



The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Shaping Students' Character Amidst the Influence of Social Media

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ABSTRACT

The development of social media presents new challenges for Islamic religious education, particularly in shaping students' character (akhlak) within the school environment. Exposure to digital content and interactions in virtual spaces can influence students' communication patterns, attitudes, and behaviors, necessitating an adaptive and contextual role from Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers. This study aims to analyze the role of PAI teachers in shaping students' character amidst the influence of social media at SMP Al-Huda, encompassing character education strategies, the application of Islamic values in digital ethics, as well as supporting and inhibiting factors. This research adopts a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews with PAI teachers, the school principal, and students, as well as document analysis. Data were analyzed through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification, while data trustworthiness was ensured through source and technique triangulation. The analysis focuses on the teacher's role as an educator, role model, mentor, and motivator in instilling honesty, politeness, responsibility, and tabayyun (verifying information) when using social media. This study is expected to enrich Islamic education literature by offering contextual insights into the relationship between character education and digital ethics at the junior high school level. Practical implications point toward strengthening PAI instruction by integrating role modeling, habituation, digital literacy, and school-family collaboration.

Keywords: Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers, Student Character, Social Media

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a vital process in shaping students' personalities so that they grow into knowledgeable, faithful, God-fearing individuals with noble character. Education aims not only to enhance intellectual capacity but also to build attitudes, behaviors, and character aligned with moral and religious values. Within the national education framework, character building is an essential aspect that must be integrated into the learning process. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) holds a strategic position in achieving these goals because it teaches core principles of faith, worship, morals, responsibility, honesty, discipline, and empathy toward others (Herwati, 2024). Through PAI instruction, students are expected not only to grasp Islamic teachings theoretically but also to internalize and practice them in daily life—at school, at home, and in society.

Akhlak (moral character) is a fundamental aspect of Islamic education as it reflects a person's quality of character in relation to Allah SWT, fellow human beings, and the environment. Good character is manifested through honest, polite, disciplined, and responsible behavior, respect for parents and teachers, appreciation of differences, and the ability to guard speech and actions. Character formation cannot happen instantaneously; it requires a continuous educational process involving habituation, role modeling, advice, guidance, and the reinforcement of Islamic values (Amalia, Ramadhani, Vitacheria, & Azizah, 2024). In this regard, schools bear the responsibility of creating an educational environment that nurtures character development. Islamic Religious Education teachers are pivotal in this process, as they deliver religious knowledge, guide behavior, set examples, and assist students in understanding and applying Islamic values when confronting various life challenges.

The rapid growth of information and communication technology has brought major shifts in society, including the realm of education. A prominent aspect of this evolution is the surge in social media usage—such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and various digital communication platforms. Social media enables students to access information, communicate, express creativity, expand social circles, and utilize diverse learning resources (Chanra & Tasruddin, 2025). In an educational context, social media can also serve as a medium for propagating religious messages, enhancing digital literacy, and broadening students' insights into Islamic values. However, these benefits must be balanced with the ability to use social media wisely, ensuring students can distinguish beneficial content from material that contradicts moral values and religious teachings.

Despite its benefits, social media usage poses significant challenges to student character development. The swift, vast, and unfiltered flow of information can alter students' mindsets, communication styles, and behavioral patterns. Exposure to vulgar language, cyberbullying, insults, unverified information, consumerism, and lifestyles incompatible with educational values can become problematic without proper guidance. Furthermore, the habit of interacting in digital spaces sometimes leads users to overlook ethics when expressing opinions, respecting others' privacy, and maintaining polite language (Maulana, Rahmawati, Nurhaliza, & Azis, 2025). This highlights that character building in the digital era pertains not only to direct physical interactions within the school setting but also extends to digital behavior.

The influence of social media on student character should not be viewed solely as negative. Its impact depends on content consumption, usage intensity, digital literacy levels, peer environments, parental supervision, and embedded personal values. Social media

exerts a positive influence when used to listen to religious lectures, study the Qur'an, join educational activities, and share good messages. Conversely, unguided usage elevates the risk of exposure to uneducational content or engagement in digital interactions that violate moral and religious ethics (Chairiyah, Kharisma, El Zahiyah, & Fadilah, 2025). Thus, the current educational challenge is not merely restricting social media access, but equipping students with self-control, information filtering skills, respect for others, and accountability for digital actions (Saputra, 2026). In this climate, PAI teachers play an increasingly critical and complex role. They must go beyond explaining praiseworthy and blameworthy traits by actively helping students apply these values to real-life situations, including social media activities. Teachers should link lesson topics with familiar digital phenomena—such as commenting etiquette, prohibitions on slander, verifying news accuracy, respecting privacy, and content sharing responsibility. These principles align with Islamic teachings on honesty, *tabayyun*, guarding the tongue, and avoiding harm (Nasyiroh, Basyar, & Ramadhani, 2025). Through contextual learning, students realize that noble character must be consistently practiced both in person and online.

Based on initial observation plans at SMP Al-Huda, this study aims to identify social media usage among students and its connection to daily character formation. Key aspects include teacher-student and peer communication, language politeness, discipline, responsibility, respect, and digital communication ethics. Additionally, it examines how PAI teachers provide direction, role modeling, advice, and habituation amid evolving social media usage. Preliminary findings aim to offer a realistic picture of character cultivation at SMP Al-Huda, including challenges faced by teachers and strategies implemented. Prior research shows that the role of PAI teachers has been studied through various approaches like role modeling, habituation, character building, and contextual learning. However, these findings do not directly explain how PAI teachers operate within SMP Al-Huda specifically. Therefore, specialized research is required to explore how PAI teachers integrate Islamic moral values with students' social media habits, detailing mentoring, role modeling, habituation, behavioral evaluation, and supporting/inhibiting factors. This study seeks to understand both the roles and their practical execution in digital-era character education.

The role of PAI teachers in shaping student character is realized through several educational functions. First, as educators, they instill moral values via learning materials, discussions, and case analyses related to social media. Second, as role models, they exhibit polite, honest, fair, and responsible communication (Fuadi, 2026). Third, as mentors, they guide students to understand the moral consequences of digital actions like bullying, insults, spreading unverified news, or posting content without consent. Fourth, as motivators, they encourage students to utilize social media for positive endeavors like sharing knowledge and building healthy social ties (Hasni, 2026). Fifth, as evaluators, they monitor behavioral shifts and address emerging character issues. However, character building cannot rest entirely on PAI teachers. Student behavior is also shaped by family parenting, peer dynamics, school culture, personal experiences, and digital media features. Hence, synergy among teachers, parents, school leaders, and the community is vital. Parents provide home guidance and open communication regarding digital activities, while schools foster a culture of politeness, discipline, and respect. PAI teachers act as vital bridges through parent communication, character education reinforcement, and Islamic habituation, creating alignment between school teachings and home behavior. Teachers also face challenges such as diverse student backgrounds, limited class time, fast-changing social media trends, and difficulty monitoring out-of-school activities. One-way lectures are often insufficient (Latif, 2026); students require communicative, dialogic approaches that resonate with their experiences. Teachers must create open forums where students discuss digital ethics and solutions grounded in Islamic

values, transforming PAI instruction into a platform for moral awareness and responsible decision-making.

Given these dynamics, investigating the role of PAI teachers in shaping student character amid social media influence is essential. This study examines teachers' roles as educators, mentors, role models, motivators, and evaluators, their strategies regarding social media, supporting and inhibiting factors, and how students apply character values daily and digitally. Ultimately, Islamic religious education should not only impart religious knowledge but also shape noble, self-controlled, wise, and responsible individuals in accordance with Islamic principles.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design to conduct an in-depth investigation into the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in shaping student character amidst social media influence at SMP Al-Huda (Kuantitatif, 2016). This approach was selected because the research focuses on understanding the roles, strategies, experiences, and challenges faced by PAI teachers in instilling Islamic moral values within a digital environment. The study was conducted at SMP Al-Huda with subjects including PAI teachers, the school principal, and students selected via purposive sampling based on their relevance to the research scope. Data were gathered through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation focused on PAI learning processes, teacher role modeling, religious habituation, and school interactions. In-depth interviews provided insights into teacher strategies, digital ethics instruction, and enabling/disabling factors. Documentation supplemented the findings with character building programs, school rules, lesson plans, and relevant records. Data were analyzed interactively through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data trustworthiness was established using source and technique triangulation, comparing information across informants and cross-checking interview responses with observation and documentation (Fauzi, 2019). The study centers on five core aspects: the PAI teacher's role as educator and role model, character cultivation strategies, integration of Islamic values with digital ethics, observable behavioral changes, and supporting/inhibiting factors.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Based on field observations conducted at SMP Al-Huda, several key findings were identified as follows:

The Role of PAI Teachers in Shaping Student Character: Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers hold a strategic position in shaping student character, as religious education aims not only to impart Islamic teachings but also to instill moral values expressed in daily attitudes and actions. In school settings, PAI teachers are responsible for helping students comprehend, internalize, and practice Islamic values through structured, continuous learning. Character formation requires role modeling, guidance, habituation, and balanced supervision. Therefore, success cannot be measured solely by a student's ability to define honesty, discipline, or responsibility, but must be observed through practical application in social interactions and decision-making.

The role of PAI teachers unfolds through instructional activities that integrate religious knowledge with real-life issues. Topics on good and bad character can be tied to respecting parents/teachers, maintaining positive peer relations, speaking truthfully,

keeping promises, and avoiding harmful actions. Contextual learning helps students see that Islam governs human relations alongside worship duties. Teachers can use case studies, discussions, reflections, and problem-solving to analyze moral scenarios, helping students evaluate why actions are good or bad based on Islamic values. Beyond instruction, PAI teachers serve as living role models. Modeling is critical because students observe how teachers act, speak, make decisions, and treat others. Teachers exhibiting honesty, discipline, patience, fairness, and politeness provide concrete examples. Discrepancies between lesson content and teacher conduct reduce character education effectiveness; thus, consistency between words and actions is vital for building trust and promoting positive behavior.

Character formation also requires consistent habituation. PAI teachers can encourage routines such as greeting others, praying before/after lessons, speaking politely, respecting opinions, keeping cleanliness, submitting assignments punctually, and fulfilling duties. These routines should be accompanied by explanations of their underlying moral purpose so students do not merely follow rules passively. When mistakes occur, teachers should offer constructive advice, helping students realize consequences and amend behavior. This elevates character development into an enlightening learning process rather than rigid rule enforcement. In the context of social media, the teacher's role expands as character expression moves beyond physical school walls into digital realms. Teachers must reinforce that moral values apply equally online. Politeness should shine in comment sections and messages, honesty in verifying news before sharing, responsibility in respecting privacy, and *tabayyun* in verifying content prior to believing or spreading it. Successful character building requires strong support from the school environment and families. Schools must foster a culture of discipline, respect, and integrity, while parents reinforce these habits at home. Balanced, age-appropriate supervision of social media usage should be maintained jointly.

PAI Teachers' Strategies in Facing Social Media Influence: Integrating digital ethics into PAI instruction is a primary strategy for character formation. Because students encounter moral dilemmas both physically and online, PAI learning must connect moral concepts with digital experiences. Teachers should go beyond theoretical explanations of virtue and vice, helping students apply Islamic principles to real online situations. Case studies are particularly effective—discussing instances of harsh comments, fake news, cyberbullying, public insults, or unauthorized sharing of private chats. Group discussions allow students to analyze problems, weigh impacts, and formulate Islamically aligned responses, building critical thinking, empathy, and self-restraints against negative trends.

Reflective discussions further solidify the connection between Islamic teachings and digital conduct. Honesty relates to fact-checking, responsibility to considering post consequences, politeness to courteous speech, and *tabayyun* to verifying rumors. Teachers facilitate open, non-judgmental discussions where students reflect on digital habits. Furthermore, teachers can direct students to use social media productively—assigning tasks to search for credible Islamic materials, create educational posts on noble character, or craft short messages on respectful speech. Guided by teachers on source credibility and privacy, students transform from passive consumers into responsible digital creators. Strategy effectiveness relies heavily on teacher role modeling, positive habits, and school-parent synergy, evaluated through student participation, digital etiquette awareness, and practical application of Islamic values.

Role Modeling and Character Habituation in School Life: Role modeling and habituation are mutually reinforcing pillars of character education. PAI teachers lead by example in polite communication, fairness, discipline, honesty, and respect. School-wide habituation includes religious routines, greeting customs, teacher respect, peer empathy, and personal accountability. Linking these practices to digital ethics teaches students that good

character must remain consistent across physical and virtual domains. Field observations identify specific habituation routines at SMP Al-Huda and how teachers evaluate them continuously.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Character Building: Character formation amid social media influence is conditioned by internal and external factors. Supporting factors include teacher role models, a religious school culture, principal backing, parental involvement, and student moral awareness. Inhibiting factors encompass varied family backgrounds, negative peer pressure, exposure to harmful digital content, and limited out-of-school supervision. Empirical data from interviews, observations, and documentation confirm how these factors operate within SMP Al-Huda.

Evaluation of Student Character Development: Character evaluation must be an ongoing process focused on daily student behavior. Key indicators include polite communication, honesty, discipline, responsibility, empathy, and digital ethics comprehension. Teachers utilize behavioral observation, personal feedback, student dialogues, and parent communication. Evaluation seeks to build internal moral consciousness rather than superficial rule compliance, backed by field evidence.

DISCUSSION

The role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in shaping student character amid social media influence is an essential element of school-based character education. PAI aims not only for cognitive mastery of religious concepts but for deep value internalization reflected in daily conduct. Teachers are tasked with guiding students to embody honesty, discipline, politeness, responsibility, and empathy. The rise of social media adds complexity to this mission, extending student interactions into virtual environments. Character education must therefore foster moral consciousness, enabling students to evaluate right from wrong and anticipate the outcomes of their actions.

Teachers fulfill their roles as educators and mentors by embedding moral values directly into learning processes. Lessons on virtue, guarding the tongue, respect, and responsibility are connected with social media experiences—such as fact-checking before sharing, avoiding hurtful comments, and protecting privacy. Tabayyun serves as a cornerstone for critical thinking against digital misinformation, while prohibitions against backbiting and slander address online harassment and rumors. Contextual methods demonstrate that Islamic principles remain deeply relevant in modern life. Teacher role modeling is equally vital; verbal instructions must align with teacher behavior. By exhibiting courtesy, fairness, patience, and honesty, teachers provide living proofs of Islamic character. Online, teachers demonstrate responsible communication and respect for differing views, setting standards for students to emulate.

Habituation ensures that values like discipline, responsibility, and politeness become natural routines rather than abstract ideas. Schools support this through daily prayers, respectful greetings, cleanliness, and accountability. Applied digitally, habituation encourages thinking before posting, using respectful language, and weighing the impact on others. Proper oversight and feedback ensure students embrace these habits out of moral conviction rather than fear of penalties (Suriyati, Kahar, Mustamir, Rabiah, & Nasrul, 2026).

Understanding social media's impact requires a balanced view of its benefits and risks. For junior high students, social media offers communication, learning, news, and social connections. In PAI contexts, digital platforms provide access to sermons, Qur'an studies, Hadith resources, and moral educational materials, serving as powerful tools for religious growth when used appropriately (Nasution, Claudia, & Sari, 2026). However, benefits

depend heavily on content type, usage duration, critical thinking, and adult guidance. Developing adolescents may struggle to filter false information, inappropriate entertainment, or harmful online behaviors. Exposure to hate speech, bullying, verbal violence, and un-Islamic lifestyles can gradually reshape mindsets and behaviors through repeated exposure.

A critical area of concern is shifting communication patterns. Digital interactions allow rapid expression but may diminish empathy and respect for others (Hikmah, Nasokah, & Astina, 2026). Degrading comments, abusive language, unauthorized screenshot sharing, and online shaming violate Islamic ethics, where communication carries moral accountability (Harahap et al., 2026). Politeness, guarding speech, and honoring others must govern both physical and digital interactions. Furthermore, social media challenges student honesty and responsibility. Information ease can lead to spreading unverified news or private details. Islam's concept of *tabayyun* demands verifying facts before sharing, preventing the spread of harmful rumors. Digital literacy must encompass ethical decision-making alongside technical skills.

Self-control is another crucial dimension. Excessive screen time can undermine study habits, sleep schedules, face-to-face social interactions, and religious duties. Character education must build self-discipline, time management, and priority-setting, ensuring technology serves personal growth rather than hindering duties. PAI teachers play a strategic role in guiding wise media use (Patimah, Annisa, & Azizah, 2026), connecting religious lessons with digital reality, fostering open dialogue, setting examples, and building parent-school partnerships (Aulia & Mukhtar, 2024). Rather than relying solely on strict prohibitions, education should empower students to evaluate content, verify facts, protect privacy, exercise self-control, and act responsibly.

Ultimately, character building is a shared responsibility involving families, peers, school culture, and media exposure. Teacher-parent synergy ensures consistent guidance across school and home settings (Faza, 2026). Evaluating character growth requires continuous observation of consistent behavior, peer interactions, task responsibility, and digital ethics awareness (Prasetya, 2025), prioritizing dialogic mentorship over harsh punishment.

Note: Academic Note: This discussion presents a conceptual analysis. To finalize as empirical research, field findings from SMP Al-Huda should be directly integrated alongside interviewee quotes, observational evidence, and existing literature.

CONCLUSION

The role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers is pivotal in shaping students' character amidst social media influence at SMP Al-Huda. PAI teachers act not only as instructors of religious knowledge but also as educators, mentors, role models, and motivators in instilling noble character (*akhlakul karimah*). Character formation is achieved through contextual learning that integrates Islamic principles with daily life, role modeling, habituation of virtuous behaviors, and guidance on digital ethics. The impact of social media on student character is multifaceted; while it can enhance religious knowledge and positive communication, unwise usage risks promoting impolite language, unverified information sharing, and reduced social empathy. Therefore, students must be equipped with values of responsibility, honesty, politeness, *tabayyun*, and respect across both physical and digital domains. Achieving lasting character development necessitates active collaboration among PAI teachers, school administrators, parents, and the community to ensure consistent reinforcement of Islamic values in every aspect of students' lives.

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