

Quran-Based Islamic Religious Education and Religious Character Formation in the Digital Era

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Abstract: This study examines the concept, implementation strategies, teacher roles, impacts, and challenges of Quran-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in shaping students' religious character in the digital era. Employing a qualitative descriptive field study design, data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews with PAI teachers and school administrators, and document analysis. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman interactive model, comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that thematic and contextual Quran-based PAI learning enhances students' spiritual awareness, moral values, religious discipline, and moderate religious attitudes. The integration of Quranic values influences not only cognitive understanding but also the internalization of moral and spiritual values reflected in students' daily behavior, including their use of digital media. This study offers novelty by identifying adaptive strategies that position Quran-based PAI learning as an ethical filter for addressing moral challenges in the digital age. The findings contribute to Islamic education theory and highlight the importance of pedagogical reform through teacher role modeling, value habituation, and reflective learning practices.

Keywords: Digital Era, Islamic Religious Education, Quran-Based Learning, Religious Character, Value Internalization

A. Introduction

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a critical role in the national education system as the principal means of developing students' religious character (Sari, 2024). PAI aims to instill the principles of faith, worship, and morality in students' attitudes and acts, beyond just conceptual understanding (Guna & Yuwantiningrum, 2024). Religious character is defined in Islamic education as a manifestation of spiritual awareness expressed through dedication to worship, self-control, ethical attitudes, and social duty (Irpan & Sain, 2024). As a result, PAI cannot be viewed only as a normative subject, but rather as a tool for the whole development of students' personalities and morals.

Numerous studies have found that PAI acts as a moral foundation, connecting religious knowledge to students' social actions. Effective PAI is thought to increase spiritual awareness, develop morals, and promote moderate and tolerant religious beliefs (Masturin, 2022). The Quran is regarded as a timeless source of principles and direction in Islamic education. As a result, ideally, PAI learning uses the Quran not only as a teaching tool, but also as a normative and ethical underpinning for the entire educational process. However, in fact, the implementation of PAI learning frequently encounters a number of difficulties, both in terms of educational approach and student social milieu (Khoir et al., 2023). With the rapid advancement of globalization and digital technology, the efficiency of PAI learning in forming students' religious character is facing increasingly complicated challenges. Generation Z, as a student body, currently lives in a world saturated with information flows, social media, and global culture that are not always consistent with Islamic beliefs (Mohammadi, 2025). Various studies have found that excessive digital exposure has the potential to cause a moral identity crisis, a drop in religious discipline, and a loss of pupils' self-control (Al Qarni, 2025; Muttaqin et al., 2023; Puspitasari & Riadi, 2023; Syafi'i & Shokheh, 2025). In this circumstance, PAI must not only teach religious information but also provide students with reflective abilities and ethical filters based on Islamic ideals. Despite this, numerous research reveals that PAI learning techniques in schools continue to be theoretical, textual, and focused on cognitive accomplishment (Nadirah et al., 2024; Nasucha et al., 2023). Learning frequently relies on memorizing concepts, definitions, and propositions rather than delving deeply into contextual meaning (Novak, 2002; Reddy & Revathy, 2024). As a result, there is a gap between students' religious comprehension and their daily practice. This situation implies that the success of PAI learning is governed not only by academic mastery, but also by pedagogical practices that promote long-term internalization of values (Cook & Artino Jr, 2016).

Recent research in Islamic education has highlighted the significance of shifting PAI learning methodologies to a more contextual, integrative, and character-building model (Alhamuddin & Ikin Asikin, 2025; Nursobah et al., 2025; Uri & Harahap, 2025). Several studies emphasize the importance of integrating the Quran as a source of values into learning, allowing pupils to appreciate its relevance to contemporary life. This method views the Quran not just as a sacred scripture to be read and memorized, but also as an ethical guideline that directs students' attitudes, choices, and actions in a variety of life scenarios, including dealing with the problems of the digital age. However, empirical research on how Quran-based PAI learning is implemented in school settings and its impact on the development of students' religious character remains limited. Some research concentrates on the normative or intellectual aspects of Islamic education (Badri & Malik, 2024; Maulana, 2024; Latipah et al., 2025), whereas studies that link Quranic learning methodologies to the dynamics of students' life in the digital age have not been thoroughly investigated. Teachers have a crucial role in instilling Quranic values in PAI, yet their importance is often overlooked in study.

This study proposes an PAI strategy that integrates Quranic ideals throughout the learning process. This study is unique in that it focuses on Quranic values as an ethical filter for forming students' religious character, especially in the digital era where distractions and moral problems exist. This study views Quran-based PAI learning as a pedagogical process that prioritizes contextual meaning, value habituation, and teacher role models in school life. This approach views PAI teachers as leaders who advise, model, and instill Quranic ideals in students. Teachers are expected to provide a learning atmosphere that promotes the development of spiritual awareness, noble morals, religious discipline, and moderate and inclusive religious attitudes. Thus, Quran-based PAI learning becomes an essential component of attempts to form students' religious character comprehensively and sustainably. This study's contributions are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this work contributes to the body of Islamic education research by proposing a Quran-based PAI learning model that is relevant to the problems of the digital age. This study sheds light on how internalizing Quranic values affects students' religious character formation. Practically, the study's findings can be used to guide teachers, schools, and educational policymakers in developing Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning methodologies that are more contextual, relevant, and character development-oriented.

Based on the above definition, the purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness and implementation techniques of Quran-based Islamic Religious Education curriculum in forming students' religious character. This study specifically seeks to answer the following research questions: how is Quran-based PAI learning implemented in the school setting, and to what extent does this learning contribute to the formation of students' religious character in the face of digital challenges? This question serves as the foundation for further investigation into the role of Quran-based PAI learning as a tool for developing religious character appropriate to the needs of current Islamic education.

B. Methods

This study used a descriptive qualitative method with a field study strategy. The qualitative technique was used because the study sought to gain a thorough understanding of the process, meaning, and dynamics of Quran-based PAI in a real-world classroom setting. The field study allowed researchers to gain an empirical understanding of learning processes, teacher-student interactions, and elements impacting religious character development. This study was done in Az-Zahra Integrated Islamic Elementary School (SDIT Az-Zahra). An Islamic school dedicated to producing a strong, capable, and morally upright generation of Muslims via high-quality, character-based education. The qualitative technique was used because the study sought to gain a thorough understanding of the process, meaning, and dynamics of Quran-based PAI in a real-world classroom setting. The field study allowed researchers to gain an empirical understanding of learning processes,

teacher-student interactions, and elements impacting religious character development.

The research site was purposefully chosen at an educational institution that was adopting an PAI curriculum with a focus on incorporating Quranic values. The venue was chosen based on the viability of the Quran-based learning program and the school's willingness to do research. The participants consisted of three PAI teachers, one school principal, and six students representing different grade levels. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, based on their direct involvement in the planning, implementation, and experience of Quran-based PAI learning. Teachers were selected because of their active role in delivering the curriculum, while students were chosen to capture diverse perspectives on the impact of Quranic learning on religious character formation.

Data were collected over a period of three months through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation analysis: 1) Observations focused on classroom instruction, religious habituation activities, and teacher-student interactions related to Quranic value internalization; 2) Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participants, totaling ten in-depth interviews. Interview protocols explored learning strategies, teacher roles, perceived impacts on students' religious character, and challenges related to digital influences; 3) Documentation included lesson plans, syllabi, teaching materials, and records of school religious activities to support observational and interview data. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, guided by the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were coded inductively to identify recurring patterns and meaningful units. These codes were then grouped into broader themes related to spiritual awareness, moral development, self-control, and religious moderation. To ensure trustworthiness, data triangulation across sources and methods was applied, along with peer debriefing to enhance the credibility of the findings.

C. Results and Discussion

This study found that PAI based on Quranic ideals significantly affects students' religious character building. Learning that consistently integrates the teachings of the Quran has an impact not just on religious knowledge but also on the spiritual, moral, and social elements of students' daily behavior. These findings suggest that Quran-based PAI learning has the potential to be a strategic tool for developing religious character that is adaptable to the demands of modern life. The discussion of study outcomes is organized around many major topics that occurred throughout the process of gathering and evaluating field data, and it is related to earlier research findings to enhance the theoretical and empirical foundation.

1. Improving Spiritual Awareness by Integrating Quranic Values

The study found that Quran-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning has a considerable impact on students' spiritual awareness. This development is evident in students' constancy in executing religious tasks like as praying on time, reciting the Quran, and exhibiting a religious mindset in various school events. Learning that focuses on contextualizing the meaning of Quranic verses allows students to see Islamic teachings as a practical guide to life, rather than just normative subject matter. A contextual method to learning allows pupils to connect Quranic messages to real-life situations. Verses about faith, patience, and responsibility are comprehended in the context of their educational experiences and social interactions. This process promotes introspective and long-term spiritual awareness, guaranteeing that religious principles are not only cognitively understood. These findings are consistent with previous studies by Parhan et al. (2024) and Nursyamsiyah et al. (2022), which found that contextualized Quranic learning can improve students' spiritual qualities. According to Saparuddin et al. (2025), including Quranic concepts into PAI enhances students' religiosity. According to (Suresman et al., 2025), reading Quranic passages that are relevant to students' lives helps them internalize spiritual ideals more profoundly. Thus, the findings of this study support the necessity of a contextual approach to Quranic-based PAI learning.

2. Morals and ethics are formed through the process of internalizing Quranic values

In addition to raising spiritual awareness, research indicates that Quran-based PAI has a substantial impact on students' morality and behavior. Consistent learning reinforces Quranic virtues like honesty, discipline, responsibility, and social awareness. Student behavior changes can be shown in higher compliance with school rules, improved emotional management, and the formation of more harmonious social interactions. The function of teachers as role models is critical to the healthy development of religious character. Teachers are more than just material carriers; they are also moral guides who model Islamic morality. Teachers' outstanding behavior in terms of discipline, honesty, and responsibility has a direct impact on student attitudes. This illustrates that the success of Quran-based PAI learning is greatly dependent on the integrity and constancy of teachers in following Quranic principles. These findings confirm Osman (2024) research, which found that teacher role models play an important role in Islamic character education. Akmalludin et al. (2025) also stressed the importance of PAI teacher professionalism in promoting students' religious character development. Madum & Daimah (2024) and Hidayatulloh et al. (2024) stressed the ability of Quran-based learning, when combined with teacher role models, to form noble character over time. Thus, Quran-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning necessitates teachers who are not only pedagogically competent but also ethically and spiritually mature.

3. Developing Self-Control and Religious Discipline in the Age of Digital Challenges

The study also found that Quran-based PAI curriculum helps students develop self-control and religious discipline, which is especially important as they face the challenges of the digital world. Students use digital media more selectively, such as avoiding bad information, controlling device usage time, and utilizing technology for educational and religious purposes. Quranic ideals guide pupils' ethical decision-making. Internalizing Quranic lessons on self-control, trustworthiness, and moral responsibility allows pupils to acquire ethical awareness when engaging with the digital world. Quran-based PAI learning promotes not just normative comprehension but also critical evaluation on the impact of digital activity on students' personal and social lives. These findings are consistent with Hidayat & Inayati (2024) research, which suggests that Quranic education helps pupils acquire self-control skills. According to Ahmad & Khalid (2024), Quranic ideals can help guide appropriate digital activity. Hermando et al. (2025) also demonstrate that Quran-based learning helps to increase students' social responsibility. Thus, Quran-based PAI learning is extremely relevant in resolving moral concerns in the digital age.

4. Developing Moderate and Inclusive Religious Attitudes

According to research findings, Quran-based PAI can help promote moderate and inclusive religious views. Understanding the Quran in context enables pupils to acquire tolerance, respect for differences, and interact happily in a pluralistic world. Students not only learn Islamic teachings textually, but also apply them in a variety of societal contexts. This learning style highlights universal ideals in the Quran, including justice, compassion, and human brotherhood. PAI teaches not just the liturgical parts of worship, but also the social characteristics of Islam that are important to life in a pluralistic society. This is especially important in the context of Islamic education in Indonesia, which has a complex social and cultural background. These findings are consistent with Maarif et al. (2022) research, which stressed the strategic significance of Islamic education in promoting moderate religiosity. Alfani et al. (2025) and Witro (2024) both stated that Quran-based Islamic education promotes religious moderation and inclusive attitudes in pupils. Thus, Quran-based PAI learning helps to shape a religious character that strikes a balance between spiritual devotion and societal openness.

5. Comparison with various research findings

Although the outcomes of this study reveal that Quran-based PAI learning has a good influence, earlier research has produced inconsistent results. According to Akhyar et al. (2024) and Futaqi & Yenuri (2023), Quranic study in schools is often ceremonial and has no impact on student conduct. These disparate outcomes suggest that the efficiency of Quranic learning is heavily reliant on the pedagogical approach

used. This study demonstrates that Quran-based PAI learning can have a considerable impact on religious character formation when administered in an integrated and contextual manner, with teacher role models and a positive school culture. Without this technique, Quran learning has the potential to become a repetitive, symbolic exercise. As a result, the disparities in research findings highlight the significance of implementation strategies in influencing learning success. Furthermore, Reza et al. (2024) stated that religious text-based learning may restrict students' critical thinking abilities. The results of this investigation contradict this viewpoint. Contextualized Quranic learning actually encourages students to engage in moral thinking and make sound ethical decisions. This illustrates that Quranic-based learning may coexist with the development of critical thinking abilities if done correctly.

6. Pedagogical and conceptual implications

Overall, the study's findings and analysis show that, when applied comprehensively, contextually, and sustainably, Quran-based PAI instruction is successful in forming students' religious character. The findings' pedagogical implications highlight the significance of enhancing PAI instructors' proficiency in creating and executing instruction focused on internalizing values. Teachers should be viewed as moral and spiritual role models in addition to being subject matter experts. According to the research's conceptual implications, PAI based on the Quran can function as a substitute model for religious character education in the contemporary era. For religious character development to continue outside of the classroom, cooperation between families and schools is essential. As a result, PAI based on the Quran has the strategic potential to produce a generation of people who are morally resilient, have faith, and are of high character in the face of global difficulties.

D. Conclusions

This study concludes that Quran-based PAI, when implemented through contextual, thematic, and value-oriented learning approaches, is effective in shaping students' religious character in the digital era. The key findings demonstrate that the integration of Quranic values within PAI learning strengthens students' spiritual awareness, moral integrity, religious discipline, self-control, and the development of moderate and inclusive religious attitudes. These outcomes are reflected in students' daily behavior, including their ability to engage with digital media in a more responsible, ethical, and reflective manner. The study also highlights that the success of Quran-based PAI learning is strongly influenced by the role of teachers as moral role models who consistently demonstrate Quranic values through example, guidance, and habituation practices within the school environment. In practical terms, these findings imply that Islamic Religious Education should not be limited to cognitive transmission of religious knowledge but should prioritize the internalization of values through meaningful learning experiences. Schools are

encouraged to design learning environments that integrate Quranic values into both instructional activities and school culture, while teachers should be supported to function as transformative educators who guide students in connecting religious teachings with real-life challenges, particularly those arising from digital exposure. For policymakers and educational institutions, this study suggests the need for curriculum development and teacher professional training that emphasize character formation, ethical reasoning, and contextual religious learning. Regarding future research, further studies are recommended to involve broader research settings, such as multiple schools or different educational levels, to enhance the generalizability of findings. Future research may also employ mixed-method or quantitative approaches to measure the long-term impact of Quran-based PAI learning on students' religious character. Additionally, exploring the role of family involvement and digital environments in supporting Quranic value internalization would provide deeper insights into sustainable religious character education in the digital age.

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