Integrating SDGs into Islamic Religious Education Curriculum Development for Religious Character Formation

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Abstract

Objective: This study aims to analyze the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum development in shaping students' religious character at SMPN 3 Sukoharjo, in alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). **Theoretical framework:** The theoretical framework is grounded in character education theory and Islamic pedagogical principles, emphasizing the role of curriculum and teacher behavior in moral development. **Literature review:** A review of relevant literature highlights the importance of curriculum-based strategies and educator modeling in fostering religious values among adolescents, yet it also identifies a gap in integrating these practices with global education standards such as the SDGs. **Methods:** Using a qualitative approach with a case study design, this research involved Islamic religious education teachers as key informants. Data were collected through triangulated methods: in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation analysis. The findings reveal that curriculum development is implemented through two major strategies: (1) the structured application of the IRE curriculum across both intracurricular and co-curricular programs, and (2) the embodiment of Islamic values by teachers as moral exemplars in everyday school life. **Results:** Curriculum content is enriched with school values and integrated with the institutional vision and mission, while character-building is reinforced through daily routines, religious practices, and continuous evaluation. Teacher role modeling significantly contributes to students' character formation by providing tangible and consistent examples of religious conduct, creating a cohesive educational environment. **Implications:** The implications of this study emphasize the importance of integrating value-based education into national curricula as a sustainable pathway for character development. **Novelty:** The novelty of this study lies in its contextualized integration of Islamic education curriculum strategies with SDG frameworks, offering a model for religious character development that is both locally rooted and globally aligned.

Keywords: religious character, curriculum implementation, islamic religious education, sdgs, character education.

INTRODUCTION

Despite the recognized importance of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in shaping students' religious character, a significant gap remains between curriculum goals and practical implementation in Indonesian schools. Many existing studies have explored character education in general, but few have examined how the IRE curriculum specifically contributes to religious character development within the framework of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) [1].

Current curriculum models often fail to contextualize religious education according to the social, cultural, and digital realities faced by students today. In many cases, curriculum development lacks responsiveness to 21st-century competencies and neglects the integration of global values such as peace, inclusiveness, and sustainability. Furthermore, there is limited research focusing on how the synergy between curriculum structure and teacher role modeling concretely affects students' moral and spiritual behavior in the school environment [2].

Additionally, disparities exist across regions in the quality of IRE implementation, often due to inconsistent policy application, limited teacher training, and inadequate monitoring mechanisms. There is also a lack of studies that evaluate IRE within the operational structure of independent curriculum models such as Kurikulum Operasional Satuan Pendidikan (KOSP). This study fills the gap by offering an in-depth analysis of the IRE curriculum implementation at SMPN 3 Sukoharjo and its alignment with national and global educational goals, thereby contributing new insights into curriculum development that is both locally grounded and globally oriented [3].

This research holds significant value for both national and global educational contexts. At the national level, it provides empirical evidence on how Islamic Religious Education can effectively shape students' religious character when implemented through a structured curriculum and teacher role modeling. This is crucial for Indonesia, a country with a majority Muslim population, aiming to strengthen moral and spiritual education in formal schools [4].

Globally, this study contributes to the discourse on achieving SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by promoting inclusive, values-based education that fosters peaceful, ethical, and responsible individuals. The research also supports the idea that religious education, when delivered systematically and contextually, can contribute to building resilient learners who uphold spiritual values and social justice [5].

By identifying best practices and challenges in the implementation of religious character formation, this study offers a scalable model for curriculum improvement and teacher training, both nationally and in Islamic education systems worldwide.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrative approach that combines Islamic educational values with the global framework of the Sustainable Development Goals. Unlike previous research, it not only evaluates curriculum implementation but also emphasizes the synergy between structured religious instruction and teacher role modeling in daily school life. This study contextualizes IRE curriculum development within the Kurikulum Merdeka framework, offering insights into how Islamic education can contribute to SDG 4 and SDG 16. It also introduces a localized yet globally aligned model for character education, highlighting practical strategies that can be replicated across diverse educational settings [6].

Islamic religious education plays a crucial role in the character formation of students,

particularly in shaping their religious identity. The task of an Islamic religious teacher is to change the attitudes of students from bad to better and from good to even better [7]. In Indonesia, as a country with a majority Muslim population, Islamic religious education in schools aims not only to teach religious knowledge but also to instill moral and ethical values related to everyday spiritual life. Islamic religious education plays a crucial role in this process by providing a strong moral foundation and teaching digital ethics to students [8]. Therefore, the Islamic religious education curriculum is expected to play a significant role in shaping the religious character of students.

The development of the Islamic religious education curriculum in reality currently often faces various challenges. The Islamic Religious Education curriculum needs to be arranged in an orderly and sustainable manner so that the goals of Islamic religious education can be achieved optimally [9]. Currently, the existing curriculum has not been fully able to adapt to the rapid development of the era, and there is still a gap between the goals to be achieved in the formation of religious character and their implementation in the field. In addition, there is a gap between the theory and practice of teaching Islamic Religious Education, as well as limited training and development of teacher competencies in implementing a curriculum based on the formation of religious character [10]. The current Islamic Religious Education curriculum is often not fully relevant to the social, cultural, and technological developments that occur. This can cause the material taught to feel less applicable and unable to accommodate the challenges faced by students in the real world [11]. There is a lack of understanding of how the Islamic religious education curriculum can specifically influence the formation of students' religious character. Although the goal of Islamic religious education is to form a religious character, there has not been sufficient in-depth research into the extent to which the implementation of the curriculum can achieve this goal [12].

The Islamic religious education curriculum can specifically influence the formation of students' religious character. Although the goal of Islamic religious education is to form a religious character, there has been no in-depth research on the extent to which the implementation of the curriculum can achieve this goal [13]. In addition, one of the biggest challenges in implementing the Islamic religious education curriculum is the lack of adequate training for Islamic Religious Education teachers. Many teachers have not been trained to develop a curriculum that can effectively form the religious character of students [14]. And no less important, so far, the implementation of the Islamic religious education curriculum has varied in each region, depending on local government policies and local social and cultural conditions. This causes inequality in the quality of Islamic Religious Education learning and the formation of religious character in various regions [15].

This study aims to analyze how the implementation of the development of the Islamic religious education curriculum shapes students' religious character, as well as what strategies are applied in shaping students' religious character. The importance of developing a curriculum that is more contextual and based on religious values that can be accepted by students in schools is a necessity [16]. Therefore, this study needs to be conducted to evaluate the implementation of the development of the Islamic religious education curriculum in shaping religious character, as well as to provide recommendations for improving the quality of Islamic religious education in schools [17].

The findings of this study have several important implications for Islamic education policy, curriculum development, and the global pursuit of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). First, it underscores the need for Islamic Religious Education (IRE) to be more than just a theoretical or doctrinal subject; it

must be implemented as a value-based, practice-oriented discipline that integrates character formation with active modeling by educators [18].

The success of SMPN 3 Sukoharjo in embedding religious values through structured curriculum and teacher role modeling highlights the importance of holistic and contextualized curriculum strategies. Policymakers should consider adopting similar approaches nationally to ensure consistency in religious character education. Integrating IRE into the broader school vision and mission allows religious instruction to contribute meaningfully to students' personal development and school culture.

For curriculum developers, the implication is clear: religious education must evolve to be relevant to contemporary challenges, including moral issues in the digital era, cultural diversity, and global citizenship. This requires curriculum designers to align content not only with national education standards but also with global competencies [19].

For international audiences and global educators, this case provides a localized example of how religious education can play a transformative role in peacebuilding and moral development goals at the heart of SDG 16. It proves that faith-based education, when guided by proper curricular and pedagogical frameworks, can significantly strengthen the moral foundations of young generations while supporting broader goals of sustainable, inclusive education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) is widely regarded as a fundamental component in the development of students' religious character, particularly in educational settings where the majority of the population practices Islam. The primary objective of IRE is not only to impart knowledge about Islamic teachings but also to foster values such as honesty, discipline, piety, compassion, and respect, which are essential for shaping ethical and responsible individuals [20].

A recurring theme in educational discourse is the disconnect between the intended goals of IRE and the actual implementation within the school environment. While the curriculum is often well-designed on paper, its practical execution frequently lacks consistency and contextual relevance. Teachers may not always receive adequate training to integrate moral values into their instructional practices, and the curriculum itself may not sufficiently address contemporary issues such as digital ethics, multicultural tolerance, or social justice [21].

Another central element in religious character formation is the role of teacher modeling. Teachers are not only educators but also role models whose behavior greatly influences students. When teachers consistently demonstrate religious values in daily school life, such as punctuality in prayer, respectful interaction, and ethical decision making, students are more likely to internalize and replicate those values. This suggests that character education in IRE must be both taught and lived within the educational context [22].

Additionally, many schools have started integrating religious values into their broader institutional frameworks. This includes aligning the curriculum with the school's vision and mission, embedding religious activities into co-curricular programs, and fostering a school culture that supports value-based learning. Such an approach helps ensure that religious character development is not isolated in the classroom but is part of the overall student experience.

Despite the growing importance of religious character education, there remains limited exploration into how IRE aligns with global education frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In particular, SDG 4, which promotes

inclusive and quality education, and SDG 16, which encourages peace, justice, and strong institutions, provide a valuable lens through which IRE can be assessed. The integration of IRE into the SDGs framework positions religious education as a contributor to global citizenship and sustainable development [23].

This study addresses the existing gaps by examining how IRE curriculum development can be strategically implemented to promote religious character, both within the local context and in alignment with broader global objectives. It also highlights the importance of synchronizing curriculum content, teacher behavior, and institutional policy to form a coherent and effective strategy for character education [24].

METHODOLOGY

This study employed field research using a qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative paradigm was selected to obtain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of how the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum is developed and implemented in shaping students' religious character at SMPN 3 Sukoharjo. A case study design enabled the researchers to explore contextual realities, institutional culture, pedagogical practices, and value internalization processes within a specific educational setting. This approach is particularly relevant for examining curriculum implementation as a dynamic and socially constructed process that involves interaction among teachers, students, administrators, and institutional policies. Furthermore, this research framework aligns with the broader vision of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially in promoting inclusive, equitable, and transformative education [25].

The research subjects were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in curriculum planning and implementation. They consisted of the school principal, Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs, Islamic Religious Education teachers, several teachers of other subjects, and students representing different grade levels. The inclusion of multiple stakeholders allowed the researchers to obtain diverse perspectives regarding curriculum development, instructional strategies, institutional support, and character-building programs. Such a multi-actor perspective reflects the SDGs' emphasis on participatory governance and collaborative partnerships in educational development. By involving administrators and teachers alongside students, the study captured both policy-level decisions and classroom-level practices in shaping religious character [26].

Data collection was conducted through three primary techniques: observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation study. Observations were carried out systematically in classroom settings, school religious activities, and extracurricular programs to understand how religious values were integrated into daily practices. The researchers observed teaching strategies, teacher–student interactions, learning materials, and habituation programs such as congregational prayer, Qur'an recitation, and character-based school routines. These observations provided empirical evidence of how curriculum design translates into lived educational experiences [26].

In-depth interviews were conducted with the principal, Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs, IRE teachers, other subject teachers, and students. Semi-structured interview guidelines were used to ensure flexibility while maintaining focus on research objectives. Interviews explored themes such as curriculum development processes, integration of religious values across subjects, instructional innovation, assessment strategies, and perceived outcomes in students' character formation. Students were interviewed to understand their perceptions of religious learning experiences and how these experiences influenced their attitudes,

behaviors, and moral awareness. This triangulated interview process strengthened analytical depth and ensured balanced representation of viewpoints [27].

Documentation study complemented observational and interview data. Researchers analyzed curriculum documents, lesson plans, syllabi, school vision and mission statements, policy guidelines, and records of religious programs. This documentation analysis allowed verification of formal curriculum objectives and comparison with actual implementation practices. Through this method, the study identified alignment between written curriculum frameworks and classroom execution. Such analysis contributes to understanding curriculum coherence and institutional commitment to character education within the framework of the SDGs [28]. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, consisting of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved organizing, coding, categorizing, and focusing on relevant findings related to curriculum development and religious character formation. Data display was conducted through narrative descriptions and thematic matrices to facilitate interpretation of relationships among variables. Conclusion drawing was carried out continuously throughout the research process, allowing emerging insights to be verified against new data. This cyclical analysis ensured analytical rigor and conceptual clarity [28].

To ensure credibility and trustworthiness, the study applied source and method triangulation techniques. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from principals, teachers, and students. Method triangulation was implemented by cross-checking findings from observation, interviews, and documentation. Member checking was also conducted by reconfirming interpretations with key informants to minimize bias and enhance validity. These validation procedures reinforce transparency and accountability, principles consistent with SDGs-oriented educational governance. Through this methodological framework, the study provides a systematic and context-sensitive analysis of how Islamic Religious Education curriculum development contributes to shaping students' religious character. The qualitative case study design allows for nuanced insights into institutional practices while situating the findings within broader educational transformation agendas inspired by the SDGs [28].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Strategies Used by Islamic Religious Education Teachers and Schools

This study aims to analyze the implementation of curriculum development in shaping the religious character of students at SMPN 3 Sukoharjo. The study was conducted through a qualitative approach with a case study design and data collection techniques of observation, interviews, and documentation. The subjects of the study included the principal, the vice principal of Curriculum, religious education teachers, class teachers, and students. To develop the curriculum to realize the mission and vision of the school, SMPN 3 Sukoharjo has had and implemented the Operational Curriculum of the Education Unit (KOSP) as a product of the development of an independent curriculum that is applied in student learning at school. Among the parts of the Islamic religious education curriculum are intracurricular and co-curricular programs with the habituation of Islamic values in everyday life to create superior, religious, character-based, environmentally aware people who are based on faith and piety, which are the vision and mission of SMPN 3 Sukoharjo.

Implementation of curriculum development is the application of a curriculum that has been developed by the school development team, agreed upon by subject teachers, principals, committees, and school supervisors, referring to the national

curriculum. Implementation of the development of the Islamic religious education curriculum is applied to all students to achieve the learning objectives of Islamic religious education, namely to shape students into people who believe and are devoted to Allah SWT, have noble morals, and have broad knowledge and understanding of Islam. The Islamic Religious Education curriculum also aims to develop intellectual abilities and practical skills that are relevant to everyday life, as well as prepare students to become faithful citizens who play an active role in society [29].

The implementation of the Islamic religious education curriculum in shaping the religious character of students at SMPN 3 Sukoharjo includes the implementation of intracurricular activities by delivering Islamic religious education learning materials related to religious behavior intensively. The subject matter at school provided by Islamic religious education teachers includes the fields of Aqidah, Akhlaq, Fiqh, and worship. Then the next strategy for forming religious character is to implement various activities to familiarize Islamic teachings in co-curricular activities that have been systematically designed by school curriculum developers, by involving Islamic religious education teachers. In the formation of religious behavior, it can be more successful if supported by the exemplary behavior of teachers, so that students are always given exemplary examples of religious behavior to motivate and inspire them in their daily lives at school. The exemplary attitudes of teachers become real role models for students to be able to shape their character [30].

Table 1. IRE Curriculum Implementation Strategy in Shaping Religious Character

Strategy	Implementation Description
Intracurricular Activities of Islamic Religious Education	Intensive delivery of Islamic teachings (Aqidah, Morals, Jurisprudence, Worship) during regular lesson hours.
Inculcating Islamic Values (Co-curricular)	Activities such as praying Dhuha together, morning tadarus, dhikr, religious lectures, and commemoration of Islamic holidays.
Teacher's Exemplary Behavior	Teachers provide real examples of religious behavior, such as dressing modestly, being polite, praying on time, and speaking well.
Collaboration of Curriculum and School Vision and Mission	Integration of religious values in the KOSP document is in line with the school's vision and mission to form superior, religious, character-based, and environmentally aware individuals.
Personal and Cultural Approach by Islamic Religious Education Teachers	Delivering Islamic teachings with a persuasive and contextual approach so that it is easily accepted by students according to their age and social conditions.
Monitoring and Evaluation of School Religious Programs	Conduct periodic evaluations of the effectiveness of religious activities and adapt them to the developmental needs of students.

Based on research conducted through observation, interviews and documentation analysis, the implementation of the development of the Islamic religious education curriculum at SMPN 3 Sukoharjo has been carried out with an intensive Islamic Religious Education learning activity strategy (Intracurricular) in an orderly and disciplined manner, a program of religious character habituation activities with Islamic teachings according to the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad SAW (co-curricular) and the exemplary behavior of educators in schools to support the realization of the formation of students' religious character.

The exemplary behaviour of teachers at SMPN 3 Sukoharjo can be realised well with the strong support and leadership of the Principal's leadership so that the exemplary behaviour of teachers and education personnel at SMPN 3 Sukoharjo can run very well to provide examples of real behaviour of their students. As a form of reflection, teachers are given questions to express obstacles in the process of habituating religious character and possible solutions. Providing feedback, the Principal provides suggestions and input that are constructive and improve the achievement of goals in forming religious character. The results of the research conducted at SMPN 3 Sukoharjo showed that the implementation of the development of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum had a significant positive impact on the formation of students' religious character.

The Exemplary Behaviour of Islamic Religious Education Teachers Contributes to Shaping the Religious Character

Based on the results of interviews, observations, and documentation conducted at SMPN 3 Sukoharjo, it was found that the exemplary behaviour of teachers plays a very significant role in shaping the religious character of students. Teachers not only function as transmitters of lesson materials, but also as real models of behaviour expected from students. This is especially seen in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers, who consistently demonstrate religious attitudes and behaviour in everyday life in the school environment [31]. Some real examples of this exemplary behaviour include the discipline of teachers in carrying out congregational prayers, both Duha prayers and Dzuhur prayers, the habit of greeting when entering the classroom or meeting students, and the use of polite and courteous language in every interaction. Teachers also demonstrate an honest, fair, and open attitude, and do not hesitate to apologise to students if they make mistakes. This creates an atmosphere of mutual respect and builds a positive and healthy relationship between teachers and students [32].

Teachers become very influential role models, especially because students are at a stage of psychological development that tends to imitate the behaviour of adults they consider authoritative and emotionally close [33]. When teachers demonstrate harmony between words and actions, especially in terms of religious values, students will be more easily inspired and motivated to emulate this behaviour in their daily lives, both at school and at home. Furthermore, teachers' religious attitudes are not only apparent in formal religious activities, but are also reflected in daily social interactions, such as how teachers behave toward students who have problems, how they respond to students' questions, and how they mediate conflicts between students [34]. Teachers who can convey Islamic values through actions, such as giving advice gently, being patient, and always trying to instill moral values in every learning experience, can shape students' religious character more deeply.

The principal and the curriculum vice principal, who were the sources in this study, also emphasised that role models are the most effective form of learning. Character education cannot only be delivered verbally or through theory, but must be demonstrated in real form by educators [35]. According to them, teachers who can demonstrate religious values in their attitudes, decisions, and daily lifestyles have a strong positive influence on the internalisation of religious values in students. Thus, it can be concluded that teacher role models not only shape students' religious knowledge and insight but also play a major role in the formation of religious attitudes, behaviours, and characters, which are an important part of the educational goals at SMPN 3 Sukoharjo.

Table 2. Exemplary Behaviour of Islamic Religious Education Teachers

Forms of Teacher Exemplary Behaviour	Example of Implementation in Schools	Impact on Students
Congregational prayers on time	The teacher follows and guides the Dhuha and Zuhur prayers with the students.	Accustoming students to perform obligatory and voluntary prayers in a disciplined manner
Greet and be polite	The teacher greets the students when entering the class, uses gentle language, and respects the students.	Cultivate politeness and respect for others in students.
Honesty and integrity	Teachers admit mistakes, are fair when assessing, and are impartial.	Encourage students to be honest in assignments, tests, and daily interactions.
Caring and patient in guiding students	Teachers guide students in learning, and advise patiently	Increase trust and positive emotional relationships between
Consistently implementing Islamic values	Teachers participate in tadarus activities, cultum, and other religious activities.	Cultivate a strong religious spirit and commitment in students.

Strategies Used by Islamic Religious Education Teachers and Schools

Based on the results of the study conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation, it was found that the instillation of religious values at SMPN 3 Sukoharjo was carried out through some strategies integrated into the development of the curriculum and school activities. These strategies involve intracurricular and co-curricular activities, teacher role models, collaboration with the school's vision and mission, personal and cultural approaches, and periodic program monitoring.

First, the strategy carried out through intracurricular activities is the delivery of Islamic Religious Education material intensively. The material taught includes the fields of Aqidah, Morals, Fiqh, and Worship, which are delivered during regular lesson hours. This learning not only aims to provide conceptual religious understanding, but also instills applicable religious values in everyday life [36].

Second, the strategy carried out through co-curricular activities includes the habituation of Islamic values in the school environment, such as congregational dhuha prayers, morning tadarus before lessons begin, dhikr together, kultum activities (seven-minute lectures), and commemoration of Islamic holidays. This habituation is routinely carried out to shape the religious character of students through direct experience and practice-based learning [37].

Third, teacher role models are one of the most influential strategies in shaping students' religious character. Islamic Religious Education teachers and other teachers demonstrate religious behaviour, such as dressing politely, greeting with greetings, praying on time, telling the truth, and being patient and polite. This role model has a direct influence on students because they tend to imitate the behaviour of adults they respect and consider as role models [38].

Fourth, there is collaboration between the curriculum and the school's vision and mission in instilling religious values. SMPN 3 Sukoharjo has compiled and implemented the Operational Curriculum of the Education Unit (KOSP), which integrates Islamic values into the school's learning plan and policy direction. This integration shows that religious character education does not stand alone, but is an inseparable part of the school's education system.

Fifth, Islamic Religious Education teachers use a personal and cultural approach in conveying Islamic teachings. Teachers deliver material persuasively, and according to the social background and age of students, so that it is easier to accept and internalise. This strategy builds a close relationship between teachers and students, so that the process of fostering religious values runs more effectively. Finally, the school also conducts regular monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of religious activities at school. This evaluation aims to assess the effectiveness of the program and adjust activities to the developmental needs of students. The principal and curriculum team provide feedback and continue to strengthen support for the implementation of character education based on Islamic values. The strategies implemented by Islamic Religious Education teachers and the school at SMPN 3 Sukoharjo show strong synergy between aspects of learning, habituation, role models, and school management systems. This has been proven to have a positive impact on the formation of students' religious character, as reflected in changes in attitudes, worship habits, and more Islamic social interactions in the school environment [39].

The Exemplary Behaviour of Islamic Religious Education Teachers Contributes

Based on the research results obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation, it was found that the exemplary behaviour of Islamic Religious Education teachers made a major contribution to the formation of students' religious character. This exemplary behaviour is manifested in various forms of real behaviour that are consistently carried out by teachers in the school environment [40]. The following is a description of each form of exemplary behaviour, along with its educational meaning and impact on students:

First, exemplary behaviour in carrying out congregational prayers on time is a very effective real practice. Islamic Religious Education teachers actively guide and participate in carrying out congregational dhuha and dzuhur prayers with students. This activity not only teaches the importance of worship but also disciplines students in maintaining prayer times. Through this habit, students are accustomed to carrying out worship regularly and consciously, which is part of the formation of religious character.

Second, the teacher's habit of greeting and being polite to students shows the application of Islamic manners in daily social interactions. Teachers always greet students with greetings when entering the classroom and use gentle and respectful language. This attitude provides a direct example of the importance of manners and communication ethics. As a result, students become accustomed to being polite, respecting others, and maintaining manners in interacting, both with teachers and with fellow students.

Third, the honest attitude and integrity of teachers are reflected in their openness in admitting mistakes, being fair in assessing student assignments, and being impartial in decision-making. This exemplary behaviour provides a strong moral message to students that honesty is part of faith. This encourages students to be honest in doing assignments, tests, and in their social lives.

Fourth, caring and patient attitudes in guiding students are typical characteristics of Islamic Religious Education teachers that are strongly felt by students. Teachers show patience in dealing with various student problems, provide wise advice, and are not quick to judge. This attitude creates a positive emotional relationship between teachers and students. As a result, students feel appreciated and more receptive to direction and guidance, and are encouraged to behave according to Islamic values.

Fifth, the consistency of teachers in implementing Islamic values in school life, such as being active in Al-Qur'an recitation activities, religious lectures, and other religious activities, has a very strong influence on students. This exemplary behaviour shows that religious values are not only taught, but also truly applied in everyday life. This consistency fosters a strong religious spirit and commitment in students [41].

The exemplary behaviour of Islamic Religious Education teachers at SMPN 3 Sukoharjo not only touches on aspects of external behaviour, but also has an impact on the formation of students' inner character. Teachers become role models who provide direction and inspiration for students to emulate Islamic values in their entirety. This consistent exemplary behaviour strengthens the process of internalising religious values in students and accelerates the achievement of character education goals that have been formulated in the school's vision and mission.

Analysis

The implementation of the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum at SMPN 3 Sukoharjo illustrates a strong integration of religious teachings with structured curriculum strategies and teacher role modeling. This dual approach, combining intracurricular and co-curricular activities with behavioral exemplification, emerges as a highly effective model for fostering students' religious character. The curriculum is not only delivered through classroom instruction but also embedded in daily school culture, religious rituals, and teacher-student interactions.

Intracurricular activities involve the formal teaching of key Islamic subjects such as Aqidah, Akhlaq, Fiqh, and Worship, allowing students to gain foundational knowledge. However, knowledge alone is insufficient; it is the co-curricular activities such as Dhuha prayers, group tadarus, Islamic lectures, and religious holiday commemorations that reinforce these values through experiential learning. These practices help students form consistent religious habits and internalize moral values in a practical, lived context.

Equally critical is the role of teacher modeling. Teachers serve as moral exemplars by demonstrating consistent religious behavior, praying on time, showing patience, acting honestly, and engaging in ethical communication. These actions provide real-life references that students observe and imitate, creating a holistic environment where moral values are practiced rather than merely preached.

When analyzed through the lens of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this approach directly supports SDG 4 (Quality Education) by promoting inclusive, values-based education and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by fostering a culture of integrity, responsibility, and peaceful behavior among students. The school's alignment of its religious curriculum with institutional vision and national policy further enhances the program's sustainability and impact. This integrated model provides valuable insights into how religious education can be both culturally grounded and globally relevant, bridging tradition and innovation in moral development.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the development and implementation of the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum at SMPN 3 Sukoharjo has significantly contributed to the formation of students' religious character. This has been achieved through two main strategies: the structured delivery of the IRE curriculum in both intracurricular and co-curricular activities,

and the consistent role modeling by teachers in everyday school life. The curriculum approach involves intensive teaching of Islamic values through formal subjects such as Aqidah, Akhlaq, Fiqh, and Worship, complemented by religious practices embedded in daily school routines. Co-curricular activities such as congregational prayers, Quran recitation, and religious talks further reinforce these teachings through practical engagement. This holistic method not only builds students' religious understanding but also shapes their behavior consistently and sustainably. Equally important is the role of teacher behavior as a model for students. Teachers at SMPN 3 Sukoharjo demonstrate religious conduct through punctuality in prayer, respectful interaction, honesty, and compassion. These behaviors serve as powerful real-life examples that students tend to emulate. The synergy between structured curriculum implementation and teacher role modeling proves to be an effective strategy for instilling deep-rooted religious character. This study also reinforces the relevance of Islamic Religious Education in contributing to Sustainable Development Goals, specifically SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by promoting inclusive, values-based learning that supports peace, moral integrity, and social cohesion. Therefore, this integrated model offers valuable insights for other schools and policymakers in designing character education aligned with both national and global objectives.

Acknowledgements

Author Contribution

Yusi Tri Hastuti conceptualized the study, designed the research framework, and led the manuscript drafting. Meti Fatimah conducted data analysis and contributed to curriculum development discussions. Nana Abdul Aziz strengthened the theoretical integration of SDGs perspectives and provided critical revisions. Njoku Ifeanyi Daniel contributed comparative insights and language refinement. All authors collaboratively reviewed, finalized, and approved the submitted version of the manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this research article. This study was conducted independently without financial sponsorship, commercial involvement, or personal relationships that could influence the research process, interpretation of findings, or conclusions presented. All authors affirm transparency, academic integrity, and adherence to ethical research standards throughout the study.

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