qur'an and Hadith: Strengthens religiosity and tolerance; 4) Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence): Develops discipline and creativity; 5) Islamic Cultural History: Cultivates nationalism, patriotism, and peace-loving attitudes.

Honesty involves openness and truthfulness without exaggeration. Responsibility reflects accountability for one's actions. Cooperation (gotong royong) signifies collaborative effort. Religiosity refers to adherence to faith-based principles. Tolerance denotes respect for differences. Discipline is voluntary compliance with established rules, while creativity involves generating new ideas or works.

Through systematic integration, character education becomes an inseparable component of instructional practice rather than an additional subject.

2) Integration Through Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular programs provide additional opportunities for students to develop knowledge and skills beyond classroom instruction. These activities serve four main functions: 1) Developmental Function: Enhancing students' talents, interests, and creativity; 2) Social Function: Strengthening social responsibility and cooperation; 3) Recreational Function: Creating a joyful and supportive atmosphere that complements academic development; 4) Career Preparation Function: Preparing students for future professional pathways.

Through both curricular and extracurricular pathways, Islamic religious education curriculum development systematically reinforces character formation, ensuring that moral education is embedded across the entire educational experience.

d) Learning Activities That Foster Character Development in Islamic Religious Education at the Secondary School Level

To internalize character values in students' daily lives, both inside and outside school, Islamic religious education learning activities must be intentionally designed. Effective and efficient classroom practices play a crucial role in ensuring that character values are not merely understood cognitively but also practised consistently. The following learning models are considered effective in strengthening character formation at the secondary school level.

1) Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL)

Contextual learning connects instructional themes or materials to students' real-life experiences. Basic Competencies should be linked to actual and relevant issues encountered by students (Aydin-Ceran, 2021). This approach enables students to directly experience what they learn, thereby increasing motivation and encouraging practical application. For example, when teaching *aqidah* (faith) on belief in the revealed scriptures, students may be invited to examine the Qur'an directly, discuss its content, and gradually practice reading and applying its teachings. When teaching *fiqh* on *thaharah* (purification), students can practice proper cleansing procedures, ablution (*wudu*), and ritual bathing. They are also guided to understand the health and moral benefits of cleanliness. Through contextual learning, teachers can more easily encourage attitudes that reflect honesty, responsibility, discipline, and religious awareness in accordance with the subject matter.

2) Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning emphasizes collaboration among students. Various models may be applied, such as group discussions, class discussions, Team Game Tournament (TGT), Jigsaw, and Learning Together (Nofriansyah et al., 2024). For instance, when studying the history of Muhammad, students may work in groups to explore different phases of his life. Within a limited time, they can gather comprehensive information while practising teamwork. This

model allows teachers to assess not only academic understanding but also character values such as critical thinking, curiosity, respectfulness, democratic attitudes, and cooperation. Students are also encouraged to emulate the Prophet's noble qualities, including honesty, patience, intelligence, compassion, and resilience.

3) Inquiry Learning

Inquiry learning is designed to enable students to discover knowledge or concepts independently through observation and analysis of phenomena (Pedaste et al., 2015). This model nurtures perseverance, intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, and a love of knowledge. Although not all competencies in Islamic religious education can be achieved through inquiry methods, topics related to *aqidah*, *muamalah* (social transactions), and Islamic civilization history are particularly suitable. By investigating real-life applications or historical developments, students actively construct understanding while strengthening their character values.

4) PAKEM Model (Active, Creative, Effective, and Enjoyable Learning)

The PAKEM approach emphasizes active student participation and enjoyable learning experiences. Instruction is designed to stimulate creativity and engagement rather than relying solely on lectures (Malau et al., 2023). While explanation remains necessary in certain contexts, students should be encouraged to participate actively through discussion, presentation, demonstration, or media-based activities. For example, in learning the Qur'an, students may practice recitation directly using supportive media such as audiovisual tools. Teachers monitor and guide students to ensure that learning objectives are achieved effectively. This model fosters creativity, confidence, discipline, and enthusiasm for learning.

5) Modelling (Exemplary Conduct)

Modelling, or *uswah hasanah* (good example), is one of the most effective strategies for character formation in Islamic religious education (Shanti & Shohib, 2026). Teachers serve as primary role models in demonstrating targeted character traits such as religiosity, honesty, intelligence, resilience, social concern, and democratic attitudes (Panjaitan & Sihombing, 2025). In daily classroom and school activities, teachers must consistently demonstrate integrity, responsibility, fairness, and compassion. Students learn not only from instruction but from observing authentic behaviour. Teachers may also introduce exemplary figures to inspire students. For honesty and moral integrity, the example of Muhammad is central. For intellectual achievement and dedication to national development, teachers may highlight B. J. Habibie, known for his engineering expertise and leadership. Through such examples, students connect moral values with real-life achievements.

6) Affective Learning

Affective learning emphasizes the development of attitudes and values as primary learning outcomes. Students are encouraged to engage with learning resources in ways that foster emotional awareness and moral sensitivity (Kuo et al., 2024). In Islamic religious education, for example, students may be guided to reflect on the blessings they receive, such as health, intellect, and family, and to develop a sense of gratitude toward God. In certain contexts, the formation of attitudes becomes the central objective of instruction, such as in anti-drug campaigns or programs aimed at strengthening moral awareness. Affective learning ensures that character education remains central to the educational process. By integrating cognitive understanding with emotional engagement, Islamic religious education becomes a comprehensive effort to cultivate individuals who are morally grounded, socially responsible, and spiritually aware.

e) Islamic Religious Education Materials in Schools as a Means of Character Formation

Education functions as a powerful agent of change in shaping children's character. Within this process, Islamic religious education holds a central role. However, one persistent challenge in schools is that Islamic religious education is often delivered solely as theoretical knowledge, with little meaningful application in students' daily lives. As a result, its essential function in cultivating noble character is not fully realized.

A prevailing perception that Islamic religious education is not a core determinant of graduation standards has also influenced the depth of its instruction (Handrianto et al., 2025). In many cases, Islamic religious education is treated as a supplementary subject, allocated limited instructional time, commonly two hours per week and assessed primarily through written examinations. Such practices risk reducing religious education to mere cognitive mastery, neglecting its moral and behavioural dimensions. This instructional pattern requires transformation. Teachers, as the primary drivers of learning success, must recognize that responsibility for Islamic religious education extends

beyond cognitive achievement. Equally important is fostering students' awareness that religious education is a fundamental personal need. Students should be encouraged to internalize and practice the religious knowledge they acquire in their everyday conduct.

Creativity in instructional delivery is therefore essential. Islamic religious education should not be confined to classroom instruction but should also extend to extracurricular activities and the cultivation of a school environment that reflects religious values (Sukandar, 2025). A religious school climate characterized by routine worship practices, moral discipline, and mutual respect ensures that character formation is not limited by formal lesson hours.

The principal objective of Islamic religious education learning is the development of students' personality, reflected in their behaviour and mindset in daily life. Consequently, responsibility for its success does not rest solely on Islamic religious education teachers. It requires collaboration among the entire school community, society, and especially parents. Schools must coordinate and communicate character-based educational patterns with these stakeholders to create a supportive and consistent moral environment.

The effectiveness of Islamic religious education learning is also influenced by the instructional methods employed. Abdullah Nasih Ulwan proposed an influential framework for moral education consisting of: 1) Education through role modelling; 2) Education through habituation; 3) Education through advice; 4) Education through attentive supervision; 5) Education through appropriate discipline or corrective measures.

Moral and personality development cannot be achieved solely through theoretical instruction; it requires consistent behavioural practice. After demonstrating exemplary conduct, teachers must encourage students to apply good behaviour in daily interactions. In this regard, teachers serve not only as evaluators but also as mentors, observing and guiding students' conduct at school. Habituation trains students to act ethically in all contexts, wherever and whenever they are.

The expected teaching and learning process in moral education prioritizes *educating* rather than merely teaching. Educating implies guiding and advising students toward the internalization of values that serve as practical life principles, rather than simply transmitting information (Mugambi, 2022). Providing sustained attention to students' behavioural development is equally important. Continuous observation enables teachers to assess whether learning outcomes are reflected in positive behavioural change. The ultimate indicator of successful Islamic religious education instruction is observable improvement in daily conduct as an application of acquired knowledge.

A correct understanding of *aqidah* (creed) forms the foundational basis for moral cultivation. For this reason, Islamic religious education serves as a cornerstone for broader knowledge development. It establishes the spiritual and ethical foundation upon which intellectual growth can flourish. Properly implemented, Islamic religious education becomes a principal pillar of character education.

Islamic religious education encompasses comprehensive moral guidance: 1) *Aqidah* is the foundation of faith; 2) The Qur'an and Hadith as life guidance; 3) *Fiqh* as practical legal guidance in worship and daily conduct; 4) Islamic history as a source of exemplary models; 5) *Akhlaq* is the ethical framework that distinguishes right from wrong behaviour.

Through integrated implementation that combines knowledge, practice, supervision, and collaboration, Islamic religious education in schools can function effectively as a transformative force in shaping morally grounded, disciplined, and socially responsible students.

f) Components of Character Education Curriculum Development

1) Objective Component

The objective component is directly related to the direction and expected outcomes of education. At the macro level, curriculum objectives are closely connected to a society's philosophy and value system. In fact, educational goals often reflect the ideal vision of the society it aspires to build.

Educational objectives are classified from the most general to the most specific and measurable, commonly referred to as competencies. Broadly, educational objectives are divided into four categories: 1) National Education Objectives; 2) Institutional Objectives; 3) Curricular Objectives; 4) Instructional or Learning Objectives

2) National Education Objectives

National Education Objectives represent the most general goals and serve as the primary reference for all educational efforts. These objectives are formulated based on a nation's philosophy of life and are legally established by the government. In Indonesia, national education objectives are clearly stated in Article 3 of Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System. It affirms that national education serves to develop learners' abilities and to shape a dignified national character and civilization, thereby educating the nation. Education aims to develop students'

potential, so they become individuals who are faithful and devoted to God Almighty, possess noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, competent, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens. These objectives serve as the foundational framework for character-based curriculum development.

3) Institutional Objectives

Institutional objectives are goals that each educational institution must achieve. They serve as intermediary goals that translate national objectives into graduate competency standards at each educational level, including primary, secondary, vocational, and higher education. In the context of secondary schools, institutional objectives emphasize the development of academic competence alongside character maturity appropriate to adolescents developmental stages.

4) Curricular Objectives

Curricular objectives refer to goals that must be achieved within each subject area. These objectives support the institutional objectives and ensure alignment with broader educational aims. In Islamic religious education, curricular objectives include strengthening faith (*aqidah*), fostering noble character (*akhlak*), developing understanding of Islamic law (*fiqh*), and cultivating awareness of Islamic history and civilization. Each subject component contributes to comprehensive character formation.

5) Instructional or Learning Objectives

Instructional objectives are derived from curricular objectives and specify the competencies students must achieve after completing a particular lesson or learning session. These objectives are operational and measurable. Because teachers understand the specific characteristics and conditions of their students, they are responsible for formulating detailed learning objectives. According to Benjamin Bloom in *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (1965), educational objectives can be classified into three domains: Cognitive domain, Affective domain, and Psychomotor domain.

g) The Cognitive Domain

The cognitive domain encompasses intellectual abilities and thinking skills, including remembering, understanding, analyzing, and problem-solving. Bloom categorised the cognitive domain into six hierarchical levels:

First, knowledge is the ability to recall previously learned information. It represents the most basic cognitive level. This includes: Knowledge of specific facts, Knowledge of procedures or processes. Although basic, factual recall is essential for higher-level thinking.

Second, comprehension refers to the ability to understand the meaning of information. It goes beyond memorisation and involves explaining, interpreting, summarising, or translating concepts. This level includes the ability to: Explain meaning, interpret information, Extrapolate implications from data.

Third, application is the ability to use concepts, principles, methods, or procedures in specific situations. At this level, students apply theories, formulas, rules, or ideas to practical contexts. In Islamic religious education, this may include applying principles of worship in daily life or practising ethical guidelines in social interactions.

Fourth, analysis involves breaking down material into components and understanding the relationships among parts. It requires higher-order reasoning skills and typically builds upon comprehension and application abilities. In Islamic education, analysis may include examining historical events in Islamic civilisation or analysing ethical dilemmas from an Islamic perspective.

Fifth, synthesis is the ability to combine elements into a coherent whole. It includes formulating plans, constructing arguments, or identifying patterns among abstract concepts. This level reflects creative thinking and integrative understanding.

Sixth, evaluation. Evaluation represents the highest level in Bloom's original cognitive taxonomy. It involves making judgments based on criteria or standards. Students must use logical reasoning and established benchmarks to assess ideas, arguments, or actions. In character education, evaluation enables students to judge behaviours according to ethical principles and to make responsible decisions grounded in moral reasoning.

In the context of character-based curriculum development, the cognitive domain must be integrated with the affective and psychomotor domains. Intellectual understanding alone is insufficient. True character education requires internalised values (affective domain) and consistent behavioural practice (psychomotor domain), ensuring that knowledge, attitude, and action function as a unified whole.

4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

4.1 Research Implications

This study contributes to the field of Islamic education and curriculum development by providing a comprehensive and systematic framework for integrating character education into the Islamic religious education curriculum. It offers a clear conceptual and practical model that connects character values with subject content, instructional approaches, and learning environments, thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice. Furthermore, the study enriches the existing literature by emphasising a multidimensional approach that combines cognitive understanding, affective internalisation, and behavioural application, and it serves as a valuable reference for educators, researchers, and policymakers in designing and implementing more holistic and value-oriented educational programs.

4.2 Research Contributions

The findings of this study imply that developing a character education-based Islamic religious education curriculum should be conducted holistically by integrating cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions across all curriculum components, including objectives, content, instructional strategies, and assessment. The results also highlight the critical role of teachers as moral role models, indicating that effective implementation depends not only on pedagogical competence but also on the ability to consistently demonstrate and reinforce character values. In addition, integrating character education through both intracurricular and extracurricular activities suggests that schools must create a supportive environment and institutional culture that continuously fosters students' moral development in both academic and social contexts.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

5.1 Research Limitations

This study has several limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, the research is based solely on a library research design, relying on secondary data without direct empirical validation in real classroom settings. As a result, the findings remain conceptual and may not fully capture the complexity of practical implementation in schools. Second, the scope of the study is limited to the development of a character education-based Islamic religious education curriculum at the junior secondary school level, which may limit its generalizability to other educational levels or contexts. Third, the study does not examine in depth the effectiveness of specific instructional models or strategies when applied in diverse school environments, particularly those with varying socio-cultural backgrounds.

5.2 Recommendation for Future Research Direction

Future research is recommended to conduct empirical studies examining the implementation and effectiveness of character-based Islamic religious education curricula in real educational settings, using qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method approaches. Further studies may also explore comparative analyses across different school levels, regions, or educational systems to provide a broader understanding of how character education can be adapted to various contexts. In addition, research on the development of assessment instruments to measure students' character outcomes would be valuable for strengthening the practical application of character education. Finally, future studies are encouraged to investigate the role of stakeholders, such as teachers, parents, and the community, in supporting the successful implementation of character-based education to ensure its sustainability and impact.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the development of a character education-based Islamic religious education curriculum at the junior secondary school level must be designed holistically and systematically. The integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains is essential to ensure that learning does not focus solely on knowledge acquisition but also on the internalisation and practice of moral values. Character values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, tolerance, and social awareness should be embedded across all curriculum components, including objectives, content, instructional strategies, and assessment.

Furthermore, the findings highlight that the successful implementation of a character-based Islamic religious education curriculum depends on the use of appropriate strategies and learning approaches. Role modelling, habituation, discipline, and the creation of a supportive learning environment are crucial to strengthening students' character formation. In addition, integrating character education through intracurricular and extracurricular acti-

vities ensures that students experience and apply moral values in both academic and social contexts. Instructional models such as contextual learning, cooperative learning, inquiry-based learning, and affective approaches further enhance the effectiveness of character education.

Finally, this study emphasises that character-based curriculum development in Islamic religious education is not solely the responsibility of teachers but requires collaboration among all educational stakeholders, including schools, families, and the wider community. A consistent and supportive educational environment is necessary to sustain character education. Therefore, integrating character values into the Islamic religious education curriculum has the potential to contribute significantly to the formation of students who are not only knowledgeable and skilled but also morally grounded and socially responsible.

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Author Contribution Statement

All authors discussed the results, contributed to the final manuscript, and approved the final version for publication. Tika Nurul Hidayati: Conceptualization and Design. Writing - Original Draft. Cindi Kloudia: Methodology, Writing - Review & Editing; Performed data collection and Analysis. Edo Arma Yoga: Interpretation of the results.

Declaration of Generative AI (GenAI) Usage in Scientific Writing

The authors declare that artificial intelligence tools were used solely to assist in language refinement, grammar checking, and improving the clarity of the manuscript. All ideas, analyses, and interpretations presented in this study are the original work of the authors. The authors take full responsibility for the content of this manuscript. All instances of Generative AI usage in this article were conducted by the authors in accordance with the [IJCES GenAI Tool Usage Policy](#), with the authors assuming full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of the work.

Conflict of Interest Statement

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

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