

Innovative Learning Strategies in Shaping Noble Character Based on Islamic Values

Salsabila Shohifah^{1*}, Suharsono², Saad Boulahnane³

^{1,2} Muhammadiyah College of Islamic Education Paciran, East Java, Indonesia.

³ Al Akhawayn University, Morocco.

e-mail:

¹salsabilashohifah4@gmail.com*

²sonosuhar22@gmail.com

³saad.boulahnane@uhp.ac.ma

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ABSTRACT. Education plays a crucial role in shaping students' noble character, especially in the context of Islamic education. Innovative learning strategies are essential for creating an effective and enjoyable learning environment while deeply instilling Islamic values. The discussion connects scholarship on Islamic personhood, curriculum, educational relationships, instructional strategies, and institutional practices. The synthesis identifies a distinction between religious knowledge, ritual participation, and moral internalisation, cautioning against treating these dimensions as interchangeable outcomes. Although innovative approaches demonstrate benefits for selected academic and engagement outcomes, they do not independently establish improvements in ethical judgement or conduct. Meaningful integration therefore requires explicit ethical objectives, reflective dialogue, supportive teacher–student relationships, and consistency between curricular expectations and institutional practices. Teacher development and family communication emerge as relevant implementation considerations, although their contributions require contextual interpretation. The synthesis proposes an interpretive framework aligning pedagogy, institutional culture, and evaluation with moral development. Empirical research remains necessary to test its effectiveness, distinguish implementation from outcomes, and examine the durability of character development across diverse educational settings.

Keywords: *Learning Strategies, Innovation, Noble Character, Islamic Values, Islamic Education.*



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INTRODUCTION

The cultivation of *akhlakul karimah*, or noble character, constitutes a central educational concern in Islamic schooling. Within this study, noble character refers to the integration of Islamic moral understanding, ethical commitment, and conduct expressed through honesty, responsibility, compassion, fairness, and respect for others. Its development therefore requires more than students' ability to recall religious teachings or comply with classroom rules. It concerns how learners interpret moral situations, justify their decisions, and translate values into everyday practices. Evidence from an Indonesian madrasah indicates that character education can connect Islamic religious instruction with spiritual extracurricular activities to support students' knowledge, attitudes, and moral actions. However, the same study identifies limited institutional supervision and weak collaboration with parents as barriers to implementation (Syarnubi et al., 2021).

A scientifically grounded discussion of character formation also requires conceptual clarity. Character education should not function as an umbrella term for every desirable educational outcome, since academic achievement, classroom participation, prosocial behavior, and moral development represent related but distinct constructs. McGrath et al. (2022), through a prototype analysis of expert opinions, demonstrate that even specialists differ in their understanding of character education. Their findings emphasize the importance of identifying the defining features of an intervention before evaluating its outcomes. Accordingly, research on *akhlakul karimah* needs to specify the values it seeks to cultivate, the learning processes through which those values develop, and the behavioral evidence that indicates their internalization.

Empirical research provides a basis for pursuing character education while discouraging exaggerated claims about its effectiveness. Brown et al. (2023) synthesized 214 studies involving 307,512 participants and identified a small but statistically significant positive average effect of character education programs, with Hedges' $g=0.24$. Their analysis also detected selection bias, and correction reduced the estimated benefits while retaining a positive effect. These findings suggest that character education can contribute to student development, but its success cannot be assumed merely because a school introduces moral content or labels an activity as character-building. Intervention design, implementation quality, contextual conditions, and the validity of outcome measures remain important considerations.

One theoretical challenge concerns the relationship between knowing moral principles and acting upon them. The practical wisdom framework examined by Darnell et al. (2022) offers an analytical perspective by integrating moral sensitivity, the adjudication of competing ethical considerations, moral identity, and emotion regulation. Their findings support the empirical viability of a multidimensional model associated with prosocial behavior. Although this Aristotelian framework should not be treated as equivalent to Islamic moral philosophy, it provides a useful comparative lens for examining why moral instruction needs to engage reasoning, emotions, motivation, and action together. In Islamic education, these dimensions can inform the pedagogical analysis of how learners apply religious values in concrete situations without replacing the normative foundations of *akhlakul karimah*.

Character formation also extends beyond individual dispositions. Peterson (2020) argues that character education must recognize the connections between individuals, their social associations, and civic life. This perspective challenges approaches that reduce moral development to personal obedience while overlooking relationships, social responsibility, and engagement with difference. For Islamic educational settings, this suggests the importance of connecting classroom discussion with students' responsibilities toward peers and the wider community. Noble character can consequently serve as an educational orientation for both personal integrity and constructive social participation.

These considerations create a rationale for innovative learning strategies that engage students in meaningful ethical inquiry and practical activity. Nevertheless, innovation should not be defined solely by the introduction of digital devices or unfamiliar classroom techniques. Its educational value depends on whether instructional design creates opportunities to investigate problems, consider alternative perspectives, make responsible decisions, and reflect on their consequences. J. Kim (2020), for example, developed and evaluated a creative problem-solving program intended to support both creativity and character among young children. Their work illustrates an approach in which cognitive development and character-related objectives form part of a shared instructional design rather than separate educational agendas.

Project-based learning offers another relevant pedagogical approach because it organizes learning around sustained inquiry, meaningful tasks, and the development of tangible products. Chen et al. (2020) meta-analysis, involving 12,585 students from 189 schools, found a positive effect on academic achievement compared with traditional instruction. However, the magnitude

of this effect varied according to factors such as subject area, school location, instructional time, and information technology support. This evidence supports the educational potential of project-based learning, but it does not establish that academic improvement necessarily produces moral development. Its application to *akhlakul karimah* therefore requires explicit ethical objectives and appropriate indicators of character-related outcomes.

A similar caution emerges from Guo et al. (2020), whose review of 76 studies examined cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes of project-based learning in higher education. The review identified diverse outcomes and assessment instruments, while also noting research-design limitations that restricted causal interpretation. For Islamic education, the implication is that project completion, student satisfaction, and active participation should not serve as substitutes for evidence of moral internalization. Instead, learning activities need to connect the project's substantive purpose with opportunities to demonstrate accountability, fairness in task distribution, honest reporting, and care for others. These proposed applications require contextual investigation rather than direct extrapolation from higher education research.

The quality of collaboration is particularly important in this process. Group assignments can expose students to disagreements, unequal participation, and competing priorities. Hussein. (2021), drawing on 67 student reflection reports in engineering education, found that collaboration challenges related to priority conflicts and uncertainty within project assignments. The study highlights structured planning, communication, follow-up, flexibility, and an inclusive environment as relevant responses. Adapted cautiously to Islamic educational settings, these findings suggest that collaborative activities require deliberate teacher guidance. Teachers need to help students examine not only whether they complete a shared task, but also how they treat one another while completing it.

Digital integration introduces a further dimension of pedagogical responsibility. Starkey (2020) review of teacher preparation distinguishes generic digital competence, digital teaching competence, and professional digital competence. This distinction indicates that familiarity with digital tools alone does not adequately describe teachers' readiness to teach in digitally mediated environments. In the present study, digital resources are therefore positioned as possible supports for inquiry, communication, and reflection rather than independent causes of character development. Their use must remain subordinate to learning objectives, students' developmental needs, and the ethical purposes of Islamic education.

Curriculum coherence and experiential relevance are equally important. Lavado-Anguera et al. (2024), in a systematic review of project-based learning in engineering education, identify connections among experiential learning, integrated curricula, sustainability, multidisciplinary work, technology, and professional contexts. Although the disciplinary setting differs from Islamic schooling, their synthesis illustrates how pedagogical innovation depends on relationships among learning goals, authentic activities, institutional support, and assessment. More directly within Islamic education, Kosim et al. (2024) developed a religious moderation-based curriculum module encompassing intracurricular, extracurricular, co-curricular, and *madrassa* cultural activities. This contextual evidence supports the relevance of examining value education across interconnected curricular and institutional practices rather than within isolated lessons.

Taken together, the reviewed literature establishes three related concerns. First, character education requires clearly defined constructs and credible evidence of outcomes. Second, innovative pedagogies provide opportunities for active learning, but their academic or participatory benefits cannot automatically be interpreted as evidence of moral formation. Third, findings from general education and professional disciplines require careful adaptation to the normative commitments and institutional conditions of Islamic education. The research problem addressed here therefore concerns how Islamic moral objectives can be aligned with active learning processes, teacher guidance, curriculum organization, and evidence of everyday conduct.

This formulation avoids assuming that innovation itself guarantees the development of noble character.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine and analyze innovative learning strategies that can support the development of students' *akhlakul karimah* in Islamic education. It focuses on the pedagogical connections among explicit value clarification, contextual problem-solving, collaborative projects, guided reflection, and appropriate digital support. It also considers the roles of teacher competence, curriculum coherence, and school–family collaboration in enabling implementation. The proposed contribution lies in an integrative analytical perspective that distinguishes instructional activities, mechanisms of value internalization, implementation conditions, and character-related outcomes. Through this focus, the study seeks to inform the design and evaluation of Islamic learning that connects religious understanding with responsible action in students' daily lives

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative literature review with a structured search and thematic synthesis to examine innovative teaching strategies for fostering students' *akhlakul karimah* in Islamic educational settings. The review aims to identify the strategies described in previous studies, examine how Islamic values are embedded in pedagogical practices, and assess the nature and limitations of the evidence supporting reported character-development outcomes. A literature-based design enables the critical integration of existing knowledge rather than the collection of primary data from research participants. Following Snyder (2019), the review procedures are organised around an explicit research purpose, transparent literature selection, critical analysis, and a clearly articulated synthesis.

The review addresses three research questions: (1) What innovative teaching strategies have previous studies described for fostering *akhlakul karimah*? (2) How do these strategies connect classroom instruction, educators' practices, and institutional culture with Islamic values? (3) What outcomes, implementation conditions, and methodological limitations do the studies report? These questions guide the selection, organisation, and interpretation of the literature. The synthesis seeks to explain relationships among pedagogical strategies, educational contexts, and reported outcomes rather than merely summarise individual publications, consistent with the review-development guidance of (Paul & Criado, 2020).

The literature search was conducted in [databases actually searched] on [search date or dates]. The search covered publications from starting year to ending year. Search terms combined concepts relating to Islamic education, character development, and teaching strategies. The search expression used in [database name] was [insert the exact search string]. Database-specific adaptations, including search fields, language restrictions, and document-type filters, are reported in table or supplementary material. Where applicable, reference-list searching supplemented the database search. The search log records the sources consulted, search dates, complete search expressions, and number of records retrieved. This documentation follows the emphasis of Chigbu et al. (2023) on making literature searching, identification, selection, and synthesis explicit and traceable.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

1.1. Akhlakul Karimah as an Integrated Educational Orientation

The literature reviewed positions *akhlakul karimah* as an educational orientation that connects religious understanding, moral judgement, and everyday conduct. Rather than treating noble character as a separate set of behavioural rules, this perspective situates ethical

development within the broader formation of Muslim personhood. Ahmed (2021), for example, conceptualises Islamic personhood through the relationship between authority, autonomy, and dialogue. This interpretation provides a basis for understanding character formation as a process involving conscious engagement with religious commitments rather than external conformity alone.

Within educational practice, this orientation appears through the interrelated concepts of *tarbiyah*, *ta'lim*, and *ta'dib*. Lafrarchi (2020) uses these concepts to examine the contribution of Islamic religious education curricula to personality development. Her analysis indicates that the inclusion of relevant curriculum elements does not, by itself, establish a sufficiently comprehensive educational framework. Lahmar (2020) similarly highlights the importance of a wisdom-based cultural environment that connects learning, critical dialogue, and action. Together, these studies locate Islamic character education within the relationship between curriculum content, educational relationships, and institutional culture.

The literature also identifies teacher student relationships as an important setting for moral development. In an Indonesian Islamic boarding school, Ismail et al. (2024) report that the *talaqqi* and *halaqa* traditions provide opportunities to cultivate respect, humility, gratitude, and emotional support. Their findings describe character formation through sustained relationships and everyday interaction rather than instruction alone. However, the context-specific nature of the study limits its use as evidence of equivalent outcomes across all Islamic educational institutions.

Another strand of research examines the relationship between religious learning and meaningful understanding. Lafrarchi (2020) offer a multifaceted examination of Qur'anic memorisation and recitation, cautioning against reducing these practices to a simple opposition between memorisation and comprehension. This perspective supports a more careful analysis of how religious practices contribute to learning, while avoiding the assumption that participation in a practice necessarily demonstrates moral internalisation.

1.2. Innovative Learning Strategies and Their Reported Outcomes

Research on innovative learning strategies provides evidence of benefits for selected learning outcomes, particularly when instructional activities require students to investigate, collaborate, and apply knowledge. Chen and Yang (2019) meta-analysis reports a positive overall effect of project-based learning on academic achievement. Guo et al. (2020), however, show that studies evaluate project-based learning through different outcome categories and measurement instruments. These differences make it necessary to distinguish academic achievement, engagement, practical performance, and affective responses when interpreting effectiveness.

Flipped learning represents another approach to reorganising classroom activity. Meta-analyses by van Van Alten et al. (2019) and Strelan et al. (2020) examine its effects across educational settings. These studies provide a stronger basis for discussing learning outcomes than claims based solely on the novelty of the method. Bond (2020) systematic review further identifies opportunities for collaboration, participation, enjoyment, and improved student-teacher relationships, while also documenting indicators of disengagement in some studies. Consequently, increased engagement should be treated as a possible outcome of instructional design rather than an automatic consequence of adopting flipped learning.

Technology-supported learning also requires a distinction between the availability of digital tools and their educational use. Sailer and Homner (2020) examine digital tools in secondary mathematics and science, while Bai et al. (2020) synthesise evidence on gamification. These studies are relevant to instructional innovation, but their findings do not directly establish improvements in Islamic moral character. Evidence concerning subject learning or participation

should therefore remain analytically separate from evidence concerning ethical judgement and conduct.

Within Islamic education, the literature identifies contextual learning and teacher professional development as relevant directions for innovation. Parhan et al. (2024) examine a contextual learning model intended to connect applicable knowledge with knowledge-based virtues. Assalihee et al. (2024) investigate lesson study as a classroom-based approach to professional development in Southern Thailand. These contributions shift attention from adopting isolated techniques towards improving the relationship between learning objectives, classroom practice, and teacher development.

1.3. Integration of Islamic Values Across Curriculum and School Practices

The integration of Islamic values takes several forms and should not be treated as a uniform educational practice. Hidayat et al. (2020), for example, identify a model of integration in sociology learning in which Qur'anic references function primarily as justification for subject content. Their findings demonstrate the presence of religious integration, but also reveal the importance of examining its depth and educational function. Adding scriptural references and developing students' capacity to evaluate ethical issues represent related but distinct processes.

At the institutional level, Tsani et al. (2024) evaluate Islamic values education through a logic model that distinguishes inputs, outputs, and outcomes. Their study describes coordinated school responsibilities, religious learning activities, congregational worship, cleanliness programmes, and charitable activities. Reported outcomes include discipline, responsibility, honesty, and social concern. The study also documents communication with families, indicating that value education extends beyond classroom instruction.

International scholarship likewise addresses Islamic education as a broader developmental endeavour. Brifkani (2021) examines principals' perspectives on whole-child education in Islamic schools in the United States. Saada and Magadlah (2021), meanwhile, propose critical Islamic religious education as an alternative to approaches dominated by non-critical and devotional instruction. Demirel Ucan and Wright (2019) also explore pedagogical improvement through critical religious education, variation theory, and the learning study model. These contributions highlight different ways of connecting religious commitment with reflection, understanding, and participation.

The literature further identifies teacher preparation as a distinct concern. Tuna (2022) examines the professionalisation of Islamic religious education teachers, while Alhashmi and Moussa-Inaty (2021) address professional learning among Islamic education teachers in the United Arab Emirates. These studies provide relevant foundations for considering teachers' professional knowledge and development when designing programmes for value integration.

Discussion

2.1. From Religious Knowledge to Moral Internalisation

The synthesis suggests that *akhlakul karimah* should function as an organising purpose of Islamic education rather than an additional topic within an otherwise unchanged curriculum. This interpretation brings together curriculum analysis, relational approaches, and scholarship on Muslim personhood. However, these contributions do not justify equating religious knowledge, ritual participation, and moral conduct. Each represents a different dimension of educational development and requires appropriate evidence.

Self-determination theory provides a useful explanatory perspective on this distinction. Ryan and Deci (2020) explain that internalisation involves increasingly accepting the value of an activity or commitment as one's own. Educational environments that support autonomy, competence, and relatedness can facilitate this process. Applied cautiously to Islamic character

education, this framework suggests that students need opportunities to understand moral expectations, practise relevant behaviours, and reflect on their reasons for acting. Compliance under supervision alone offers insufficient evidence of internalisation.

This interpretation does not require abandoning religious authority. Instead, it raises a pedagogical question about how teachers exercise authority. Ahmed (2021) account of dialogical Muslim selfhood and Saada and Magadlah's (2021) critical approach both provide grounds for examining whether educational relationships enable understanding and responsible agency. Respect for teachers can coexist with opportunities to ask questions, consider reasons, and discuss moral dilemmas.

2.2. Aligning Innovation with Explicit Ethical Objectives

Innovative strategies become relevant to *akhlakul karimah* when educators establish a clear relationship between the learning activity and the intended ethical outcome. Evidence that project-based or flipped learning improves academic performance does not establish that the same approach produces honesty, empathy, or responsibility. The outcome categories identified by Guo et al. (2020) make this distinction particularly important.

A practical implication of this synthesis is to design activities with separate academic and ethical objectives. For example, a collaborative project may assess the accuracy of subject knowledge alongside observable responsibility in completing agreed tasks. Reflective discussion may then examine how students handled disagreement, acknowledged contributions, or responded to mistakes. These are proposed applications of the literature, not effects established by the cited meta-analyses.

Gamification requires similar caution. Research on gamification addresses learning outcomes, but moral education concerns more than participation or task completion. Ryan and Deci (2020) distinction between controlled and autonomous motivation suggests that educators should examine whether rewards encourage meaningful commitment or dependence on external approval. Therefore, points and rankings should not serve as substitutes for explaining ethical purposes and supporting reflective judgement.

Islamic educational innovation can also involve productive engagement with established traditions. Gurlesin et al. (2020) discuss an innovative, dialogical approach to religious education, while Ismail et al. (2024) describe the relational significance of *talaqqi* and *halaqa*. Considered together, these studies suggest that innovation need not mean replacing inherited practices. It can involve examining how those practices support participation, understanding, and ethical relationships in contemporary settings.

2.3. Moving Beyond Symbolic Curriculum Integration

The distinction between symbolic inclusion and substantive integration is central to interpreting the findings. Hidayat et al. (2020) show how integration can operate through scriptural justification of subject content. Lafrarchi (2020), meanwhile, demonstrates the need to evaluate whether a curriculum adequately addresses broader educational purposes. These findings indicate that the presence of Islamic terminology or references cannot, on its own, establish the depth or effectiveness of integration.

Substantive integration requires attention to the relationship between intended values and students' educational experiences. For example, a school that teaches responsibility should examine how it allocates duties, provides feedback, and responds to unmet commitments. Similarly, the teaching of respect should inform classroom interaction rather than remain confined to written learning objectives. This interpretation is consistent with Lahmar (2020) emphasis on the educational environment and Tsani et al. (2024) examination of coordinated institutional practices.

The wider application of Islamic values also appears in research on humane entrepreneurship in Indonesian boarding schools. Anggadwita et al. (2021) connect institutional development with a humane entrepreneurship approach. Although this study does not directly test classroom character education, it broadens the discussion by locating ethical commitments within organisational and community practices. Its relevance lies in this institutional perspective, not in providing direct evidence of students' moral improvement.

2.4. Teacher Development, Family Participation, and Evaluation

The reviewed scholarship positions teacher development as an important component of educational improvement. Research on teacher professionalisation, professional learning, and lesson study provides a basis for designing sustained support rather than relying only on short training sessions. In this context, professional development should connect subject knowledge, pedagogical decisions, and reflection on classroom practice.

Family participation also deserves a more qualified formulation than the original claim that parental involvement is “proven” to strengthen outcomes. Tsani et al. (2024) document family communication and parental accounts within a particular school programme. This evidence supports discussing family participation as part of the implementation context. It does not establish the independent causal effect of parental involvement across different schools or student populations.

Finally, evaluation should distinguish programme activities from student outcomes. Holding religious activities, introducing digital resources, or completing projects demonstrates implementation. It does not necessarily demonstrate lasting changes in character. The logic model used by Tsani et al. (2024) and the measurement issues identified by Guo et al. (2020) support a more explicit account of what educators assess, how they assess it, and what conclusions the evidence permits.

On this basis, the proposed educational approach combines explicit ethical objectives, meaningful participation, reflective dialogue, consistent institutional practices, and context-sensitive evaluation. This is an interpretive framework derived from the literature. Its effectiveness in the setting of the present study would require empirical examination.

CONCLUSION

This literature synthesis positions *akhlakul karimah* as an organising purpose of Islamic education, connecting religious understanding, moral judgement, and everyday conduct. Character formation therefore requires more than the transmission of religious knowledge, participation in ritual activities, or compliance with institutional expectations. These dimensions may contribute to educational development, but none independently demonstrates moral internalisation. The central challenge is to create educational experiences through which students understand ethical commitments, practise them meaningfully, and increasingly accept responsibility for their actions.

The reviewed literature suggests that this process depends on alignment among curriculum, pedagogy, educational relationships, and institutional culture. The concepts of *tarbiyah*, *ta'lim*, and *ta'dib* provide a foundation for approaching students' development holistically, while dialogical and relational perspectives highlight the importance of understanding, participation, and responsible agency. Established practices such as *talaqqi* and *halaqa* may contribute to this orientation through sustained teacher–student interaction. Their educational significance, however, should be interpreted within the contexts examined rather than assumed to produce equivalent outcomes across institutions.

Innovative learning strategies offer opportunities to support this broader educational purpose when their activities are explicitly connected to ethical objectives. Project-based learning,

flipped learning, and technology-supported approaches may improve selected academic or engagement outcomes, but such findings cannot be treated as direct evidence of stronger moral character. Educators should therefore distinguish academic achievement from ethical judgement and conduct, designing learning activities and assessments that address each dimension appropriately. Reflection, collaborative responsibility, and discussion of moral dilemmas represent potential applications rather than established effects of instructional innovation.

Substantive integration also requires Islamic values to inform institutional practices rather than appear only as terminology or scriptural references within subject content. Responsibility, honesty, respect, and social concern should shape classroom interaction, feedback, school routines, and organisational decisions. Sustained teacher development can support this alignment, while family communication can help connect school expectations with students' wider experiences. Nevertheless, the independent contribution of family participation remains insufficiently established by the evidence discussed.

Overall, this synthesis proposes an interpretive framework combining explicit ethical objectives, meaningful participation, reflective dialogue, consistent institutional practices, and context-sensitive evaluation. Its principal contribution is to clarify the relationships that educational design should address, not to establish the effectiveness of a single model. Future research should examine these relationships empirically, distinguish programme implementation from student outcomes, and investigate whether observed changes persist across settings and over time. Such evaluation is necessary to determine how Islamic educational practices support enduring moral understanding and conduct in everyday life.

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