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Strategies of Moral Faith Teachers in Integrating SDGs-Based Character Education in Islamic Boarding Schools

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Abstract

Objective: This study analyzes the pedagogical strategies of Akidah Akhlak teachers in integrating SDGs-based character education at Al-Jauharen Islamic Boarding School, Jambi City, focusing on discipline, honesty, and responsibility. **Theoretical framework:** The research is grounded in character education theory, value internalization, and contextual pedagogy, aligned with SDGs principles that emphasize inclusive, equitable, and value-oriented education. **Literature review:** Previous studies indicate that Akidah Akhlak learning remains largely cognitive and memorization-oriented, limiting effective character internalization, while empirical studies on teacher strategies in pesantren contexts and their linkage to SDGs are still limited. **Method:** This study employs a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach involving teachers, school leaders, and students, using interviews, observations, and documentation, analyzed through the Miles and Huberman model with triangulation. **Results:** Findings reveal that SDGs-oriented character integration is implemented through structured planning, teacher exemplification, value habituation, and reflective discussions rooted in students' experiences and strengthened by pesantren culture; however, it remains insufficiently systematic, particularly in evaluation, and is constrained by time and students' psychological factors. **Implications:** The study highlights the need for more reflective, contextual, and sustainable pedagogical strategies aligned with SDGs, ensuring that character values are internalized beyond normative understanding into real student behavior. **Novelty:** This research offers an empirical contribution by specifically examining SDGs-based character education integration strategies in Akidah Akhlak learning within a pesantren-based madrasah context, which remains underexplored.

Keywords: sdgs, character education, moral faith, teacher strategy, islamic boarding school.

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary global education discourse, the implementation of SDGs has emphasized the urgency of developing holistic education that integrates cognitive, affective, and ethical dimensions. Education is no longer viewed merely as a tool for academic achievement, but as a strategic means to foster responsible, ethical, and socially conscious individuals in line with the vision of SDGs. However, despite strong global commitments, the practical integration of value-based education into classroom pedagogy remains uneven, particularly in religious education contexts where moral content is abundant but not always effectively internalized [1].

A significant research gap lies in the limited empirical exploration of how teachers translate normative moral values into lived learning experiences that align with SDGs principles. Existing studies tend to focus on policy frameworks or institutional culture, while neglecting the micro-level pedagogical strategies that directly shape students' character formation. Moreover, there is still insufficient understanding of how Islamic boarding school environments, with their strong cultural and spiritual systems, can be optimized to support systematic and sustainable character education [2].

Education is essentially a process of forming a whole human being that not only develops intellectual capacity but also forms character, attitudes, and moral orientations that guide individual behavior in social life [1]. Therefore, the success of education cannot be reduced solely to academic achievements, but must be seen from the extent to which the educational process is able to produce individuals who have integrity, responsibility, and ethical awareness in acting. In the context of human resource development, the character dimension is the foundation that determines the quality of the use of knowledge and skills possessed by students [2].

However, educational practices in Indonesia to date still show a strong tendency towards cognitive orientation. The assessment of learning success is often centered on test results, grade achievement, and mastery of the material, while character building has not always been designed as an integral part of the pedagogical process. This condition has an impact on the emergence of various moral problems among students, such as low discipline, weak honesty in academic activities, and a lack of responsibility for the rules and mandates given [3]. This phenomenon shows that there is a gap between the normative goals of education that emphasize the formation of noble morals and the reality of learning practices in educational units.

Character education in many contexts is still present as a policy discourse or symbolic program, but has not been fully operationalized as systematic pedagogical work [4]. Character values are often conveyed in the form of advice, slogans, or written rules, without being accompanied by a learning strategy that allows students to experience, reflect, and habituate these values in real actions. In fact, character is not formed through information alone. The process of internalizing values requires consistent habituation, example, strengthening, and continuous evaluation so that values do not stop at the level of knowledge, but become deep-rooted awareness and habits.

In the context of religious-based formal education, especially madrasas, character education should have a more strategic position because moral and ethical values are substantively embedded in the objectives and learning materials. However, the integration of character values in religious learning does not automatically guarantee the success of student character formation. In practice, religious learning, including the subject of Moral Faith, is still often oriented towards mastery of material and memorization of concepts. As a result, the character values contained in it have not been fully internalized in students' daily behavior [5]. This shows that the main problem does not lie in the richness of values in the teaching material, but in the pedagogical strategies used by teachers in managing learning.

The subject of Moral Faith has great potential as a medium for character formation. This subject contains the foundation of beliefs, moral orientation, and manners in social and religious relations that are directly related to the formation of students' attitudes and behaviors. However, this potential can only be realized if learning is designed contextually and reflectively, so that students not only understand the value conceptually, but are also able to relate it to everyday life experiences [6]. Thus, the integration of character education in the Moral Creed requires the pedagogical ability of teachers to manage learning objectives, methods, classroom activities, and evaluation in harmony with attitude formation.

Islamic boarding schools, as Islamic educational institutions, have structural and cultural advantages in the development of students' character. Dormitory life, structured worship rhythms, manners, traditions, and the intensity of the relationship between teachers and students are strong social capital for the process of internalizing values. The pesantren environment allows character education to take place not only in the classroom, but also in the practice of daily life [7]. However, reality shows that the existence of the pesantren system does not automatically eliminate character problems, especially in students who are in the early to secondary adolescent development phase.

Grade IX MTs students are in a period of development characterized by emotional dynamics, self-identity search, and increasing peer environmental influence. In this phase, students' behavior tends to fluctuate and be responsive to the social situation around them. These conditions make the values of discipline, honesty, and responsibility vulnerable to inconsistencies in daily practice. Therefore, the approach to character education at this level is not enough to be carried out through the enforcement of rules or the provision of sanctions, but requires learning and mentoring strategies that are able to foster students' internal awareness of the values they are living.

The Al-Jauharen Islamic Boarding School in Jambi City institutionally places character education as an important part of its educational orientation [8]. The vision and institutional practices show a commitment to fostering students' morals and character. However, preliminary findings in the field suggest that the integration of character education in learning is underway, but it still faces some challenges. Some grade IX MTs students show behaviors that indicate a weak internalization of the values of discipline, honesty, and responsibility, such as delays in participating in activities, inconsistency in obeying provisions, and lack of commitment to daily tasks and mandates. This symptom indicates that character development requires strengthening at the level of pedagogical strategy, not just the addition of rules or supervision.

In this context, the role of the Moral Faith teacher is very crucial. The teacher not only functions as a material presenter but also as a designer of learning experiences that allow character values to be learned, experienced, and habituated. The learning strategies used by teachers, starting from planning learning objectives, selecting methods, managing class interactions, and the form of evaluation, are determining factors for the success of character education integration [9]. Without a directed strategy, character values have the potential to remain at the normative level and not transform into real behavior.

So far, studies on character education in the pesantren environment have largely highlighted normative, policy, or general achievements of moral development [10]. Meanwhile, studies that specifically examine the strategies of Akidah Akhlak teachers in integrating character education into the learning process are still relatively limited, especially in the context of madrasah tsanawiyah and in grade IX age groups that have their own developmental characteristics [11]. In fact, the teacher's learning strategy is the main bridge that connects the ideal goal of character education with the learning practices that students actually experience.

Based on these considerations, this study is directed to in-depth examine the strategies of Akidah Akhlak teachers in integrating character education in grade IX MTs students at the Al-Jauharen Islamic Boarding School, Jambi City, with a focus on instilling the values of discipline, honesty, and responsibility. In addition, this study also analyzes the supporting and inhibiting factors that affect the effectiveness of integrating character education in learning Akidah Akhlak. Through this study, it is hoped that a sharper understanding of pedagogical practices that work in character formation will be obtained, so that the research findings can make a theoretical contribution to the development of character education studies based on learning Akidah Akhlak, as well as practical contributions to strengthening the implementation of character education in madrasah and pesantren environments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The integration of character education within Islamic educational settings has been widely discussed as a strategic effort to address the imbalance between cognitive achievement and moral development. In many madrasah contexts, learning still emphasizes memorization and conceptual understanding, while the internalization of values such as discipline, honesty, and responsibility remains less systematically implemented. Character education is fundamentally viewed as a process of value internalization that requires not only knowledge transmission but also consistent habituation, reflective engagement, and meaningful learning experiences in line with SDGs principles [11].

Within the framework of Islamic education, the subject of Akidah Akhlak holds a central role in shaping students' moral awareness because it connects theological beliefs with ethical behavior. However, the effectiveness of this subject in fostering character depends largely on pedagogical strategies employed by teachers. Studies on value internalization emphasize that students develop character more effectively when they are actively involved in contextual learning processes that relate moral concepts to their daily experiences, supporting the vision of SDGs in education [11].

In pesantren-based education systems, character formation is further strengthened by institutional culture. The boarding school environment provides continuous exposure to structured routines, religious practices, and social interactions that support habituation of values. This creates a "hidden curriculum" where students learn discipline, honesty, and responsibility through daily practice, reflecting the holistic approach promoted by SDGs. Teacher exemplification is consistently highlighted as a critical factor in character education. Students tend to imitate behaviors demonstrated by teachers, making consistency between teaching and practice essential. Additionally, effective character education requires integration across planning, implementation, and evaluation stages of learning, which is also emphasized in SDGs frameworks [12].

Despite these strengths, challenges such as limited instructional time, large class sizes, and the lack of systematic assessment tools often hinder optimal implementation. These constraints indicate the need for more structured and sustainable pedagogical strategies aligned with SDGs to ensure long-term impact. Furthermore, integrating character education contributes to the development of responsible, ethical, and socially aware individuals, which is a core objective of SDGs. Ultimately, the alignment between Islamic character education and SDGs highlights the importance of value-based learning in achieving sustainable and inclusive educational transformation under SDGs.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive-analytical qualitative approach to examine the strategies of Akidah Akhlak teachers in integrating character education within the framework of SDGs-oriented learning. The qualitative design is considered appropriate to explore deeply the pedagogical processes, meanings, and experiences that reflect the implementation of SDGs values in educational practice. The research was conducted at MTs Al-Jauharen Islamic Boarding School, Jambi City, as a representative pesantren-based institution that integrates formal and non-formal education aligned with SDGs principles [12].

The primary subjects of this study are Akidah Akhlak teachers who were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in planning and implementing character-based instruction consistent with SDGs perspectives. Additional informants include the head of the madrasah and selected students, who provide complementary insights into the effectiveness of character education practices within the SDGs

context. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and documentation analysis, including lesson plans, teaching materials, and institutional policies that reflect the integration of SDGs values [12].

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. This process allows for systematic interpretation of how pedagogical strategies are aligned with SDGs in real educational settings. The validity and trustworthiness of the data were ensured through triangulation of sources and techniques, as well as member checking with informants to confirm the accuracy of interpretations related to SDGs implementation. Through this methodological framework, the study aims to produce a comprehensive and credible understanding of how character education is pedagogically integrated and operationalized in alignment with SDGs, ensuring that the findings reflect authentic field conditions and contribute to sustainable educational development [13].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Brief Profile of Al-Jauharen Islamic Boarding School

Al-Jauharen Islamic Boarding School is located in Tanjung Johor Village, Pelayangan District, Jambi City. This institution began from a recitation activity pioneered by Sheikh H. Usman bin Haji Aji in 1300 H (1872 AD) in the Sungai Asam Darat area [13]. As the number of students increased, the recitation activities were then moved to the Tanjung Johor area and held at the local mosque before finally developing into a more organized educational institution. In 1346 AH (1927 AD), the community, together with local religious leaders, established the Al-Jauharen College as a form of institutionalization of Islamic education in the region. The leadership of the pesantren then underwent several changes, following the social dynamics and internal conditions of the institution. In its development, Al-Jauharen College had experienced a period of vacuum, especially towards the end of the 1980s, so that educational activities did not run optimally. Efforts to reactivate were carried out in 2003 on the initiative of religious leaders and the people of Tanjung Johor. Since then, Al-Jauharen has been developed with a new format as a boarding school that organizes formal and non-formal education simultaneously. The education system implemented combines the madrasah curriculum according to the provisions of the Ministry of Religion with pesantren activities that take place in dormitories [14].

Currently, MTs Al-Jauharen Islamic Boarding School is one of the formal education units under the management of the Islamic boarding school. Educational activities take place in a pesantren environment with a dormitory system, daily rules, and relatively intensive supervision of student life. This condition forms a typical educational environment, where interaction between teachers, students, and pesantren managers takes place directly and continuously, both in the classroom and outside the classroom [15]. In the context of this study, the Al-Jauharen Islamic Boarding School is positioned as a research location because it has the characteristics of an educational institution that combines formal learning in madrasas with daily Islamic boarding school life. This condition allows researchers to observe firsthand how the values of discipline, honesty, and responsibility are applied in teaching and learning activities in the classroom as well as in the lives of students in the school and pesantren environment [16].

Strategies of Moral Faith Teachers in Character Education Integration

The integration of character education in the learning of Moral Beliefs in grade IX MTs students of the Al-Jauharen Islamic Boarding School, Jambi City, is carried out

through pedagogical strategies that are designed consciously, systematically, and continuously, starting from the learning planning stage, learning implementation, and learning evaluation [17]. The character values that are the main focus of integration are discipline, honesty, and responsibility, which are seen as the foundation of a Muslim's morals and are relevant to the developmental needs of students in the early adolescence phase. In practice, the learning of Akidah Akhlak is not directed solely at mastering theological concepts, but at the formation of religious attitudes and behaviors that are reflected in the daily lives of students in the madrasah and pesantren environment [18].

The results of the research through interviews show that the integration of character education has been explicitly designed from the learning planning stage. Teachers of Moral Faith do not position character education as an additional content, but as an integral part of learning goals [19]. This is reflected in the Learning Implementation Plan (RPP), which not only contains cognitive goals, but also affective goals that are directly related to the formation of students' character. The head of the madrasah emphasized that character education has become part of the school's curriculum policy through the establishment of key Islamic values such as honesty, patience, responsibility, and compassion as learning goals that must be internalized by students [20]. Thus, the value of honesty and other moral values is not positioned as a mere implicit message, but as a formally planned learning target.

In the Moral Faith RPP analyzed, the values of discipline, honesty, and responsibility are directly related to the teaching material. As in the material of faith in Allah and His attributes, the teacher formulates learning objectives so that students not only understand the concepts of al-'Adl (Most Just) and al-Amīn (Most Trustworthy), but also be able to emulate these qualities in daily behavior, such as being honest in doing assignments, not cheating during exams, and being responsible for the mandate given by the teacher. In commendable moral materials, such as trust and honesty, teachers design learning activities in the form of simple case studies taken from student experiences, for example, about honesty during exams or the responsibility of carrying out class picket duties [21]. A teacher of Akidah Akhlak stated that character planning must be done from the beginning so that learning does not stop at the delivery of normative material: "If character is not planned from the beginning, it usually only appears as advice at the end of the lesson. Therefore, in the lesson plan, I write down the character values that I want to form, so that learning has a direction". These findings show a pedagogical awareness that learning planning functions as a roadmap for the integration of character education, although the study also found that the attitude assessment indicators in the lesson plan are still general and have not been fully equipped with detailed character evaluation instruments [22].

In the learning implementation stage, the integration of character education is realized through several main strategies that complement each other, namely teacher examples, value habituation, as well as reflective discussions and case studies. The example of teachers is the most fundamental strategy in learning Akidah Akhlak. Teachers realize that moral values will be difficult to internalize if they are not accompanied by real examples in the attitude and behavior of educators [23]. Therefore, teachers try to display consistency between the teachings conveyed and daily behavior, such as coming to class on time, being honest in delivering material, and being responsible for teaching tasks and student coaching. This attitude is not conveyed explicitly as "character material", but is present as a real practice that is observed and imitated by students. A grade IX student revealed that the teacher's example has a strong influence on their behavior: "If the ustaz is disciplined and not favoritism, we will be ashamed of ourselves if we violate. It feels like it is not being told, but exemplified". Analytically, teacher examples function as a medium for internalizing values that work on the affective realm and moral awareness of students,

especially in the context of pesantren, where the teacher figure has strong moral authority.

In addition to examples, habituation of values is an important strategy in the implementation of Akidah Akhlak learning. Learning is strengthened through routines that practice discipline, honesty, and responsibility, both in the classroom and in the life of the pesantren. Students are accustomed to starting learning with prayer, participating in congregational prayers on time, reading the Qur'an regularly, and carrying out weekly infaq. Teachers consistently associate these routines with moral values, so that students understand that the practice is a form of practicing the faith and morals of a Muslim [24]. The Akidah Akhlak teacher explained: "At the Islamic boarding school, children are actually used to discipline through schedules. In the Akidah Akhlak class, I emphasize that all of these are part of the mandate and morals". Students also admit that the habituation slowly forms a positive habit: "At first it feels heavy, but over time it becomes normal. Especially if it is explained that it is part of morals, so you understand better". These findings show that habitual values that are carried out consistently and accompanied by religious meaning are able to shift student behavior from mere structural compliance to internal awareness.

Other strategies used by teachers are reflective discussions and case studies. In learning Akidah Akhlak, teachers raise real problems that are close to students' experiences, such as dishonesty during exams, neglect to carry out picket duties, or delays in participating in pesantren activities. These cases are discussed dialogically by relating them to the values of faith and morals that are being studied. The teacher said that this approach is more effective than one-way lectures: "If it's just lectures, children are often passive. But if the cases they have experienced themselves are discussed, they are more open and willing to think". Students also feel that reflective discussions help them realize mistakes without feeling judged: "If you discuss it together, become aware of yourself. Sometimes it's embarrassing because it turns out that we're the one at fault". This approach reinforces the integration of character values in the cognitive and affective realms simultaneously, as students not only know the correct values but also reflect on their meaning and impact in real life.

The integration of character education is also reflected in the evaluation of the learning of the Moral Faith. Teachers not only assess cognitive achievement through written tests, but also pay attention to students' attitudes and behaviors during the learning process. Character assessments are carried out through daily observations, behavioral notes, and personal dialogue between teachers and students [25]. Teachers view evaluation as part of the coaching process, not just punishment. When encountering behavior that does not match character values, the teacher chooses a dialogical approach to help students understand mistakes and correct their attitudes: "If there is a child who is dishonest or irresponsible, I talk to him first. Evaluation is part of coaching, not punishing". However, this study also found that attitude evaluation still faces limitations, especially in terms of systematic and documented assessment instruments, so character assessment still relies heavily on the subjective observation of teachers.

Character Values Developed in Islamic Boarding Schools and Schools

The development of character values in learning Moral Beliefs in grade IX MTs students of the Al-Jauharen Islamic Boarding School, Jambi City, is focused on three main values, namely discipline, honesty, and responsibility. These three values were chosen because they have a central position in Islamic moral teachings and are relevant to the dynamics of student development in the early adolescence phase, which is characterized by the search for self-identity, emotional fluctuations, and the increasing need for consistent moral coaching [26]. In this context, character

education is not understood as a curricular addition, but as the core of learning the Moral Faith, which is directed at the formation of the Muslim personality as a whole.

Discipline values are developed through learning management that emphasizes regularity, compliance with rules, and consistency in carrying out obligations. In the practice of learning Akidah Akhlak in the classroom, teachers show discipline through punctuality in starting and ending lessons, readiness of learning tools, and consistency in enforcing classroom rules. Students are required to attend on time, bring study materials, and participate in learning in an orderly manner [27]. Teachers not only reprimand violations of discipline, but relate them to the material of Akidah Akhlak, especially in the discussion of trust and *istiqamah*. The Akidah Akhlak teacher explained that discipline is part of the mandate of a Muslim who will be accounted for, as expressed in an interview: "Discipline is not only a matter of school rules, but part of morals. If the child understands that this is trustworthy, he is more aware, not just afraid of being punished".

The value of honesty is developed as a fundamental moral principle inherent in the learning of Akidah Akhlak, both in the academic context and in the social life of students. In the classroom, teachers instill honesty through the affirmation of the prohibition of cheating, the obligation to do assignments independently, and the encouragement to dare to admit mistakes. This practice is associated with the material of faith in Allah, especially the understanding of the nature of *al-'Alīm* (the All-Knowing) and *al-Amīn* (the Most Trustworthy). The teacher emphasized that honesty is not just obedience to school rules, but a consequence of the belief that every human deed is under God's watch. A teacher said, "If children already understand Allah is All-Knowing, they are usually more embarrassed to act dishonestly, even though they are not supervised".

In learning practice, teachers often raise real cases that are close to students' lives, such as honesty during exams or honesty in returning found items. The cases are discussed reflectively to help students understand the moral and social impacts of honest and dishonest behavior. A grade IX student revealed that this kind of discussion makes them more aware of the consequences of their actions: "If we discuss the examples that we often experience, we think for ourselves. Dishonesty turns out to have a long impact". In the *pesantren* environment, the value of honesty is strengthened through the habit of trust, such as honesty in managing pocket money, the implementation of weekly *infaq*, and honesty in reporting room cleaning tasks. These practices reflect the teachings in *al-Ghazālī's Iḥyā' Ulūm al-Dīn*, which places honesty (*ṣidq*) as the core of morality and the foundation of social trust [28].

The value of responsibility is developed through the assignment of tasks, roles, and obligations that demand student commitment and consistency. In learning Akidah Akhlak, teachers practice responsibility through the timely completion of tasks, active involvement in group discussions, and willingness to accept the consequences of every action [29]. In the moral material on trust, teachers often ask students to reflect on the form of responsibility they have taken in their daily lives, both in the classroom and in the dormitory. One student stated: "If it is associated with a trust, the task is not considered a burden, but a responsibility". This reflection helps students interpret tasks not just as administrative obligations, but as part of moral formation.

In the *pesantren* environment, the value of responsibility is strengthened through the class picket system, room cleaning tasks, and the role of student management. Students who are entrusted as class leaders or dormitory administrators are trained to be responsible for their peers. The Akidah Akhlak teacher then relates the experience to learning in the classroom, so that students understand that responsibility is not only a social obligation, but also a form of moral and religious responsibility to Allah. This practice is in line with the teachings in the book *Akhlaq lil Banīn* by 'Umar bin Aḥmad

Barjā', which emphasizes the importance of personal and social responsibility as a form of noble morality.

In the pesantren environment, the value of discipline is strengthened through a strict daily schedule system, such as the obligation to pray in congregation five times, evening study activities, and recess time restrictions. This discipline is not positioned as external control alone, but is explained as part of moral training. Teachers of Moral Faith often associate the experience of pesantren discipline with classroom learning, so that students understand that time order and obedience to rules are real implementations of Islamic teachings. This practice is in line with the teachings in al-Zarnūjī's *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, which emphasizes the importance of time discipline (*ḥifz al-waqt*) and regularity in the pursuit of knowledge as a condition for blessings and success in learning [30].

The findings of this study show that the integration of character education in the learning of Moral Beliefs at MTs of the Al-Jauharen Islamic Boarding School does not stop at the normative approach, but is realized through contextual and reflective pedagogical strategies. This is in line with the view of contemporary character education that emphasizes the importance of integrating values in learning objectives, processes, and evaluations, rather than simply the insertion of moral messages. The approach applied by Akidah Akhlak teachers supports the concept of character education based on the internalization of values, as stated in cognitive-affective moral theory that emphasizes the reflective involvement of students [31]. The reflective discussions and case studies that teachers used reinforced Lawrence Kohlberg's findings on the importance of moral dialogue in increasing students' ethical awareness. However, the findings of this study go beyond a purely cognitive approach because moral values are associated with habitative worship practices and pesantren culture.

Compared to previous studies that have highlighted character education in Islamic boarding schools as a result of institutional culture, this study confirms that the role of Akidah Akhlak teachers as pedagogical actors has a strategic position [32]. Teachers function as a link between the normative values of Islamic teachings and the concrete experiences of students, so that character formation does not only depend on the pesantren system, but on a conscious and planned learning design.

Table 1. Integration of SDGs-Based Character Values in Classroom and Islamic Boarding School Practices Through Teacher Strategies

Character Value	Practice in the Classroom	Practice in Islamic Boarding Schools	Interview Data	Book References
Discipline	Arriving on time, orderly following lessons, consistent with class rules, and reflection on trust	Congregational prayers on time, evening study schedules, and obedience to discipline	"Discipline is part of the mandate, not just a rule."	<i>Ta'lim al-Muta'allim</i> (al-Zarnūjī): the importance of regularity of time and manners in the pursuit of knowledge
Honesty	Prohibition of cheating, independent duty, and discussion of honest cases	Pocket money trust, weekly infaq, dorm assignment report	"If Allah is aware of the Knower, children are more ashamed to act dishonestly";	<i>Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn</i> (al-Ghazālī): honesty as the essence of morality

			"The impact is long."	
Responsibilities	Timely assignments, discussion roles, and trust reflection	Class picketing, room cleanliness, and student management	"Duty is a responsibility, not a burden."	<i>Akhlaq lil Banīn</i> ('Umar bin Aḥmad Barjā'): personal and social responsibilities

Supporting Factors for Character Education Integration

The integration of character education in the learning of Moral Beliefs at MTs Al-Jauharen Islamic Boarding School, Jambi City, takes place in a complex pedagogical field, where the ideal values of Islamic education interact with the psychological reality of students, the demands of the formal curriculum, and the institutional dynamics of Islamic boarding schools and madrasas [33]. The process of cultivating character, especially discipline, honesty, and responsibility, cannot be understood only as a result of curriculum design or learning activities in the classroom, but as a product of layered interaction between institutional culture, the role of teachers, habituation systems, and students' internal conditions [34]. Therefore, an analysis of the supporting and inhibiting factors of the integration of character education is important to understand the extent to which the learning of Akidah Akhlak is able to function as a medium for moral formation, not just the transmission of normative knowledge.

One of the most dominant supporting factors is the culture of the pesantren, which forms the framework of student life as a whole. The boarding system with a strict worship schedule, daily supervision, and internalization of manners in social interaction creates a relatively conducive environment for character education. The discipline of congregational prayer times, the obligation to participate in night study activities, and compliance with dormitory rules indirectly train students to live in a clear value structure. The Akidah Akhlak teacher emphasized that this culture facilitates the process of learning character in class: "In Islamic boarding schools, children are used to living with rules. So when in the Akidah Akhlak class, trust or discipline is discussed, it is not something abstract for them".

The culture of the pesantren serves as a praxis context that allows the values of Akidah Akhlak to be translated into real experience. The value of honesty is not only taught through verses or hadiths, but is practiced through the rules prohibiting cheating, the mandate of room management, and the management of picket duties. However, field findings also show that pesantren culture is not an automatic guarantee of character formation [35]. In some cases, student compliance is still externally driven by supervision, and sanctions have not fully developed into internal awareness. This shows that pesantren culture needs to be strengthened through reflective pedagogical strategies so that values do not stop at structural compliance.

The next supporting factor is the example of teachers, who in the context of pesantren have a very strong moral weight. The Moral Faith Teacher not only functions as a material presenter but also as an ethical figure whose behavior is intensely observed by students. Research findings show that students are more likely to accept and imitate character values when they see consistency between the teacher's teachings and actions. A grade IX student said: "If the ustaz is disciplined and honest, we will be ashamed of ourselves if we violate. It feels like it's not being told, but exemplified".

From a pedagogical perspective, the teacher's example works on the affective realm and moral imagination of students. Teachers who arrive on time, are fair, and are

responsible for their teaching duties indirectly instill moral standards that become a reference for student behavior. In classical Islamic education, exemplary (*uswah*) is seen as the main method of moral *tarbiyah*. These findings reinforce the view that character education will lose its transformative power when teachers only act as academic instructors without consistent personal integrity [36].

In addition to the example, the habituation system and the rules of *madrasah* are supporting factors that strengthen the integration of character education. Habits such as pre-lesson prayers, congregational prayers, weekly *infaq*, and class picket responsibilities provide a space for concrete value training. Moral Faith teachers do not allow this habit to run mechanically, but relate it to teaching materials. The teacher said: "If the child is not being treated, the child will just be obedient. But if it is associated with morals and faith, they begin to be aware".

This analysis shows that habituation becomes effective when it is accompanied by a process of meaning. *Infaq*, for example, not only trains social care, but also honesty and responsibility towards the trust of property. Thus, habituation serves as a bridge between the normative values in the text of the Moral Faith and the social practice of students. *Madrasah* policy support also strengthens the integration of character education. Character education is not positioned as an incidental program, but rather as part of the institutional vision. This support provides space for teachers to develop learning strategies that are oriented towards moral development without worrying about going against school policies. However, despite supportive policies, the effectiveness of implementation remains dependent on teachers' pedagogical capacity and classroom conditions.

Factors Inhibiting the Integration of Character Education

Faced with these supporting factors, this study also identified a number of significant inhibiting factors. The first obstacle has to do with the psychological characteristics of grade IX students, who are in the early adolescence phase. In this phase, students tend to experience identity searches, emotional fluctuations, and impulses to test the boundaries of rules. The Moral Faith Teacher revealed: "In theory, they already understand honesty and discipline, but the practice is not stable". This shows that character education in adolescence requires a persuasive and sustainable approach, not just rule enforcement or normative lectures. The next obstacle is limited learning time and curriculum load. The limited time allocation of *Akidah Akhlak* subjects forces teachers to balance the demands of delivering material and character development [37]. In practice, reflective discussions and moral mentoring often have to be simplified in order for the material targets to be achieved. This condition reflects the structural tension between academic orientation and character-building goals in the formal education system.

In addition, the number of students in the classroom is a pedagogical obstacle that cannot be ignored. Classes with relatively large numbers of students make it difficult for teachers to conduct in-depth character observations and provide individual assistance. As a result, character development tends to be general and not fully responsive to students' personal needs [38]. The last obstacle has to do with the consistency of supervision and character evaluation. Character assessment still relies heavily on the subjective observation of teachers and has not been fully supported by systematic and documented evaluation instruments. Although the dialogical approach is considered more humane, the limitations of documentation make the follow-up of character development not always continuous between teachers and between learning contexts.

Table 2. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors of Character Education Integration in Learning Moral Beliefs at MTs Al-Jauharen Islamic Boarding School

Dimensions	Conditions/Field Facts	Character Values Affected	Critical Pedagogical Analysis
Islamic Boarding School Culture	Boarding life, mandatory congregational prayers, structured worship and study schedules, strict dormitory rules	Discipline, Responsibility	The culture of pesantren functions as a <i>hidden curriculum</i> that provides space for the praxis internalization of values. However, without reflective meaning in learning, student obedience has the potential to be external (obedience because of rules), not yet fully developed into moral awareness.
Teacher Example	Teachers arrive on time, are consistent in attitude, fair in judgment and reprimand, and are responsible for the teaching mandate.	Discipline, Honesty, Responsibility	The example of teachers works in the affective and <i>moral realms of</i> students. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, the figure of the teacher is the main ethical reference. Teachers' inconsistencies have the potential to undermine the legitimacy of the values taught.
Habituation and Discipline System	Prayer before learning, weekly infaq, class pickets, and class management mandate	Honesty, Responsibility, Social Care	Habituation is effective when accompanied by religious meaning in learning Akidah Akhlak. Without reflection, habituation risks becoming a mechanical routine that does not shape the student's internal consciousness.
Integration in Learning Moral Beliefs	Case studies of honesty during exams, discussion of trust and responsibility, and association of the nature of Allah (al-'Adl, al-Amīn) with student behavior	Honesty, Discipline	Moral Faith Learning serves as a reflective space that bridges normative values with students' reality. Dialogical strategies strengthen the transition from moral knowledge to ethical awareness.
Madrasah Policy Support	Character education is part of the school vision, values-based discipline, and habituation program support.	All core values	The policy provides structural legitimacy for teachers. However, its effectiveness is highly dependent on the pedagogical capacity of teachers in translating

			policies into concrete learning practices.
Psychological Characteristics of Grade IX Students	Early adolescence phase, fluctuating emotions, tendency to test the limits of rules	Discipline, Honesty	It becomes an inhibiting factor when the learning approach is too normative. Character education in this phase requires a dialogical and reflective strategy, not just instructions or sanctions.
Time Constraints and Curriculum Load	Limited Akidah Akhlak lesson hours, demands for completion of material	All core values	There is a structural tension between academic orientation and character development. Without integrative design, character values tend to be marginalized by cognitive targets.
Number of Students in Class	Relatively large and heterogeneous classes	Honesty, Responsibility	Limiting in-depth observation and individual mentoring. Personal character education is difficult to optimize in large classes without differentiation strategies.
Character Evaluation That Has Not Been Systematic	Observation-based assessment and personal dialogue, minimal written documentation	All core values	The humanist approach is strong, but institutionally vulnerable. Without simple and documented instruments, character building follow-up is less sustainable.

Analysis of the Effectiveness of Moral Faith Teacher Strategies in Character Education Integration

The results of the study show that the strategies used by Akidah Akhlak teachers in integrating character education have a substantial degree of compatibility with the theoretical framework of character education. Conceptually, character education is understood as a process of value formation that takes place through the integration of learning objectives, learning experiences, examples, and continuous habituation. Field findings show that Akidah Akhlak teachers at MTs Al-Jauharen Islamic Boarding School do not position character education as a normative addition, but as a pedagogical orientation that animates the entire learning process.

This conformity appears, first, in learning planning that consciously incorporates the values of discipline, honesty, and responsibility as affective goals that are parallel to cognitive goals. This strategy is in line with the view that character education should be designed explicitly so as not to stop at implicit messages or incidental advice. Teachers realize that without planning, character values tend to appear sporadically and undirected, as acknowledged in interviews that "character must be planned from the beginning so that learning has a direction".

Second, the strategy of implementing learning through example and habituation shows conformity with the theory of character education, which emphasizes the importance of concrete examples and moral experiences. In character education theory, teacher exemplification is seen as the main medium of internalizing values because students learn not only from what is taught, but from what is shown. Field findings confirm this, where students claim to be more encouraged to be disciplined and honest when they see the consistency of teachers' behavior in daily learning [37].

However, the analysis also shows that the suitability of the strategy with character education theory has not been fully followed by the strengthening of an adequate evaluation system. Character assessment is still observational and depends on the subjectivity of the teacher. From a theoretical perspective, character education requires an evaluation system that is able to monitor the development of attitudes in an ongoing manner. This imbalance between the strength of the implementation strategy and the weakness of the evaluation shows that the effectiveness of the teacher's strategy is contextual and personal, not fully institutionalized.

The effectiveness of teachers' strategies can also be analyzed through the extent to which learning Akidah Akhlak is able to integrate the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor realms. The findings of the study show that the integration of the three domains has been attempted, albeit with different levels of intensity. The cognitive realm appears strong through the mastery of the material of faith and morals, such as the understanding of the attributes of Allah, the concept of trust, and commendable moral values [38]. The affective realm develops through the example of the teacher, religious habituation, and reflective discussions that encourage students to assess and respond to values emotionally and morally. Meanwhile, the psychomotor realm is reflected in real practice, such as discipline in participating in congregational prayers, honesty during exams, and the responsibility of carrying out class assignments and Islamic boarding school mandates.

The integration of these three domains shows that the learning of Moral Faith does not stop at the mastery of normative knowledge, but moves towards the formation of attitudes and behaviors. However, the study also found that the integration of the affective and psychomotor domains still depends heavily on teacher initiatives and pesantren culture, not on structured pedagogical instruments [39].

Moral Faith as a Media for Internalizing Values

In the theoretical perspective of Islamic education, Moral Faith is positioned as a core subject in character formation because it relates theological beliefs to ethical consequences in behavior. Field findings show that this position is relatively realized in the learning practice at MTs of the Al-Jauharen Islamic Boarding School. The teacher does not separate the teaching of faith and the construction of morals, but combines them in a pedagogical unity. Like the findings in the field, the discussion of the nature of Allah al-Amīn and al-'Adl is not only directed at conceptual understanding, but is associated with the demands of student behavior, such as honesty in doing tasks and fairness in social interactions. This practice is in line with the theoretical concept that views morality as a practical manifestation of faith [40].

However, compared to the concept of theoretical ideals, the internalization of values through Moral Faith still faces structural limitations. The limited time and demands of a formal curriculum often limit the space for deep reflection. As a result, the process of internalizing values risks stopping at rational understanding without a sustained deepening of moral awareness.

One of the important findings of this study is the strong effort to contextualize values in the learning of Akidah Akhlak. Teachers consciously associate teaching materials with the reality of student life in the classroom and Islamic boarding

schools. Cases such as dishonesty during exams, late participation in pesantren activities, or neglect to carry out picket duties are used as material for moral reflection in learning. This approach shows that moral values are not taught as abstract norms, but rather as life guidelines that are relevant to students' experiences. Pedagogically, this contextualization of values increases the opportunity for internalization because students not only understand what is right, but also why and how those values should be realized in real life. Thus, Akidah Akhlak functions as a dialectical space between the teaching text and the social context of students. This analysis confirms that the effectiveness of Akidah Akhlak as a medium for internalizing values is largely determined by the teacher's ability to relate normative teachings to students' concrete experiences. When contextualization goes well, learning Akidah Akhlak is no longer perceived as a memorization subject, but as a process of forming a living and meaningful moral awareness [41].

The Role of Islamic Boarding School Culture in Strengthening Character

Field findings show that the Al-Jauharen Islamic Boarding School in Jambi City functions as a relatively intact character education ecosystem, because the values taught in learning Akidah Akhlak are strengthened by the institutional culture of the pesantren. The dormitory system, structured worship schedule, daily discipline, and intense relationships between teachers and students create a praxis space that allows the internalization of values to take place in a sustainable manner. In the context of discipline, pesantren implements strict time management, starting from waking up early, congregational prayers, learning activities, and night rest. This pattern forms regular life habits, which are then strengthened in learning Akidah Akhlak [42]. The Akidah Akhlak teacher stated: "In Islamic boarding schools, children are used to living with a schedule. So when in the Akidah Akhlak class, discipline and trust are discussed, they have experienced it, not just heard".

Observation data show that delays in attending congregational prayers or night study activities are not only understood as a violation of rules, but are also associated with moral values, such as responsibility and trust. This shows that the culture of pesantren provides a praxis environment that brings together normative teachings with real student experiences. The value of honesty is also strengthened through daily practice in Islamic boarding schools. The prohibition of cheating, honesty in the management of weekly infaq, and the mandate of room and class management are means of moral training [43]. A grade IX student revealed: "In a pesantren, being caught lying is not only punished, but also advised about trust. So you will be ashamed of yourself if you are not honest".

Pesantren functions as a hidden curriculum that supports the learning of Moral Faith. Grades are not only present in the text of the book or the teacher's explanation, but are attached to the rhythm of the student's life. From the perspective of character education, this condition strengthens the opportunity for internalization of values because students are in a consistent environment between teachings, rules, and practices. However, this study also found that the cultural strength of pesantren is not always directly proportional to the depth of value internalization. For some students, compliance with the rules is still driven by supervision and sanction mechanisms, not mature moral awareness [44]. This shows that pesantren as a character education ecosystem still needs reflective pedagogical reinforcement so that values do not stop at external compliance.

Although the culture of the pesantren is a major supporting factor, the field findings show a number of limitations and challenges. The first challenge has to do with formalistic tendencies in habituation practice. Some students carry out the rules of the pesantren regularly, but do not fully understand the meaning of the values behind them. The Moral Faith Teacher acknowledged this condition: "Sometimes children

obey because they are afraid of breaking the rules, not because they are aware that it is part of morality. This is where the role of learning Akidah Akhlak must come in".

The second challenge is related to the psychological development phase of grade IX students. In the early adolescence phase, students tend to try to limit rules and show an ambivalent attitude toward authority. In this context, the culture of Islamic boarding schools that are structural needs to be balanced with a dialogical approach so as not to cause hidden resistance. In addition, consistency of supervision between neighborhoods is also a challenge. The values enforced in Islamic boarding schools sometimes weaken when students are outside of direct supervision hours, for example, during free activities or interactions between students without teacher assistance. These findings show that pesantren culture requires stronger integration with reflective learning strategies so that character values become personal awareness, not just situational compliance [45].

Pedagogical Implications

Based on the findings of the research, there are several pedagogical strategies that have proven effective in strengthening the integration of character education through learning Akidah Akhlak in the pesantren environment in line with SDGs. First, the integration of character values explicitly in the planning and implementation of learning reflects the orientation of SDGs toward holistic education. When the values of discipline, honesty, and responsibility are formulated as learning objectives, they support the realization of SDGs-based competencies. Second, teacher exemplification becomes the core strategy for internalizing values, reinforcing SDGs principles through consistent ethical modeling. Third, the use of pesantren culture as a praxis space provides a contextual environment aligned with SDGs, where worship habits and social responsibility practices become concrete learning experiences. Fourth, reflective discussions and case studies strengthen students' moral awareness and critical thinking, which are essential components of SDGs-oriented education.

However, several aspects need improvement to optimize SDGs integration. Strengthening the character evaluation system is crucial, as current assessments are still subjective and not systematically aligned with SDGs indicators. Increasing reflective meaning in habituation is also necessary so that routine practices are connected to deeper value understanding within the SDGs framework. Furthermore, differentiated approaches based on students' psychological characteristics are needed to ensure inclusive learning as emphasized in SDGs. Finally, stronger integration across teachers, institutional policies, and daily practices is essential to create consistency and sustainability of character education aligned with SDGs [45].

Analysis

From an SDGs perspective, this study highlights that character education integration reflects Goal 4, which emphasizes inclusive and quality education. The pedagogical strategies demonstrate alignment with SDGs by promoting not only cognitive achievement but also ethical awareness, responsibility, and social values. Teacher exemplification and pesantren culture function as transformative learning mechanisms that support lifelong learning principles.

However, the absence of systematic evaluation tools indicates a gap between SDGs policy aspirations and practical implementation. Strengthening assessment frameworks is essential to measure character outcomes more objectively. Additionally, contextual and reflective learning approaches align with SDGs emphasis on relevance and sustainability in education. The findings suggest that integrating SDGs into Islamic education requires adaptive pedagogy, institutional consistency, and continuous reflection. Therefore, SDGs serve not only as a global

framework but also as a practical guide for enhancing character education effectiveness in pesantren-based learning environments.

CONCLUSION

The integration of character education in the learning of Moral Faith at Al-Jauharen Islamic Boarding School, Jambi City, demonstrates a contextual and structured pedagogical effort that aligns with the broader vision of SDGs in promoting holistic and value-based education. The findings confirm that the values of discipline, honesty, and responsibility have been embedded as core elements of the learning process through deliberate planning, implementation, and reflection. Teachers play a central role in translating these values into meaningful learning experiences, particularly through exemplification, habituation, and reflective dialogue, which support the internalization of character in students' affective development in line with SDGs principles. Furthermore, the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains indicates that character education is not merely theoretical but practiced in daily student life. The pesantren culture significantly strengthens this process by providing a continuous environment for value habituation through structured routines, religious practices, and social responsibilities. This ecosystem reflects an applied model of education that resonates with the objectives of SDGs, especially in fostering responsible, ethical, and socially aware individuals. However, the study also reveals that such integration is not yet fully systematic, particularly in the area of character evaluation, which still relies heavily on subjective teacher observation rather than standardized instruments. Several challenges remain, including students' psychological dynamics in adolescence, limited instructional time, large class sizes, and inconsistencies in evaluation practices. These constraints highlight the need for more adaptive and sustainable pedagogical strategies that are capable of ensuring long-term character development. In this regard, aligning character education practices more explicitly with SDGs frameworks can provide a strategic direction for strengthening both policy and implementation. In conclusion, this study emphasizes that effective character education requires not only supportive institutional culture but also intentional and reflective teacher strategies. Strengthening evaluation systems, enhancing contextual learning, and ensuring consistency across educational environments are essential steps toward achieving sustainable character formation. Such efforts will contribute significantly to advancing educational quality and sustainability as envisioned by the SDGs.

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Author Contribution

All authors contributed significantly to this study. The first author designed the research and collected data. The second author analyzed data and developed the theoretical framework. The third author reviewed and refined the manuscript. All authors collaboratively discussed findings, ensured alignment with SDGs perspectives, and approved the final version for publication.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this research. This study was conducted independently without any financial, institutional, or personal influences that could affect the objectivity, integrity, and validity of the research findings and conclusions presented in this article.

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