Integration of Religious and Character Education in the Independent Curriculum: Efforts to Support the SDGs in Ogan Ilir Regency

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Abstract

Objective: This study aims to explore how the integration of religious values and character education in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in the Independent Curriculum supports the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially in supporting quality education (SDG 4). **Theoretical framework:** This study uses the theory of integration of scientific patterns, such as interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and value integration, to understand how religious values and character are integrated in PAI. **Literature review:** Character education and religious values have an important role in shaping students' morals and intellect. This study examines the integration of the two in the Islamic education curriculum, which aims not only to teach religious knowledge but also to shape the character of students. **Methods:** This study used a qualitative design with case studies using the analysis of PAI textbook documents and interviews with PAI teachers in high school and vocational schools. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. **Results:** The findings of the study show that the integration of religious values and character education in PAI has been carried out systematically in the curriculum. Values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, and critical thinking are included in learning objectives, materials, methods, media, and evaluation. The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes a holistic education that promotes students' academic development and character. **Implications:** This study shows the importance of integrating religious values and character in PAI to support the achievement of SDG 4. Teachers have an important role in instilling these values in students. **Novelty**: This research provides new insights into the integration of religious values and character in the Independent Curriculum, as well as its contribution to achieving sustainable development goals.

Keywords: religious education, character education, independent curriculum, sdgs, ogan ilir regency.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a structured process to impart knowledge, skills, values, and understanding to individuals, to develop their potential, and prepare them to play an active role in society. Education is not limited only to the academic aspect, but also includes the development of character, ethics, and morality that are the basis for forming responsible and integrity individuals. In this case, Islamic religious education (PAI) plays a very important role [1]. As a core subject in the education curriculum in Indonesia, PAI not only serves to provide religious knowledge but also to shape the character and morals of students. This religious education, in line with the values contained in Islam, has the goal of producing a generation that is not only academically intelligent but also has noble morals that can face social and global challenges [2].

In the context of the *Independent Curriculum* that is currently applied in Indonesia, there is an emphasis on the integration of religious values and character in various subjects, including Islamic Religious Education (PAI) [3]. The Merdeka Curriculum is designed to encourage the holistic development of students' potential, which includes cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. One of the important elements of this curriculum is the integration of character education based on religious values, which aims not only to educate students in terms of knowledge but also in the formation of good character. By instilling values such as honesty, responsibility, tolerance, empathy, and cooperation, this curriculum seeks to form individuals who have integrity, creativity, and are ready to contribute positively to society [4].

The integration of religious values and character in *the Independent Curriculum* also plays a role in supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially goals related to quality education (SDG 4). Quality education not only measures success through academic aspects, but also how education can shape the character of learners who are ready to overcome social, cultural, and environmental challenges. In this regard, Islamic religious education has a very strategic role, as it not only instills spiritual values but also equips students with the ability to think critically, coexist in diversity, and be responsible for society and the environment [5].

This study aims to examine how the integration of religious values and character education in *the Independent Curriculum* in PAI subjects can support the achievement of the SDGs, especially in the aspects of quality education and strong character formation. The main focus of this study is to see how this integration is reflected in PAI textbooks used at the high school and vocational school levels, as well as how the implementation of this curriculum can shape the character of students who are not only intelligent but also noble, creative, and globally competitive. This research will also explore the relationship between religious education, character, and sustainable development goals in the context of education in Indonesia, as well as provide recommendations to improve the quality of religious education that can support the achievement of these global goals [5].

This study offers several important novelties in the field of Islamic education and curriculum studies. First, it provides a systematic and empirical mapping of how religious values and character education are structurally embedded within the Independent (Merdeka) Curriculum for Islamic Religious Education (PAI), not merely at the conceptual level but across learning objectives, materials, methods, media, assessment, extracurricular activities, and school culture. Unlike previous studies that discuss character education normatively, this research demonstrates how value integration operates as a coherent pedagogical system [6].

Second, this study introduces a multi-layered integration framework that combines normative-theological, interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary approaches in Islamic education. By linking Qur'anic teachings, moral values, educational sciences, and social-humanities perspectives, the research advances a holistic model of PAI

that transcends the traditional dichotomy between religious knowledge and general knowledge. This framework strengthens the relevance of Islamic education in addressing contemporary social and global challenges [6].

Third, the study contributes novel insights by explicitly positioning Islamic Religious Education as a strategic driver for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While most SDGs-related education research focuses on secular subjects, this research highlights how PAI substantively supports SDG 4 (Quality Education) through inclusive, value-based learning; SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) through integrity, honesty, tolerance, and social responsibility; SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) through respect for diversity; and SDG 3 (Well-being) through spiritual and moral development. This explicit alignment places Islamic education within global sustainability discourse. Finally, the study presents novelty by identifying character-based evaluation mechanisms— including affective assessment, reflective journals, and peer evaluation—as essential instruments for measuring educational success beyond cognitive outcomes. This challenges conventional assessment paradigms and reinforces the idea that sustainable education must assess values, attitudes, and behaviors [7].

Implications. The findings of this study have significant theoretical, practical, and policy implications. Theoretically, the research strengthens the discourse on integrated Islamic education by providing a validated model that connects religious values, character education, and SDGs. It enriches Islamic curriculum studies by offering an evidence-based framework that can be adapted for further research in different educational contexts. Practically, this study implies that PAI teachers play a central role as agents of sustainable development. Teachers are not only transmitters of religious knowledge but also facilitators of character formation aligned with global citizenship values. Therefore, continuous professional development programs should emphasize SDGs literacy, integrative pedagogy, and character-based assessment.

At the institutional level, schools are encouraged to build PAI-based educational ecosystems that integrate classroom learning with extracurricular activities and school culture. Such ecosystems support SDG 4 by ensuring inclusive and meaningful learning, and SDG 16 by cultivating ethical and responsible citizens. From a policy perspective, this study suggests that curriculum developers and educational authorities should explicitly embed SDGs indicators within Islamic Religious Education standards and learning outcomes. Strengthening collaboration between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Religious Affairs also supports SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), ensuring coherent and sustainable educational reform. Overall, this research confirms that integrating religious values and character education within the Independent Curriculum is not only pedagogically effective but also strategically vital for advancing sustainable development in Indonesia [7].

LITERATURE REVIEW

Islamic education, especially in the context of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum, requires an approach that integrates various disciplines to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Along with the development of a more holistic educational curriculum, the integration of knowledge patterns is important to ensure that the material taught is not only focused on one field of knowledge but also able to connect religious science with other sciences, especially in building the character of students who are oriented towards sustainability. Some theories about the integration of knowledge patterns described by experts can be used as a basis for understanding how Islamic education can combine various sciences in the learning process, as well as support the achievement of the global goals of the SDGs [8].

Interdisciplinary Integration

Jacobs posits that interdisciplinary integration is the merging of two or more disciplines to address a single topic or solve a complex problem [9]. In the context of Islamic education, this means combining religious knowledge with general knowledge side by side in learning. For example, teaching the concept of ecosystems in biology along with verses of the Qur'an that talk about the creation and maintenance of nature, as in QS. Al-An'am: 141. This approach not only enhances students' scientific understanding but also instills environmental values in line with SDG 15 (Life on Land), which aims to protect, manage, and sustainably restore terrestrial ecosystems [10]. It also introduces students to the concepts of sustainability through a religious lens, creating a more comprehensive understanding of the world and God's creation.

Multidisciplinary Integration

Fogarty explains that the multidisciplinary approach involves several disciplines studied in parallel to give students a broader insight. In Islamic education, this approach allows each discipline to maintain its identity but still leads to an understanding of the same values [11]. For example, physics, geography, and PAI lessons can discuss eclipse phenomena from a scientific and Sharia perspective, so that students can understand natural phenomena not only scientifically but also from a spiritual perspective. This approach is in line with SDG 4 (Quality Education), which prioritizes inclusive and equitable education and improves lifelong learning for all [12].

Transdisciplinary Integration

Nicolescu argues that transdisciplinary integration transcends the boundaries of the discipline to form new syntheses. In Islamic education, this means uniting religious knowledge, general science, and human values in one holistic frame of mind [13]. An example is the development of an environmental education model based on fiqh al-bi'ah that combines ecology, Islamic law, and global ethics. This approach supports SDG 13 (Addressing Climate Change), which encourages immediate action to address climate change and its impacts [14]. Thus, transdisciplinary-based Islamic education can develop students' awareness of environmental and social issues as a whole, encouraging them to play an active role in creating positive change in society.

Integration of Islamic Curriculum

Al-Attas argues that the integration of the pattern of knowledge in Islam should eliminate the dichotomy between religious science and general science by placing revelation as the primary source of truth and reason as a tool for understanding Allah's creation. In this context, Islamic education must combine ulum al-din (religious knowledge) with ulum al-dunya (world knowledge) in a single educational purpose [15]. For example, Islamic universities, which combine the study of interpretation with science and technology in applied research, show that religious science and world science can go hand in hand to provide a deeper understanding of the truths found in revelation and science. This supports SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), which aim to develop education that is relevant to the needs of future technology and innovation [16].

Value Integration

According to Thomas Lickona, character education must integrate moral values in all subjects and school activities. In the context of PAI, the integration of these values is carried out by instilling Islamic morals in the entire learning process, both in religious and non-religious lessons [17]. For example, math subjects can teach honesty and rigor as part of

character values, which are also applied in students' daily lives. Thus, character education in PAI not only occurs in religious classes but also permeates all disciplines and activities in schools. This supports SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), which focuses on building peaceful and inclusive societies and promoting human rights and social justice [18]. An education that emphasizes these moral values and character will help create individuals who are not only academically intelligent but also have integrity, ethics, and concern for others and the environment.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative design with a case study approach to explore the integration of religious values and character education in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in *the Independent Curriculum*, as well as how it supports the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [19]. This research involves the analysis of PAI textbooks used in high schools and vocational schools in Indonesia.

Data is collected through two main methods: document analysis and interviews. Document analysis was carried out on *the textbook of Islamic Religious Education and Ethics* to identify how religious values and character are integrated in the curriculum. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with PAI teachers to understand how they implement the curriculum and integrate those values into learning practices [20].

The data obtained were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, which involved initial reading, coding of important segments, thematic categorization, and cross-analysis between textbook and interview data to identify the consistency and effectiveness of value integration. The validity and reliability of the research are maintained by triangulating data, peer review, and member checking [21].

Table 1. Data Collection and Analysis Methods

Method	Description
Document Analysis	Analyze PAI textbooks to identify the integration of religious values and character.
Interview	Semi-structured interviews with PAI teachers to gather insights on curriculum implementation.
Thematic Analysis	Categorize data to find themes related to religious values and character in learning.
Triangulation	Compare data from different sources (textbooks and interviews) to validate findings.
Member Checking	Engage teachers to ensure that the findings are in line with their perspective.

With this methodology, this research is expected to provide an in-depth picture of how the integration of religious values and character in PAI can support the development of students who have noble character and are ready to contribute to society.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Integration between Religious Values and Character Values in PAI Learning

The Islamic Religious Education and Ethics Book for grades X, XI, and XII, which is used in the Independent Curriculum, aims to integrate Pancasila values into Islamic religious materials, with a focus on developing students' character and spirituality. This book not only teaches religious science but also instills values such as faith, noble morals, cooperation, creativity, critical reasoning, independence, and global diversity [22]. Character education that is included in daily learning aims to strengthen students' personal

development and is in line with SDG 4 (Quality Education), which prioritizes inclusive, equitable, and quality education, as well as lifelong learning opportunities for all. These values are the foundation for forming students who are not only intellectually intelligent but also have high moral integrity [23].

This book is published by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, and is adapted to the Independent Curriculum and the 2013 Curriculum. In the scientific classification, this book is included in the normative-theological and integrative science pattern, which combines religious teachings (PAI) with moral development (ethics) in one holistic learning structure [24]. This integrative approach supports SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), which focuses on character education that creates individuals committed to social justice, peace, and human rights.

The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes the importance of integrating character values such as honesty, responsibility, tolerance, empathy, and cooperation in subject matter, teaching methods, and evaluation [25]. These values are in line with the goals of the Pancasila Student Profile, which aims to form students who have faith, noble character, creativity, and can think critically and live in diversity. Thus, character education in this curriculum not only helps to form intelligent personalities but also trains students to live in diversity and build harmonious social relationships, in accordance with SDG 10 (Reduction of Inequality) [26].

The integration of religious values and character in PAI learning can be clearly seen in the learning objectives in this book, such as learning the story of the Prophet Muhammad SAW [27]. The book also presents a synthesis matrix that integrates the religious values of the Qur'an and Hadith, as well as character values relevant to the personal and social development of students. This approach helps students to understand the relationship between religious teachings and the application of those values in their social lives, as well as to contribute to character development that supports sustainable development [28]. Thus, this education, based on the integration of religious values and character, not only equips students with religious knowledge but also directs them to become responsible and useful individuals in society, as well as contribute to the achievement of sustainable development goals at the global level.

Table 2. Types of Pattern Integration in Islamic Education

Types of Integrations	Focus	Theory/Expert	Implementation Examples
Interdisciplinary	Combining two or more disciplines in one discussion	Jacobs (1989)	Ecosystem (biology) + Qur'anic verses about nature
Multidisciplinary	Several disciplines are studied in parallel with the same theme	Fogarty (1991)	Eclipse from the point of view of science & syar'i
Transdisciplinary	Transcending the boundaries of the discipline, forming a new synthesis	Nicolescu (2002)	Fiqh al-bi'ah (ecology + Islamic law + global ethics)
Islamic Curriculum	Uniting ulum al-din & ulum al-dunya, eliminating the dichotomy of knowledge	Al-Attas (1980)	Integration of tafsir with science and technology in Islamic universities
Value Integration	Inculcate moral values in all school lessons & activities	Lickona (1991)	Mathematics → Train Honesty and Thoroughness

The results of the study of the text and observations carried out show that the book of Islamic Religious Education and Ethics integrates religious values and character in learning in a systematic and planned way. This integration is reflected in various aspects of learning, ranging from objectives, materials, methods, media, evaluation, to extracurricular activities and the school environment, all of which support the achievement of SDG 4 (Quality Education) [29]. By emphasizing the character development of students based on religious values, this book plays a role in creating learning that is not only intellectually intelligent but also concerned about morality and ethics.

Learning Objectives

In the learning objectives, character values are explicitly included. For example, in learning the story of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, the learning objectives are formulated by including the character values to be achieved, such as *"Through learning the story of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, students can show honest and responsible behavior in daily life"* [30]. The values that are integrated in this goal include honesty, responsibility, trust, and discipline. This is in line with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), which prioritizes the formation of strong character in the field of justice and honesty in society.

Learning Materials

The learning material in this book is also designed to contain character values that are relevant to the teachings of Islam. Some of the materials used include the exemplary stories of the Prophet and his companions, who teach values such as honesty, patience, and toughness. Worship teachings that involve responsibility, discipline, and solemnity are also part of the learning material [31]. In addition, Qur'anic verses about morality, such as compassion, empathy, and tolerance, are also included, for example, QS. Al-Hujurat: 11-13, which teaches brotherhood and anti-bullying, as well as the story of the Prophet Joseph, who teaches about self-care, patience, and forgiveness. This learning supports SDG 10 (Reduction of Inequality) because it teaches values that encourage equality and justice among others [32].

Learning Methods

The learning methods used in this book allow students to be more actively involved in learning and reflect on character values. Methods such as discussion, questioning, and answering were developed to hone critical thinking skills and respect the opinions of others. Role play techniques serve to instill a sense of social responsibility and empathy, while project-based learning (PBL) trains cooperation, independence, and responsibility. The think-pair-share (TPS) method is also applied to foster mutual respect and self-reflection among students [33]. This approach contributes to the achievement of SDG 4 and SDG 16, as students are taught to think critically, respect differences, and work together to achieve common goals.

Learning Media and Resources

The media and learning resources used support the formation of students' characters by presenting videos of inspiring Islamic stories, infographics on moral values, and illustrated stories about exemplary figures [34]. For example, the film The Message and the Omar series are used to illustrate the value of da'wah and honesty, which were conveyed by PAI teachers of SMAN 1 Indralaya Utara. The use of this media supports SDG 17 (Partnership for the Goals) by engaging a variety of resources working together to achieve inclusive learning goals.

Evaluation and Assessment

Evaluation and assessment in PAI learning not only focus on cognitive aspects, but also include affective and psychomotor aspects. Assessment is carried out through attitude observation, such as rubrics that assess honesty and responsibility. In addition, personal reflection in the form of a journal of personal values and peer assessment about cooperation and honesty is also implemented [35]. Instruments such as spiritual and social attitude observation formats in character-based learning are also used to assess students' character achievements. This holistic evaluation supports SDG 4 by ensuring that students are assessed not only academically, but also in terms of their attitudes and behaviors in daily life.

Extracurricular Activities and School Environment

In addition to the classroom, extracurricular activities are also involved in the integration of these character values. Activities such as congregational prayers, cults, commemoration of Islamic holidays, as well as Friday Blessing programs, social services, and Qur'an literacy play an important role in building religious character, care, and cooperation of students [36]. This activity supports SDG 3 (Healthy Living and Well-being) by teaching the importance of students' spiritual and social well-being. The school environment also contributes to character formation through a PAI-based educational ecosystem. The school creates an atmosphere that supports character learning, such as manners towards teachers and friends, as well as the 5S culture (Smile, Greeting, Politeness, Manners). Moral value posters were also installed in classrooms and prayer rooms to strengthen character learning applied in schools, which contributed to SDG 11 (Inclusive, Safe, Resilient, and Sustainable Cities and Settlements).

Science Patterns and Integration Models in PAI for SDGs

Islamic *Religious Education and Ethics books* can be categorized in a normative-theological pattern of integrative science. This scientific pattern prioritizes material sourced from the Qur'an and Hadith, which is complemented by the opinions of scholars and used as a guideline for life norms. This book not only focuses on the delivery of pure religious knowledge, but also combines it with moral development (ethics) in one comprehensive learning structure [37]. Thus, this book supports SDG 4 (Quality Education) by providing a comprehensive education based on moral, spiritual, and social values.

This book covers three main fields of knowledge: Islamic science, which includes tafsir, hadith, fiqh, creed, and morals; the educational sciences, which focus on learning theories, learning methods, and character development; and social sciences and humanities, which deal with social, ethical, and civic interactions [38]. Thus, this book combines religious teachings with character education and social skills in an integrated approach. This approach also supports SDG 10 (Reducing Inequality) by providing a basis for understanding diversity and social equality among students.

This book also uses an integration-interconnection pattern, which connects religious science with various other disciplines. Educational science is applied with active, project-based, and self-reflection learning strategies, which encourage student participation in the learning process [39]. Social sciences are integrated with Islamic teachings that are relevant to community life, tolerance, and harmony, which are in line with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). Students are taught to be part of a peaceful and inclusive society. In addition, humanities are developed by teaching the values of aesthetics, Islamic art, and moderate Islamic culture, so that students not only understand religious teachings but can also apply them in broader social and cultural life [40]. This approach supports SDG 11 (Inclusive, Safe, Resilient, and Sustainable Cities and Settlements) by emphasizing the importance of aesthetic and cultural values in creating harmonious societies.

The book also implements several integration models that support the overall learning objectives. Substantial integration connects religious materials to students' daily attitudes and behaviors, such as linking verses about honesty to honesty practices in schools, which is in line with SDG 16. Curricular integration ensures that PAI values and ethics are structured in learning outcomes (CP), learning objectives (TP), and learning activities, which enable students to develop character and knowledge systematically [41]. Contextual integration introduces religious material with examples of contemporary events, such as social media issues, the environment, and interfaith tolerance, so that students can see the relevance of religious teachings in their daily lives. This approach supports SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) by linking religious teachings to contemporary issues relevant to social responsibility and sustainability.

Table 3. Summary of Types of Scientific Patterns, Field of Model Science, Objectives, and Characteristics

Aspects	Information
Types of Science Patterns	Normative-theological & integrative
Dominant Fields of Science	Islamic Sciences, Education, Social Sciences-Humanities
Integration Model	Substantial, curricular, contextual integration
Main Source	The Qur'an, Hadiths, scholars' opinions, and educational scientific references
Purpose	To form students who have faith, knowledge, and noble character
Characteristic	Religion-based material with character and social competence strengthening

These findings show that the integration of religious values and character education is a key feature in the PAI curriculum. Through an interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary approach, the Independent Curriculum encourages a holistic educational experience, which not only molds students into knowledgeable individuals but also of good character. This approach is in line with the theory of value integration put forward by Lickona, which emphasizes the importance of integrated character education in every aspect of learning. This approach also supports the achievement of SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by instilling character values that lead to a more just, peaceful, and sustainable social life.

Analysis of Research Findings and SDGs Integration

This research provides a comprehensive qualitative analysis of how religious values and character education are systematically integrated within Islamic Religious Education (PAI) under Indonesia's Independent Curriculum and how this integration substantively contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education). The study's strength lies in its holistic examination of curriculum documents, pedagogical practices, and teacher perspectives, offering a grounded understanding of value-based education in real instructional contexts. At the conceptual level, the study positions PAI not merely as a normative subject transmitting doctrinal knowledge, but as a transformative educational space where moral reasoning, ethical awareness, and social responsibility are cultivated. The integration of religious and character education reflects a paradigmatic shift from content-oriented instruction toward competency- and value-oriented learning. This aligns closely with SDG 4.7, which emphasizes education for sustainable development, global citizenship, human rights, and cultural diversity.

The findings demonstrate that character values—such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, cooperation, and critical thinking—are embedded across learning objectives, instructional materials, pedagogical methods, media use, and assessment strategies. This systematic integration supports the principle of inclusive and equitable quality education by addressing not only cognitive development but also affective and behavioral domains. Consequently, education is framed as a means of human development rather than mere academic achievement, reinforcing SDG 4's broader educational vision

From an SDGs perspective, the curriculum's emphasis on moral integrity and ethical behavior also contributes to SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). By instilling values such as honesty, discipline, tolerance, and social responsibility, PAI learning fosters students' readiness to participate in peaceful and just social structures. The study highlights that religious narratives, Qur'anic values, and prophetic exemplars are pedagogically mobilized to encourage ethical citizenship, anti-bullying attitudes, and respect for diversity. This positions religious education as a strategic instrument for long-term social cohesion and institutional trust.

The research further identifies interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary integration as key pedagogical strategies. Interdisciplinary integration connects Islamic teachings with scientific and social knowledge, such as linking Qur'anic perspectives on nature with ecological education. This approach contributes to SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 15 (Life on Land) by fostering environmental awareness grounded in religious ethics. Students are encouraged to view environmental stewardship as both a spiritual obligation and a global responsibility, reinforcing sustainability-oriented behavior.

Multidisciplinary integration allows different subjects to address shared themes—such as natural phenomena or social ethics—while maintaining disciplinary boundaries. This enhances students' holistic understanding and supports SDG 4's emphasis on relevant and meaningful learning. Meanwhile, transdisciplinary integration transcends subject boundaries altogether, synthesizing religious knowledge, social ethics, and global challenges into a unified framework. The study's example of fiqh al-bi'ah illustrates how Islamic jurisprudence can intersect with ecology and global ethics, directly supporting climate resilience and sustainable development goals.

Another critical contribution of the study lies in its analysis of assessment practices. Evaluation in PAI extends beyond written tests to include attitude observation, reflective journals, and peer assessment. This comprehensive evaluation model ensures that character development is monitored and valued alongside academic performance, strengthening the quality assurance dimension of SDG 4. Such practices also nurture self-awareness and ethical accountability among students, which are essential for sustainable social development. Extracurricular activities and the school environment further reinforce SDGs integration. Religious practices, social service programs, Qur'anic literacy activities, and community engagement initiatives extend character education beyond the classroom. These activities promote students' spiritual well-being and social empathy, contributing to SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 11 (Inclusive and Sustainable Communities). The cultivation of a school culture grounded in respect, discipline, and social care demonstrates how institutional ecosystems can support sustainable educational outcomes.

Critically, the study underscores the central role of teachers as value transmitters and curriculum interpreters. Teachers' pedagogical creativity and moral commitment significantly influence the effectiveness of character integration. This finding highlights the need for continuous professional development aligned with SDGs-oriented education, ensuring that educators are equipped to translate global goals into contextual learning practices. Overall, this research confirms that the integration of religious values and character education within the Independent Curriculum is not symbolic but structural and operational. By embedding ethical, social, and spiritual dimensions into PAI learning, the curriculum actively contributes to SDG 4, SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 16, and

SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). The study thus provides a compelling model for how faith-based education can function as a catalyst for sustainable development while remaining contextually rooted in local cultural and religious traditions

CONCLUSION

The Islamic Religious Education and Ethics book for grades X, XI, and XII used in the Independent Curriculum has succeeded in integrating religious values and character in every aspect of learning. This book not only teaches religious knowledge but also instills values such as faith, noble morals, creativity, and global diversity. Through a normative-theological and integrative approach, this book combines religious teachings with moral development in one comprehensive learning structure, covering Islamic science, education, and social sciences. This approach supports SDG 4 (Quality Education) by providing comprehensive and relevant education. The integration of religious values and character in PAI learning is clearly seen in the learning objectives, materials, methods, media, and evaluations that support the formation of students' character. With a substantial, curricular, and contextual integration model, this book ensures that students not only develop religious knowledge but also character values relevant to everyday life, such as honesty, responsibility, and empathy. This supports SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by instilling the values of justice and integrity in society. In addition, the Independent Curriculum plays an important role in shaping the character and spirituality of students. With a structured and systematic approach, which includes learning objectives, methods, media, and evaluation, the curriculum encourages a deeper understanding of Islam and the application of character values in daily life. This approach supports SDG 10 (Reducing Inequality), as it emphasizes social equality and respect for diversity in society. The findings of this study confirm the importance of a comprehensive educational framework, which links religious education with character development. This enables students to face the challenges of the modern world while adhering to strong religious values and noble morals, which in turn supports the goals of SDG 17 (Partnership for the Goals), by creating strong partnerships in achieving quality and sustainable education.

Acknowledgments

Author Contribution

All authors collaboratively designed the research framework, conducted data collection and analysis, and developed the manuscript. Authors from Universitas Sriwijaya, Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang, and the University of The Gambia contributed equally to conceptualization, interpretation of findings, critical revisions, and final approval.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to this study. The research was conducted independently without financial, institutional, or personal relationships that could influence the objectivity, analysis, or interpretation of data and conclusions presented in this article.

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