



TEACHER EXEMPLARITY AS A MECHANISM OF ISLAMIC MORAL CHARACTER FORMATION: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY IN A QUR'ANIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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Abstract: *This study examines teacher exemplarity and moral character formation in Islamic Education among fourth-grade students at SD Al Quran Raudlotut Tholibin. The study was motivated by the importance of teacher role modelling in translating Islamic values into students' everyday moral behavior. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed to explore the role of Islamic Education teachers and the factors supporting and inhibiting students' moral character formation. The research was conducted from 24 to 26 February 2026 and involved one Islamic Education teacher and 15 fourth-grade students. Data were collected through direct observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, and were analyzed inductively through data organization, reduction, identification of patterns, and interpretation. The findings demonstrate that the Islamic Education teacher functions as a role model, mentor, guide, motivator, and adviser in students' moral development. Teacher exemplarity is demonstrated through punctuality, respectful communication, Islamic practices, inspirational stories, and positive conduct both inside and outside the classroom. Moral formation is further strengthened through habituation, teacher-parent cooperation, collaboration among school personnel, creative learning strategies, and students' developing self-awareness. However, environmental influences, peer relationships, limited parental attention, insufficient student awareness, and limited teacher resources remain significant challenges. The study concludes that teacher exemplarity is most effective when supported by an integrated school-family environment that enables students to observe, practice, reinforce, and gradually internalize Islamic moral values in everyday life.*

INTRODUCTION

Character formation has become an increasingly important concern in contemporary education because schooling is expected not only to develop students' intellectual capacities but also to cultivate ethical dispositions, social responsibility, self-discipline, and respect for others. In the context of Islamic education, this responsibility has an additional dimension because educational processes are closely connected with the cultivation of akhlak and the internalization of Islamic values in students' everyday lives (Dwiputri & Anggraeni, 2021). Islamic education therefore cannot be reduced to the transmission of religious concepts and doctrinal knowledge. It also involves developing students who are able to translate religious understanding into appropriate attitudes and behavior. This orientation is particularly important at the elementary-school level, where students are still developing patterns of social interaction, emotional

regulation, and moral judgment. Recent studies similarly emphasize that character education in elementary schools requires sustained interaction between teachers, students, learning practices, and the broader school environment (Qomar, 2016).

Within Islamic education, the teacher occupies a particularly important position because teachers are not merely instructors but also moral figures whose behavior can become an object of observation and imitation. The concept of teacher exemplarity refers to the teacher's embodiment of the values, attitudes, and behaviors that students are expected to develop. Teachers may communicate honesty, discipline, responsibility, respect, patience, and religious commitment through explicit instruction, but these values become more concrete when students encounter them in the teacher's everyday conduct (A'la & Makhshun, 2022). From the perspective of social learning theory, individuals learn not only through direct instruction and experience but also through observing the behavior of significant models and the consequences associated with that behavior (Bandura, 2001). Consequently, teachers can function as powerful behavioral models within the educational environment.

The significance of role modelling has been discussed extensively in moral and character education. Arthur (2016) argues that role modelling can become an important component of moral education when students are able to recognize the moral significance of the behavior being modelled and understand how such qualities can be developed within themselves. This point is particularly relevant to Islamic education because teacher exemplarity is closely connected with the traditional concept of *uswah hasanah*, in which moral education is strengthened through concrete examples of appropriate conduct (Arthur et al., 2016). Research on teachers as role models similarly demonstrates that teacher behavior can influence students' academic, ethical, and social development through observable professional and interpersonal practices.

The relevance of teacher exemplarity becomes even more significant in elementary education. Children frequently learn through observation, repetition, and interaction with adults who occupy important positions in their social environment. A recent study of teacher role modelling in elementary schools demonstrates that teachers' exemplary conduct can support character strengthening when it is integrated with consistent behavioral expectations and a supportive learning environment (Altinyelken, 2021). Likewise, research examining Islamic character formation in elementary schools has connected teacher role modelling with habituation and the development of students' moral behavior. These findings reinforce the argument that character education is not produced exclusively through formal lessons but also through the hidden and relational dimensions of schooling.

In Islamic education specifically, teacher exemplarity has been associated with the cultivation of *akhlakul karimah*, religious practices, discipline, respect, and social responsibility.

Recent qualitative research shows that modelling, habituation, and advice can work together to cultivate students' respectful and religious behavior, while school culture and leadership can strengthen the sustainability of these practices (Endriadizein, 2025). Other research has similarly found that Islamic Education teachers function as role models through consistency in speech, attitudes, religious practices, and daily interactions with students. These studies indicate that teacher exemplarity should not be treated as an isolated personality characteristic but as a pedagogical practice embedded within the broader educational environment.

Nevertheless, an important gap remains in the existing literature. Much of the recent research on teacher role modelling focuses on general character formation, religious character, discipline, or specific moral values. Other studies examine role modelling among secondary-school or madrasah students. Comparatively less attention has been given to how teacher exemplarity operates among elementary-school students in an explicitly Qur'anic educational environment, where moral formation is integrated with religious learning and daily school practices. This distinction matters because younger students may experience teacher exemplarity differently from adolescents. At the elementary level, observable behavior, repetition, emotional relationships, and direct guidance may play particularly important roles in shaping students' developing moral dispositions.

The present study addresses this gap by examining teacher exemplarity and moral character formation among fourth-grade students at SD Al Quran Raudlotut Tholibin, an Islamic elementary school in Purwosari, Metro Utara, Metro City, Lampung. The school's educational orientation explicitly emphasizes the development of a Qur'anic generation that is knowledgeable, broadly minded, and characterized by *akhlakul karimah*. The research context is therefore particularly relevant for examining how Islamic values are translated into everyday educational practices. The original field research found that some students experienced challenges in maintaining appropriate moral behavior, including influences from peers and the broader social environment, while insufficient parental involvement and limited collaboration among educational actors were also identified as challenges.

The empirical findings provide a particularly important basis for examining teacher exemplarity. The Islamic Education teacher at the school was found to function simultaneously as a role model, moral mentor, motivator, and adviser. The teacher demonstrated punctuality, opened lessons with greetings, communicated using appropriate language, incorporated inspirational stories into instruction, concluded lessons with prayer, and provided examples of Islamic conduct beyond classroom instruction. Students likewise reported that the teacher consistently reminded them about good behavior, provided moral guidance, and demonstrated

appropriate conduct in everyday situations. These findings suggest that teacher exemplarity operates through both explicit pedagogical instruction and implicit behavioural modelling.

Furthermore, the formation of students' moral character appears to be supported by habituation and collaboration. The school implements religious practices and routines, while cooperation between teachers, parents, and guidance personnel contributes to the development of students' behavior. At the same time, the research identifies external influences, peer relationships, insufficient parental attention, and limited student awareness as factors that can inhibit the consistency of moral development. These findings suggest that teacher exemplarity should be understood within an ecological context rather than as an isolated teacher characteristic.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine how Islamic Education teachers enact exemplary behavior and contribute to the formation of fourth-grade students' moral character at SD Al Quran Raudlotut Tholibin. Rather than measuring the statistical effect of teacher behavior on students, the study seeks to understand the practices, interactions, and contextual factors through which moral character is cultivated. This qualitative perspective is important because it allows teacher exemplarity to be examined as a lived educational process involving modelling, habituation, guidance, motivation, and interpersonal interaction.

The contribution of this study lies in positioning teacher exemplarity as a lived mechanism of moral character formation in elementary Islamic education. Existing literature establishes the importance of teachers as role models, but the present study provides a contextualized account of how such exemplarity is enacted in a Qur'anic elementary-school setting and how it interacts with habituation, parental involvement, peer influence, and school culture. In doing so, the study moves beyond the general assertion that teachers are important for character education and instead examines how exemplary conduct is embodied, communicated, practiced, and reinforced in students' everyday educational experiences. This perspective contributes to a deeper understanding of moral education in Islamic elementary schools and highlights the importance of consistency between what teachers teach, what they practice, and what students experience in their daily school lives.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the role of Islamic Education teachers in shaping the moral character of fourth-grade students at SD Al Quran Raudlotut Tholibin, Metro Utara, Metro City, Lampung. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study focused on understanding educational practices, teacher-student interactions, and the processes through which moral values are cultivated in the natural school

environment. The research was conducted from 24 to 26 February 2026, with data obtained directly from the research setting through observation, interviews, and documentation (Byrne et al., 2012).

The research participants consisted of 15 fourth-grade students and one Islamic Education teacher at SD Al Quran Raudlotut Tholibin. The teacher was selected because of the direct responsibility for Islamic Education and students' moral development, while the students provided information concerning their experiences of teacher guidance and moral formation. The research was conducted in the context of a Qur'anic elementary school whose educational vision emphasizes the development of a Qur'anic generation who are knowledgeable, broad-minded, and possess *akhlakul karimah*.

Three techniques were employed to collect the data. First, observation was used to examine the teacher's behavior, instructional practices, and students' moral conduct during school activities. The researcher directly observed and recorded interactions between the Islamic Education teacher and students using an observation guide. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Islamic Education teacher and selected fourth-grade students. This technique enabled the researcher to obtain direct explanations concerning teacher exemplarity, moral guidance, students' responses, and the challenges encountered in developing students' character. Third, documentation was used to complement the observational and interview data. Documents included school profiles, relevant school records, and documentation of students' classroom activities.

Data validity was supported through the triangulation of observation, interview, and documentation data. The researcher compared information obtained from different sources and techniques to strengthen the credibility of the findings. Data analysis followed an inductive qualitative process, beginning with specific empirical information and developing broader interpretations. The analysis involved organizing the collected data, identifying relevant categories, reducing information to focus on the research objectives, identifying patterns, and drawing conclusions. The analytical process was conducted interactively and continuously throughout the research (Mahbubi, 2025).

In accordance with the methodological principles of qualitative research, the analysis emphasized interpretation of naturally occurring educational practices rather than statistical measurement. The findings were consequently constructed from the convergence of teachers' accounts, students' experiences, direct observations, and documentary evidence (Creswell, 2013). This approach enabled the study to examine teacher exemplarity not simply as a theoretical concept but as an observable practice within the everyday moral education of fourth-grade students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teacher Exemplarity in the Formation of Students' Moral Character

The findings of this study demonstrate that teacher exemplarity is a central mechanism in the formation of students' moral character in Islamic Education at SD Al Quran Raudlotut Tholibin. The role of the Islamic Education teacher extends beyond delivering religious knowledge to include modelling appropriate behavior, guiding students, providing motivation, and giving moral advice. This finding is consistent with the broader understanding of character education in which teachers function not only as instructional agents but also as living examples of the values that schools seek to cultivate. Arthur argues that teacher role modelling is an important but complex dimension of moral and character education because students encounter teachers not merely through formal instruction but through their everyday attitudes and conduct (Arthur et al., 2016).

The empirical evidence from SD Al Quran Raudlotut Tholibin indicates that the Islamic Education teacher occupies several interconnected roles in the process of moral formation. The teacher is identified as a good role model, mentor, guide, motivator, and adviser for students. These roles demonstrate that moral character formation is embedded within the daily educational relationship rather than being confined to a particular lesson or character-building program. The teacher becomes a reference point through which students encounter concrete examples of how Islamic values should be expressed in everyday behavior (Affandi et al., 2024).

The importance of this finding becomes clearer when considering the nature of elementary-school students. At this developmental stage, students frequently learn through observation, imitation, repetition, and direct interaction with adults who occupy meaningful positions in their social environment. Teacher behavior consequently becomes an implicit component of the learning process. A recent study of elementary education similarly identifies teachers as important models in strengthening students' character and emphasizes the importance of teachers' observable conduct in the formation of students' behavior. Research specifically connecting Islamic character formation with teacher modelling also emphasizes that elementary students are particularly responsive to examples presented through daily educational interactions (Darwis et al., 2024).

At SD Al Quran Raudlotut Tholibin, teacher exemplarity is expressed through relatively ordinary but educationally significant practices. The Islamic Education teacher demonstrates punctuality, begins learning with greetings, communicates using appropriate language, incorporates inspirational stories into classroom instruction, concludes learning with prayer, and continues to demonstrate Islamic manners outside the classroom. These practices illustrate that teacher exemplarity does not necessarily require special programs or extraordinary activities.

Rather, it is embedded in the consistency of the teacher's everyday conduct. Such consistency is important because students repeatedly encounter the same moral messages through both what the teacher says and what the teacher does (Qiftiyah et al., 2026).

This finding supports the theoretical perspective of Bandura's social cognitive theory, according to which human behavior can be learned through observing others and interpreting the consequences of their actions. In an educational setting, teachers occupy a particularly influential modelling position because students interact with them repeatedly and observe their behavior in multiple contexts. Thus, when a teacher consistently demonstrates punctuality, respectful communication, discipline, responsibility, and religious practice, these behaviors can become visible standards for students (Bandura, 2001). The significance of modelling is also emphasized by Firdaus, who argues that teachers have responsibilities extending beyond cognitive learning to the development of students' affective and moral dimensions (Firdaus et al., 2026).

Within Islamic Education, however, teacher exemplarity has a particular religious significance. The teacher is expected to embody the values being taught and function as an *uswah hasanah*. Consequently, the effectiveness of Islamic moral instruction depends partly on the coherence between religious knowledge and the teacher's personal conduct. The present findings illustrate this coherence: students do not merely receive explanations about good behavior but encounter such behavior through their teacher's daily actions (Amin et al., 2021). This is consistent with recent research showing that Islamic Education teachers can function as moral exemplars by integrating Islamic values through discipline, politeness, religious practice, and daily interaction with students.

The teacher's role as a moral guide and adviser further strengthens the modelling process. The field findings indicate that the teacher provides reminders and advice when students display behavior that is inconsistent with expected moral standards. The teacher encourages students to practice good behavior and provides explanations concerning appropriate conduct. This means that students are not simply expected to imitate the teacher automatically. Their behavior is accompanied by verbal clarification that helps connect observable conduct with moral and religious values (Sari et al., 2024). Teacher exemplarity therefore operates through both demonstration and explanation.

The importance of this combination can be understood through the distinction between merely observing a behavior and understanding its moral significance. Sanderse notes that role modelling in moral education involves more than simply displaying desirable traits; the educational value of modelling depends on how students perceive and interpret the example. In the present study, teachers strengthen this interpretive dimension through advice, motivation,

religious stories, and reminders (Arthur et al., 2016). Students are therefore exposed not only to examples of good conduct but also to explanations concerning why such conduct is valuable.

The use of stories and motivational material is another important element of the findings. The teacher incorporates inspirational stories into Islamic Education learning to encourage students to develop positive attitudes and behavior. Such narratives provide students with additional moral models beyond the teacher. They allow students to encounter examples of desirable behavior through Islamic figures while simultaneously observing the teacher as a living example in their immediate environment (Alqodr et al., 2025). This creates two interconnected forms of moral modelling: narrative exemplarity and lived teacher exemplarity.

The formation of moral character also extends beyond the classroom. The findings indicate that the teacher continues to provide examples of Islamic conduct in everyday school interactions. This is important because students' moral learning does not stop when formal instruction ends. When teachers maintain consistency between classroom behavior and informal school interactions, students encounter a relatively stable moral framework. Recent research similarly identifies consistent teacher conduct, habituation, and school culture as important components of Islamic character formation (Ghozali, 2024). For example, found that modelling, habituation, and advice were interconnected in the development of students' *akhlakul karimah* (Maulana, 2025).

The findings further indicate that teacher exemplarity is reinforced through the wider educational environment. The school's stated vision is to produce a Qur'anic generation who are knowledgeable, broad-minded, and characterized by *akhlakul karimah*. This institutional orientation creates an important contextual foundation for teacher exemplarity. The teacher's conduct is therefore not isolated from the school's educational philosophy but forms part of a broader effort to integrate Qur'anic values into students' lives (Astuti & Sujati, 2022).

The role of teacher exemplarity is also strengthened through collaboration. The findings identify cooperation between teachers and parents, collaboration between the Islamic Education teacher and guidance personnel, teacher creativity, and students' own awareness as supporting factors in moral development (Latif, 2016). This suggests that teacher exemplarity becomes more sustainable when students encounter relatively consistent moral expectations across different educational environments. Recent research similarly emphasizes collaboration between teachers, parents, and school environments in strengthening students' Islamic character.

Nevertheless, the findings caution against interpreting teacher exemplarity as a simple or deterministic process. Students' moral development is also affected by peer relationships, external environments, parental attention, student awareness, and limitations in teacher resources (Isnani, 2023). These factors demonstrate that teachers operate within a broader social

environment. Teacher exemplarity may provide a strong moral reference, but students simultaneously encounter other behavioral models outside the classroom. Consequently, consistent reinforcement remains necessary if exemplary conduct is to become an enduring component of students' character.

This finding is particularly important because it shifts the discussion from the question of whether teachers are role models to the more analytical question of how teacher exemplarity functions as a pedagogical mechanism. At SD Al Quran Raudlotut Tholibin, the mechanism can be interpreted through a sequence of modelling, observation, guidance, repetition, and behavioural reinforcement. The teacher first demonstrates the desired conduct; students observe it through repeated interaction; the teacher explains and reinforces the associated values; and students are subsequently encouraged to practice those values in their own behavior. This interpretation is compatible with recent empirical studies that position teacher modelling, habituation, and moral guidance as mutually reinforcing components of Islamic character education.

The findings therefore extend previous research by placing teacher exemplarity at the center of moral character formation among elementary-school students in a Qur'anic educational setting. Previous studies have established the importance of teachers as role models in character education, including Islamic character formation and elementary education. The present case adds contextual evidence showing that exemplarity becomes meaningful when it is consistently embodied through teachers' speech, discipline, religious practice, interpersonal relationships, and pedagogical behavior (Aderibigbe et al., 2023).

Overall, teacher exemplarity at SD Al Quran Raudlotut Tholibin can be understood as a continuous moral-pedagogical practice rather than simply a personal quality of the teacher. Its significance lies in the consistency between what teachers teach and what students observe in their everyday conduct. The teacher becomes simultaneously an educator, moral model, guide, motivator, and adviser. This integrated role allows Islamic values to move from the level of religious knowledge toward observable moral behavior. The findings consequently support the argument that effective Islamic character formation requires teachers who do not merely explain moral values but embody, demonstrate, reinforce, and consistently practice those values in the presence of their students.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Students' Moral Character Formation

The findings indicate that the formation of students' moral character at SD Al Quran Raudlotut Tholibin is influenced not only by the direct role of the Islamic Education teacher but also by a combination of supporting and inhibiting factors originating from the school, family, students themselves, and their wider social environment. This finding is important

because teacher exemplarity does not operate in isolation. Moral character develops through continuous interaction between the models provided by teachers and the environments in which students live and learn. The field data demonstrate that cooperation among educational actors, teacher creativity, student awareness, and the school environment provide important support for moral development, while peer influence, limited parental attention, environmental factors, insufficient student awareness, and limited teacher resources may constrain the process (Duryat, 2021).

One of the most significant supporting factors identified in this study is cooperation between teachers and parents. The Islamic Education teacher emphasized that parental involvement is crucial in supporting students' moral development. The research findings specifically identify cooperation between teachers and parents as an important factor in maintaining the continuity of moral guidance. This finding is particularly significant because students spend considerable time outside school. The values introduced by teachers therefore require reinforcement within the family environment. When expectations concerning discipline, politeness, honesty, responsibility, and religious behavior are communicated consistently between school and home, students receive a more coherent moral framework (Siregar, 2021).

This finding also demonstrates that moral education cannot be positioned exclusively as the responsibility of the Islamic Education teacher. Parents constitute an important component of the educational environment because they influence students' daily habits, communication patterns, and responses to moral situations. The literature reviewed in the original study likewise emphasizes the importance of parental cooperation and explains that parents contribute to character development through affection, discipline, positive examples, and moral guidance (Akrim et al., 2022). Thus, the formation of students' moral character is strengthened when the values demonstrated by teachers are also reinforced within the home.

A second supporting factor is collaboration among teachers within the school. The findings show that the Islamic Education teacher works together with the guidance and counseling teacher in addressing students' behavioral problems, including situations involving violations of school expectations. Students also reported that the Islamic Education teacher sometimes involves other teachers in guiding and educating them (Rudiansyah et al., 2025). This collaboration indicates that moral formation is understood as a shared responsibility within the school rather than a task assigned exclusively to one subject teacher.

Such collaboration is particularly important because students encounter multiple teachers during their educational experience. If moral expectations are consistently communicated by different teachers, students receive stronger reinforcement concerning appropriate conduct. Conversely, inconsistent expectations may create ambiguity concerning acceptable behavior (Qiftiyah et al., 2024). In this respect, the collaboration between the Islamic Education teacher, guidance and counseling personnel, and other teachers functions as an institutional mechanism that strengthens the continuity of moral education.

Another supporting factor identified in the study is teacher creativity in delivering Islamic Education. Students reported that teachers sometimes use films and learning materials beyond conventional classroom explanations. The use of varied instructional strategies is important because moral education can become less effective when students encounter it only through repetitive verbal explanations (Apriyanti et al., 2024). Creative approaches can provide concrete situations through which students are able to recognize, discuss, and understand moral values.

The field findings show that the Islamic Education teacher also incorporates inspirational stories into classroom instruction to motivate students and increase their enthusiasm for learning (Ali et al., 2024). Such practices demonstrate that teacher exemplarity and instructional creativity are interconnected. The teacher does not merely demonstrate good conduct but also provides students with additional moral narratives and experiences through which Islamic values can be interpreted. The use of stories, films, and visual materials therefore expands the pedagogical resources available for character formation.

The fourth supporting factor is students' own awareness of moral values. The findings indicate that student awareness represents an important internal factor in the development of character. The original study explains that self-awareness enables students to recognize their own actions and understand whether their behavior corresponds with moral expectations. This is significant because sustainable character formation cannot depend exclusively on external supervision. Teachers can provide examples, advice, and correction, but students must gradually develop the ability to regulate their own behavior (Miftahussurur & Firdaus, 2024).

From this perspective, teacher exemplarity functions most effectively when it contributes to the development of students' internal awareness. A student who behaves politely only because a teacher is watching remains dependent on external control. By contrast, a student who understands the importance of politeness, honesty, discipline, and respect can begin to

apply these values even when direct supervision is absent. The findings therefore suggest that the ultimate objective of moral education is not simply behavioral compliance but the gradual development of moral awareness (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Despite these supporting conditions, the study identifies several factors that inhibit the optimal formation of students' moral character. The first is the influence of the surrounding environment. The teacher identifies internal and external factors within the school as challenges, while students report that environmental influences both inside and outside school can strongly affect their behavior. This finding demonstrates that students encounter multiple behavioral models beyond the Islamic Education classroom (Rotgans & Schmidt, 2011).

The importance of environmental influence is particularly evident because elementary-school students are still developing their ability to independently evaluate different forms of behavior. Values promoted at school may be strengthened or weakened by students' experiences in their neighborhoods, families, peer groups, and broader social environments. The original research therefore appropriately identifies the living environment as an important factor in moral formation, noting that students spend substantial amounts of time outside school. Consequently, the teacher's influence must be understood within a broader social context.

Closely related to environmental influence is peer interaction. The study identifies friends as an important factor affecting students' moral behavior. The original discussion explains that students' conduct can be influenced by the people with whom they associate, with positive friendships potentially reinforcing good behavior and negative friendships potentially encouraging undesirable conduct. This finding illustrates the social nature of moral development. Students do not learn behavior only from adults; they also observe, imitate, negotiate, and sometimes reproduce the behavior of their peers (Ulfa et al., 2021).

Peer influence can therefore function in two directions. Positive peer relationships may reinforce the moral values introduced by teachers, while negative peer relationships may undermine them. This makes the development of a supportive peer culture an important component of school-based character education. Teacher exemplarity remains essential, but its impact can be strengthened when students' social relationships provide similar behavioral expectations.

Another inhibiting factor identified by students is limited parental attention at home. Students reported that insufficient parental attention can have a negative influence on their

behavior. This finding is particularly important because it creates a direct contrast with parental cooperation as a supporting factor (Szabo et al., 2020). When parents actively participate in students' moral development, the home environment reinforces the school's educational objectives. However, when parental attention is limited, students may receive less supervision and fewer opportunities to discuss or practice the moral values introduced at school.

This finding reinforces the need for stronger school–family communication. The school cannot completely compensate for the absence of moral guidance at home, just as parents cannot independently control all aspects of students' behavior at school. The formation of moral character therefore requires continuity between these two environments. Such continuity becomes increasingly important when students are exposed to competing influences outside the school (Department of Islamic Education, Postgraduate Studies, Universitas Islam Negeri Datokarama Palu, Indonesia et al., 2023).

The study also identifies limited student awareness as another inhibiting factor. Some students may not yet fully recognize the importance of moral behavior in their daily lives. This condition explains why moral education requires repetition, patience, and continuous guidance. The teacher cannot assume that students will immediately internalize values after receiving instruction. Moral awareness develops progressively through experience, reflection, habituation, correction, and repeated exposure to positive examples.

The final major inhibiting factor is limited human resources among teachers. The Islamic Education teacher reported that insufficient teacher resources can make moral development less optimal. The original discussion further indicates that limited availability of Islamic Education teaching personnel can reduce the teacher's ability to focus fully on students' moral development (Anshori, 2017). This is an institutional challenge because effective moral education requires time for observation, individual guidance, follow-up, and communication with other educational actors.

The combination of these findings suggests that teacher exemplarity is a central but not sufficient condition for moral character formation. The teacher provides an important moral model, but students' development is shaped by a broader network of relationships and contexts. The effectiveness of exemplary conduct is strengthened when parents cooperate, other teachers provide consistent guidance, students develop self-awareness, and the school creates an environment that supports Islamic values (Cahyani et al., 2025). Conversely, negative peer

influence, unsupportive environments, limited parental attention, insufficient student awareness, and inadequate human resources can weaken the process.

The school's institutional orientation provides an important foundation for addressing these challenges. SD Al Quran Raudlotut Tholibin has the vision of producing a Qur'anic generation that is knowledgeable, broad-minded, and characterized by *akhlakul karimah*. Its mission also emphasizes students' engagement with the Qur'an through reading, memorization, understanding, and application in daily life. This institutional orientation creates a favorable context for integrating teacher exemplarity with broader moral and religious practices.

The findings consequently reveal that moral character formation is best understood as a shared educational process involving teachers, parents, students, peers, and the school environment. Teacher exemplarity provides the central behavioural reference, while collaboration and institutional support create the conditions necessary for that example to be repeatedly reinforced (DeLuca, 2011). At the same time, environmental and social influences demonstrate that moral formation is not linear or automatic. Students continuously negotiate values across different contexts, making consistency and sustained guidance particularly important.

Overall, the case of SD Al Quran Raudlotut Tholibin demonstrates that the sustainability of students' moral character depends upon the interaction between teacher exemplarity, family involvement, teacher collaboration, instructional creativity, student awareness, and environmental support. The principal implication is that Islamic Education teachers should not be positioned as the sole actors responsible for moral development. Rather, they should function as central coordinators of a broader moral ecosystem in which exemplary behavior is demonstrated by teachers, reinforced by parents and other teachers, practiced by students, and supported by the school environment. This finding strengthens the argument that effective Islamic character education requires not merely teaching moral values but creating a consistent educational environment in which those values can be observed, practiced, reinforced, and gradually internalized by students..

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that teacher exemplarity constitutes an important component in the formation of students' moral character through Islamic Education at SD Al Quran Raudlotut Tholibin. The Islamic Education teacher does not function solely as a transmitter of religious

knowledge but also as a role model, mentor, motivator, and adviser. Teacher exemplarity is demonstrated through punctuality, respectful communication, appropriate conduct, religious practices, inspirational stories, and the consistent demonstration of Islamic manners both inside and outside the classroom. These practices provide students with concrete examples of how Islamic values can be translated into everyday behavior.

The study further concludes that moral character formation is strengthened through habituation, guidance, motivation, and collaboration. Students are repeatedly exposed to positive examples and encouraged to practice values such as politeness, discipline, honesty, responsibility, and respect. The process becomes more sustainable when Islamic Education teachers collaborate with other teachers and parents. The findings show that cooperation between teachers and parents, collaboration with guidance and counseling personnel, teacher creativity, and students' own awareness constitute important supporting conditions.

At the same time, the formation of students' moral character remains influenced by several contextual challenges. Environmental influences, peer relationships, limited parental attention, insufficient student awareness, and limited teacher resources can constrain the consistency of moral development. These findings indicate that teacher exemplarity should not be understood as an isolated or deterministic factor. Rather, its effectiveness depends on the broader educational ecosystem surrounding students.

The main contribution of this study is therefore the identification of teacher exemplarity as a relational and contextual process of moral character formation in Islamic elementary education. The teacher's example becomes more meaningful when it is continuously reinforced through habituation, family involvement, collaboration among educators, and a supportive school environment. The case of SD Al Quran Raudlotut Tholibin demonstrates that effective Islamic character education requires consistency between what teachers teach, what they practice, and what students experience in their daily lives. Future efforts to strengthen moral character formation should consequently focus not only on improving teachers' capacity to teach Islamic values but also on developing an integrated school-family environment that enables students to observe, practice, and internalize those values consistently..

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