

Strengthening Students' Akhlakul Karimah in Building the Foundation of Islamic Education at Madrasah Aliyah

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the strengthening of akhlakul karimah (noble character) among students in building the foundation of Islamic education at Madrasah Aliyah PP Al-Ihslah Saren Bandar. The background of this research is rooted in the challenges posed by the rapid development of technology and information, which significantly influence students' behavior and morality, making character reinforcement increasingly essential. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design, involving teachers, the madrasah principal, and boarding school caregivers as key informants. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, and subsequently analyzed using descriptive techniques. The findings reveal that the strengthening of akhlakul karimah is implemented through interactive Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, the habituation of moral values within the boarding school environment, supervision of technology use, and the active involvement of all educational stakeholders. This study demonstrates that strengthening noble character can establish a solid foundation for Islamic education that is adaptive to contemporary developments and capable of shaping students into disciplined, honest, responsible, and socially caring individuals.

Keywords: Akhlakul Karimah, Islamic Education, Character Building, Madrasah Aliyah, Information Technology.

I. Introduction

The rapid advancement of information and communication technology in 2025 has significantly influenced students' behavior, attitudes, and moral development, particularly within Madrasah Aliyah PP Al-Ihslah Saren Bandar where students are increasingly exposed to diverse digital content through smartphones, social media, and online learning platforms. While such technological progress offers substantial educational opportunities, it also presents serious challenges in maintaining students' moral values, as unsupervised access may lead to moral degradation, decreased discipline, and the erosion of ethical awareness. Consequently, educators and boarding school caregivers must play a strategic role in ensuring that technological development supports the formation of *akhlakul karimah* (noble character), a necessity that aligns with global educational discourse where character education has become central in addressing the complex social and moral challenges of the twenty-first century, including value degradation, weakening social solidarity, rising intolerance, and identity crises among younger generations (Hajar, 2026).

In Islamic education, akhlakul karimah is considered the core foundation in shaping students' personalities and guiding their behavior in both personal and social life. Islamic teachings emphasize that

education is not merely the transfer of knowledge, but also the cultivation of moral values rooted in the Qur'an and Hadith. Character education theory highlights that moral values can be effectively developed through exemplary behavior (*uswah*), habituation, and the integration of ethical principles into daily learning activities (Mulyasa, 2023). This perspective aligns with the holistic approach of Islamic education, where cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains are integrated to form balanced individuals. Thus, strengthening *akhlakul karimah* is not an additional component, but an essential objective of the educational process in madrasah and pesantren environments. Furthermore, the Transformative Learning theory provides a relevant framework for understanding how students internalize moral values. According to Mezirow (2000), transformative learning occurs when individuals critically reflect on their experiences, leading to a change in their perspectives and behavior. In the context of Islamic education, this process involves guiding students to reflect on moral teachings and apply them in real-life situations. Rahman (2024) further explains that teachers act as facilitators who encourage students to engage in reflective thinking, dialogue, and meaningful experiences that foster moral awareness. Through this approach, students are not only instructed about what is right and wrong but are also encouraged to understand, appreciate, and practice these values consciously in their daily lives.

The integration of technology in education, if properly managed, can also contribute to strengthening students' moral character. Digital platforms can be utilized to disseminate religious teachings, promote positive behavior, and create interactive learning experiences that reinforce ethical values. However, without consistent moral guidance, technology may instead become a source of negative influence. Therefore, the role of teachers, especially Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, becomes increasingly crucial in filtering information and guiding students toward responsible digital behavior. This includes instilling digital ethics, promoting critical thinking, and fostering self-control in the use of technology. Previous studies have highlighted the importance of character-based education in improving students' behavior. Sari and Hidayat (2023) found that the implementation of character education at the elementary school level significantly improved students' discipline and sense of responsibility. Similarly, Pratama (2024) emphasized that the integration of communication technology in learning processes can be effective when accompanied by consistent moral guidance. These findings indicate that moral education and technological advancement should not be viewed as opposing forces, but rather as complementary elements that can support each other when properly aligned.

Despite these insights, there is still a limited number of studies focusing specifically on the strengthening of *akhlakul karimah* among students in Madrasah Aliyah within the context of modern Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). This gap highlights the need for further research to explore how moral values are reinforced in such institutions, particularly in the face of rapid technological change. The unique environment of *pesantren*, which combines formal education with religious and character development, provides a valuable setting for examining effective strategies in moral education. Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the strengthening of students' *akhlakul karimah* as the foundation of Islamic education at Madrasah Aliyah PP Al-Ihslah Saren Bandar. The research focuses on understanding the strategies, processes, and roles of educators in fostering moral character among students. Accordingly, the research problem is formulated as follows: *"How is the strengthening of students' akhlakul karimah carried out to build the foundation of Islamic education at Madrasah Aliyah PP Al-Ihslah Saren Bandar?"*

II. Literature Review

The concept of *akhlakul karimah* (noble character) is a fundamental pillar in Islamic education, emphasizing moral integrity, ethical behavior, and spiritual awareness. In contemporary educational discourse, character education has become increasingly important due to the rapid development of information and communication technology, which significantly influences students' behavior and values. Recent studies highlight that moral degradation among students can occur when technological advancement is not balanced with strong ethical guidance (Aziz, 2021; Yulianti, 2021). Therefore, strengthening students'

moral character is essential to ensure that they can navigate the digital era responsibly. Character education in Islamic contexts is not only cognitive but also affective and behavioral. According to Mulyasa (2023), character formation can be effectively developed through habituation, exemplary behavior, and the integration of moral values into the learning process. This aligns with the theory of transformative learning, which emphasizes that students construct meaning through reflection on their experiences, guided by educators who act as facilitators (Rahman, 2024). In this perspective, teachers play a crucial role in shaping students' character by embedding ethical values in both formal instruction and daily interactions.

Recent empirical studies within the last decade further support the importance of integrating character education into Islamic schooling. Sari and Hidayat (2023) found that character-based learning significantly improves students' discipline and responsibility. Similarly, Hidayat (2023) emphasizes that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers have a strategic role in fostering students' moral development through consistent guidance and role modeling. In addition, Pratama (2024) argues that the integration of digital technology in education can enhance learning effectiveness when accompanied by continuous moral supervision. Furthermore, the boarding school (*pesantren*) environment provides a unique setting for strengthening *akhlakul karimah* through structured routines and value-based practices. Hasanah (2022) explains that transformative and experiential learning approaches in religious education can deepen students' understanding of moral values and encourage internalization. This is supported by Sulisty (2020), who notes that moral education in the digital era must involve not only classroom instruction but also environmental conditioning and social interaction.

Despite the growing body of literature, studies focusing specifically on strengthening *akhlakul karimah* at the Madrasah Aliyah level within integrated pesantren systems remain limited. Most existing research examines character education at the elementary or general school level, leaving a gap in understanding how moral reinforcement is implemented in Islamic senior secondary education. Therefore, this study seeks to contribute to the literature by exploring practical strategies for strengthening students' noble character as a foundation of Islamic education in a pesantren-based Madrasah Aliyah context.

III. Research Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design conducted at Madrasah Aliyah PP Al-Ihslah Saren Bandar in 2025. This approach was selected to obtain an in-depth understanding of the strengthening of students' *akhlakul karimah* as the foundation of Islamic education, as well as the actual practices implemented by teachers, the head of the madrasah, and boarding school caregivers. The data sources consisted of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, the head of the madrasah, and boarding school caregivers as key informants. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation in the form of character development programs, activity schedules, and evaluation records. The data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative techniques, including data reduction, narrative data presentation, and verification through source and technique triangulation. This process enabled the study to comprehensively and contextually describe the practices of strengthening students' *akhlakul karimah*.

IV. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

The findings of this study were obtained through data collection techniques including in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation studies conducted at Madrasah Aliyah PP Al-Ihslah Saren Bandar. The collected data were analyzed descriptively to provide a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of *akhlakul karimah* (noble character) reinforcement as the foundation of Islamic education. The results indicate that moral reinforcement is not merely delivered theoretically but is

implemented through an integrated approach involving classroom learning, habituation in the boarding school environment, and supervision in students' daily lives. Based on interviews with Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, the reinforcement of *akhlakul karimah* is carried out through three main strategies: the integration of moral values into the learning process, the provision of exemplary behavior by teachers, and the habituation of positive daily conduct. Teachers do not only deliver cognitive material but also relate it to students' real-life experiences. One teacher stated, "We emphasize honesty, discipline, and responsibility. Every lesson includes stories and real-life examples so that students can emulate good character." This statement reflects that the learning process is designed to be contextual and practical, enabling students not only to understand moral values but also to internalize them.

PAI teachers serve as role models (*uswah hasanah*) in their daily behavior. Their attitudes in communication, interaction, and decision-making provide direct examples for students in shaping their character. This exemplary role is crucial, as students tend to imitate observable behavior rather than merely absorb theoretical knowledge. Therefore, the success of strengthening *akhlakul karimah* is highly influenced by the consistency of teachers' conduct both inside and outside the classroom. In addition to teachers, the principal plays a strategic role in integrating moral development into the entire educational system. Based on interview findings, the principal emphasized that character building is not solely the responsibility of PAI teachers but a collective responsibility of all educational stakeholders. Moral values are embedded in the curriculum, learning activities, and various boarding school programs. Routine activities such as morning assemblies, religious studies, afternoon programs, and character-building sessions are designed to instill responsibility, cooperation, and social awareness among students.

The boarding school caretaker further explained that monitoring students' use of communication technology is also an essential component of moral development. In the digital era, unrestricted access to information can significantly influence students' behavior. Therefore, the institution implements rules and supervision regarding the use of gadgets and social media. This approach is not merely restrictive but also educative, aiming to foster students' awareness of responsible and ethical technology use. Thus, the reinforcement of *akhlakul karimah* also encompasses digital literacy grounded in Islamic values. Observational data reveal that PAI learning is conducted in an interactive and contextual manner. Teachers actively engage students in discussions about good and bad behavior commonly encountered in daily life. Students are encouraged not only to understand moral concepts but also to reflect on their experiences and apply moral values in real actions. For instance, students participate in group activities that emphasize cooperation, honesty in completing tasks, and responsibility for outcomes.

The habituation of positive behavior is evident in students' daily routines within the boarding school environment. Activities such as congregational prayers, cleaning duties, orderly queuing, and social interaction among peers serve as effective media for character formation. These practices are carried out consistently and continuously, thereby shaping positive behavioral patterns. A supportive and religious environment further facilitates the internalization of moral values at a deeper level. Documentation data further strengthen these findings. Documents such as character development program books, daily activity schedules, and evaluation records indicate that the reinforcement of *akhlakul karimah* is systematically planned and implemented. These programs reflect structured planning, organized execution, and continuous evaluation. The evaluation process is conducted to monitor students' character development and to identify areas that require improvement.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the reinforcement of *akhlakul karimah* at Madrasah Aliyah PP Al-Ihsan Saren Bandar is conducted in an integrated and holistic manner. The involvement of multiple stakeholders, including teachers, the principal, and boarding school caretakers, plays a key role in the success of character development. The integration of classroom instruction, environmental habituation, and technology supervision creates a comprehensive educational system. In conclusion, the reinforcement of *akhlakul karimah* is not only part of the formal curriculum but also becomes a living culture within the educational environment. This approach has proven effective in shaping students who are disciplined, honest,

responsible, and socially aware, thereby establishing a strong foundation for Islamic education that is relevant to contemporary challenges.

4.2. Discussion

Islamic Education (PAI) teachers at Madrasah Aliyah PP Al-Ihsalah Saren Bandar play a strategic role in strengthening students' *akhlakul karimah* (noble character) as the fundamental basis of Islamic education. This role extends beyond merely delivering instructional content to encompass character formation through role modeling (*uswah hasanah*), habituation, and the integration of moral values into all learning activities. The findings of this study indicate that the approaches employed by PAI teachers are aligned with character education theory, which emphasizes the internalization of values through direct experience and exemplary behavior (Mulyasa, 2023). In this context, teachers function not only as instructors but also as moral exemplars for students. Teacher role modeling is a key factor in the success of character formation, as students tend to imitate behaviors they observe in their daily lives. This is consistent with the view that character education is most effective when supported by a conducive environment that consistently reinforces moral values (Lickona, 2019). Therefore, PAI teachers in this madrasah strive to demonstrate honesty, discipline, responsibility, and social care in their daily interactions as part of their instructional strategy.

In addition to role modeling, habituation is another crucial strategy in strengthening *akhlakul karimah*. Habituation is implemented through routine activities such as congregational prayers, Qur'an recitation, and the consistent practice of discipline in daily life within the Islamic boarding school environment. This approach aims to shape students' character continuously so that moral values are not only understood cognitively but also internalized in real behavior. Recent studies suggest that consistent habituation significantly contributes to character development, as it engages affective and psychomotor domains simultaneously (Rahman, 2024). Furthermore, the integration of moral values into the learning process represents a strategy that is highly relevant to contemporary education. PAI teachers connect instructional materials with students' real-life experiences, making learning more contextual and meaningful. This approach aligns with Transformative Learning theory, as proposed by Mezirow, which emphasizes critical reflection as a means of transforming individual perspectives (Mezirow, 2000). In practice, students are encouraged to reflect on their life experiences and relate them to Islamic values, leading to a deeper understanding of the importance of morality in everyday life.

The use of interactive learning methods also emerges as a significant finding in this study. Teachers utilize discussions, case studies, and digital media to enhance students' understanding of moral values. This indicates adaptation to the rapid development of information and communication technology in the digital era. The integration of technology in learning not only increases student engagement but also broadens access to relevant learning resources (Hidayat & Suryana, 2022). Consequently, moral education is no longer confined to conventional approaches but evolves into a more dynamic and contextual process. Moreover, continuous supervision and guidance within the Islamic boarding school environment further strengthen the implementation of moral values. The structured nature of the pesantren environment allows for effective social control over students' behavior. All student activities are monitored by teachers and caregivers, enabling immediate intervention when moral violations occur. This is in line with the concept of holistic education, which emphasizes the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects in the educational process (Nasution, 2021).

The strategies implemented by PAI teachers in this institution also demonstrate strong relevance to the challenges of the digital era. Amid the rapid and often unfiltered flow of information, students are exposed to various influences that may affect their behavior and moral development. Therefore, strengthening *akhlakul karimah* becomes essential as a moral safeguard. Research indicates that character education based on religious values enhances students' moral resilience in facing the negative impacts of technology (Sari & Putra, 2020). Furthermore, the success of character strengthening cannot be separated from the synergy between teachers, the school environment, and the boarding school setting. This collaboration creates an

educational ecosystem that supports comprehensive character development. Teachers act as facilitators of learning, while the pesantren environment provides a practical space for applying moral values in daily life. Thus, education occurs not only in the classroom but also in students' lived experiences.

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the strategies for strengthening *akhlakul karimah* implemented by PAI teachers at Madrasah Aliyah PP Al-Ihslah Saren Bandar reflect a comprehensive and adaptive approach. The combination of role modeling, habituation, moral value integration, and the use of technology constitutes the key to developing students with noble character. This approach is not only relevant to the context of Islamic education but also capable of addressing global challenges in the digital era. Therefore, strengthening *akhlakul karimah* is not merely an educational objective but a fundamental foundation for shaping a generation that is ethical, responsible, and socially aware.

V. Conclusion

PAI teachers at Madrasah Aliyah PP Al-Ihslah Saren Bandar play a central role in strengthening students' *akhlakul karimah*. Moral development is carried out through interactive classroom learning, the habituation of moral values in the boarding school environment, and the supervision of technology use. The collaboration among teachers, the principal, and boarding school caretakers ensures that character development is implemented holistically and consistently. This strategy fosters students who are disciplined, honest, responsible, and socially caring, while also strengthening the foundation of Islamic education in the digital era.

VI. References

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