

Does Islamic Religious Education Matter? Its Contribution to Moral Development and Student Discipline in Primary Education

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ABSTRACT

The development of students' moral character and disciplinary behavior has become a major concern in contemporary education. As an integral component of character education in Muslim-majority societies, Islamic Religious Education (IRE) is expected to foster moral values and promote positive behavioral outcomes among students. This study aimed to examine the contribution of Islamic Religious Education to moral development and student discipline in primary education. A quantitative correlational design was employed involving 40 students from Grades IV to VI at SDN Cihideung Ilir 01, Bogor Regency, Indonesia. Data were collected through questionnaires and documentation and analyzed using Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation, t-test, and coefficient of determination analyses. The findings revealed that the implementation of Islamic Religious Education was perceived positively by students, with an achievement level of 84.56%. Moral development and student discipline were also found to be at favorable levels, achieving scores of 85.44% and 87.47%, respectively. Correlation analysis indicated a significant positive relationship between Islamic Religious Education and moral development ($r = .426$), as well as between Islamic Religious Education and student discipline ($r = .498$). Furthermore, Islamic Religious Education contributed 18.1% to the variance in students' moral development and 24.8% to the variance in student discipline. These findings suggest that Islamic Religious Education plays a meaningful role in supporting character formation among primary school students, particularly in fostering moral values and disciplinary behavior. However, the moderate magnitude of the relationships indicates that character development is influenced by multiple factors beyond formal religious instruction. The study highlights the importance of strengthening religious education as an integral component of character education within primary school settings.

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Introduction

Character education has increasingly become a central concern in educational discourse because schools are expected to prepare students not only for academic success but also for responsible citizenship. Education is fundamentally intended to develop learners' intellectual, emotional, social, and moral capacities so that they can contribute positively to society. In Indonesia, the National Education System explicitly emphasizes the development of students who are faithful, knowledgeable, creative, responsible, and possess noble character (Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 20 Tahun 2003). Therefore, character development should be viewed as an integral component of educational success rather than merely a complementary outcome.

The importance of moral education has become even more significant in the contemporary era. Rapid technological advancement and globalization have transformed patterns of communication, social interaction, and information access among young people. While these developments offer numerous opportunities for learning, they also expose students to various social and moral challenges. Daradjat (2008) argues that technological progress may contribute to moral degradation when individuals lack adequate religious and ethical guidance. Consequently, educational institutions are increasingly challenged to strengthen students' moral foundations so that they can respond wisely to the complexities of modern life.

In the Indonesian educational context, concerns regarding students' moral behavior continue to attract attention. Various forms of misconduct, including disrespect toward teachers, dishonesty, failure to comply with school regulations, and irresponsible behavior, indicate the need for stronger character education initiatives. According to Nata (2006), morality (*akhlak*) refers to a system of values that regulates human attitudes and behavior based on Islamic teachings derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah. Therefore, moral education is expected to encourage students not only to understand ethical principles but also to internalize and practice them in their daily lives.

Moral development and discipline are closely related dimensions of character formation. Moral values provide individuals with an understanding of appropriate behavior, while discipline reflects the willingness to consistently implement these values in everyday situations. Students who possess strong moral awareness are generally more likely to obey rules, respect authority, and fulfill their responsibilities. This perspective is consistent with the view of Ibn Miskawaih, who defined morality as a disposition embedded within the soul that motivates individuals to perform good actions voluntarily without external coercion (as cited in Nata, 2006).

Educational scholars have long emphasized that character formation requires systematic educational efforts. Moral values cannot be developed solely through theoretical instruction but must be reinforced through habituation, guidance, supervision, and role modeling. Marimba (1981) argues that education is a conscious process of guidance aimed at forming an ideal personality. Likewise, educational activities should facilitate not only the acquisition of knowledge but also the cultivation of desirable attitudes and behaviors. In this regard, teachers play a crucial role as role models whose actions and interactions significantly influence students' character development.

Within the Islamic educational tradition, character formation occupies a central position. Islamic education seeks to develop individuals who possess faith, knowledge, and noble character in a balanced manner. According to Daradjat (1996), Islamic Religious Education is a deliberate effort to guide learners toward understanding, appreciating, and practicing Islamic teachings as a way of life. Similarly, Abdul Rachmad S. (2000) describes Islamic education as a process of directing students' development so that they are capable of fulfilling their responsibilities as servants and representatives of God on earth.

The centrality of character formation in Islamic education is also reflected in the views of prominent Muslim scholars. Al-Ghazali emphasized that the ultimate purpose of education is the formation of noble character, whereas Al-Attas viewed Islamic education

as a process of cultivating *adab*, enabling individuals to recognize and act according to the proper order of knowledge and existence (Al-Attas, 1980). Likewise, Al-Abrasyi maintained that moral excellence constitutes the essence of Islamic education because educational success is ultimately measured by the quality of a person's character rather than solely by intellectual achievement.

Through classroom instruction, religious practices, habituation programs, and teacher role modeling, Islamic Religious Education is expected to foster positive behavioral outcomes among students. The learning process not only introduces religious knowledge but also promotes the internalization of values such as honesty, responsibility, respect, self-control, and discipline (Azra, 2001). Consequently, Islamic Religious Education is often regarded as an important instrument for supporting students' moral development and strengthening their commitment to school rules and social norms.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design to examine the contribution of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) to students' moral development and disciplinary behavior. Quantitative research is appropriate for investigating relationships among variables through numerical data and statistical analysis. A correlational approach was selected because the study sought to determine the extent to which Islamic Religious Education is associated with students' moral and disciplinary outcomes without manipulating the existing educational environment.

The study focused on Islamic Religious Education as the independent variable, while moral development and student discipline served as the dependent variables. Specifically, the study investigated whether students' experiences and perceptions of Islamic Religious Education were related to their moral behavior and disciplinary practices in the school setting.

Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted at SDN Cihideung Ilir 01, located in Ciampea District, Bogor Regency, Indonesia. The school was selected as the research site because Islamic Religious Education constitutes an integral component of the curriculum and character-building activities implemented within the school environment.

The participants consisted of 40 elementary school students enrolled at SDN Cihideung Ilir 01. These students represented the respondents involved in the study and provided information regarding their experiences of Islamic Religious Education as well as their moral and disciplinary behaviors. Participation was voluntary, and all respondents completed the questionnaire during the data collection period.

Instruments

Data were collected through questionnaires and documentation techniques. The questionnaire served as the primary instrument for measuring the three variables investigated in this study: Islamic Religious Education, moral development, and student discipline. The Islamic Religious Education variable was measured through indicators related to learning materials, instructional methods, students' interest in Islamic Religious Education, and learning evaluation. These indicators were derived from the conceptual framework of Islamic education, which emphasizes the integration of knowledge, values, and behavioral development through religious learning activities (Daradjat, 1996).

Moral development was assessed using indicators that reflected students' attitudes and behaviors associated with Islamic values. The concept of morality (*akhlak*) in Islam refers to a system of values that regulates human conduct and guides individuals toward virtuous behavior based on the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah (Nata, 2006).

Therefore, the instrument measured behaviors associated with honesty, respect, responsibility, obedience, and positive interpersonal conduct.

Student discipline was measured through indicators related to adherence to school regulations, punctuality, responsibility in completing school tasks, participation in school activities, and compliance with classroom procedures. These indicators were selected because discipline represents a behavioral manifestation of students' commitment to established rules and expectations within the educational environment. The questionnaire employed a Likert-type scale to capture students' responses to each statement. This format enabled the researchers to quantify respondents' perceptions and experiences systematically. In addition to questionnaires, documentation was used to obtain supporting information regarding school programs, educational activities, and the implementation of Islamic Religious Education within the school context.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was conducted directly at the research site. Prior to administering the questionnaire, the researcher obtained permission from the school administration and informed participants about the objectives of the study. Respondents were instructed on how to complete the questionnaire and were encouraged to provide honest responses based on their actual experiences.

The questionnaires were distributed and completed during the designated data collection period. After completion, all questionnaires were reviewed to ensure completeness and accuracy. Documentation related to school regulations, religious activities, and character education programs was also collected to provide contextual support for the quantitative findings.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using quantitative statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics were first employed to summarize respondents' responses and provide an overview of the variables under investigation. To examine the relationship between Islamic Religious Education and moral development, Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation analysis was conducted. The same procedure was applied to investigate the relationship between Islamic Religious Education and student discipline. Pearson's correlation coefficient was selected because it enables researchers to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between two quantitative variables.

Following the correlation analysis, a t-test was performed to determine whether the observed relationships were statistically significant. The significance test was used to evaluate the research hypotheses and determine whether the obtained correlation coefficients differed significantly from zero. To determine the magnitude of the contribution of Islamic Religious Education to moral development and student discipline, the coefficient of determination (R^2) was calculated. The coefficient of determination indicates the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variable. Higher values indicate a stronger contribution of Islamic Religious Education to the development of students' moral and disciplinary behavior.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were observed throughout the research process. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the study before completing the questionnaire. Participants were assured that their responses would be treated confidentially and used exclusively for academic purposes. No personal information that could identify individual respondents was disclosed in the reporting of the findings.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

This study involved 40 students from Grades IV, V, and VI at SDN Cihideung Ilir 01, Bogor Regency. The descriptive analysis was conducted to provide an overview of the levels of Islamic Religious Education (IRE), moral development, and student discipline as perceived by the respondents.

The findings indicated that the implementation of Islamic Religious Education was generally perceived positively by students, achieving an average score of 84.56%, which falls within the good category. This result suggests that Islamic Religious Education was effectively implemented in the school through classroom instruction, religious learning activities, and value-based educational practices. The relatively high score also indicates that students actively participated in and responded positively to religious education programs provided by the school.

Students' moral development also demonstrated a favorable result, with an average achievement level of 85.44%, categorized as good. This finding indicates that the majority of students exhibited positive moral behaviors, including honesty, respect, responsibility, and appropriate social interactions. The result suggests that moral values promoted through educational activities had been internalized to a considerable extent by the students.

Among the three variables, student discipline obtained the highest achievement score, reaching 87.47%, which was categorized as very good. This finding indicates that students generally complied with school regulations, attended classes punctually, completed their academic responsibilities, and demonstrated appropriate behavior within the school environment. The high level of discipline may reflect the combined influence of school regulations, teacher supervision, parental support, and character-building programs implemented within the educational setting. Table 1 summarizes the descriptive results of the study variables.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables

Variable	Percentage (%)	Category
Islamic Religious Education	84.56	Good
Moral Development	85.44	Good
Student Discipline	87.47	Very Good

The descriptive findings suggest that students experienced a positive learning environment characterized by effective religious education, satisfactory moral development, and a high level of discipline. These results provide an initial indication that Islamic Religious Education may contribute to the development of desirable student behaviors.

Relationship Between Islamic Religious Education and Moral Development

To examine the relationship between Islamic Religious Education and students' moral development, Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation analysis was conducted. The analysis revealed a correlation coefficient of $r = .426$, which exceeded the critical value of $r = .355$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating a statistically significant positive relationship between Islamic Religious Education and moral development.

The positive coefficient indicates that students who reported stronger engagement with Islamic Religious Education also tended to demonstrate higher levels of moral development. Although the correlation was not categorized as strong, it falls within the moderate range, suggesting a meaningful relationship between the two variables. This result implies that Islamic Religious Education may serve as one of several factors that contribute to the formation of students' moral values and ethical behavior.

To determine the magnitude of the contribution of Islamic Religious Education to moral development, the coefficient of determination was calculated. The analysis showed that Islamic Religious Education explained 18.1% of the variance in students' moral development. In other words, nearly one-fifth of the variation in students' moral development could be associated with differences in their experiences of Islamic Religious Education. The remaining 81.9% may be attributed to other factors not examined in this study, such as family environment, peer relationships, community influences, personal experiences, and broader social contexts.

These findings indicate that while Islamic Religious Education contributes positively to moral development, character formation is a multidimensional process influenced by various educational and social factors. Therefore, religious education should be viewed as one important component within a broader ecosystem of character development.

Relationship Between Islamic Religious Education and Student Discipline

The second objective of the study was to examine the relationship between Islamic Religious Education and student discipline. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation analysis revealed a correlation coefficient of $r = .498$, which was greater than the critical value of $r = .355$. This result indicates a statistically significant positive relationship between Islamic Religious Education and student discipline. Consequently, the research hypothesis concerning the relationship between these two variables was accepted.

The correlation coefficient of .498 suggests a moderate positive relationship. Students who demonstrated more positive perceptions of Islamic Religious Education tended to exhibit higher levels of discipline in school. This pattern indicates that religious education may encourage students to develop self-control, responsibility, obedience to rules, and commitment to expected behavioral standards within the school environment.

The coefficient of determination analysis further revealed that Islamic Religious Education accounted for 24.8% of the variance in student discipline. This contribution was greater than its contribution to moral development, suggesting that Islamic Religious Education may have a relatively stronger association with observable disciplinary behaviors than with broader moral dispositions. Nevertheless, approximately 75.2% of the variance in student discipline remained unexplained by the model, indicating the influence of additional factors such as parental supervision, teacher expectations, school culture, peer interactions, and individual personality characteristics.

The findings demonstrate that Islamic Religious Education plays a meaningful role in supporting students' disciplinary behavior. However, the moderate magnitude of the relationship also suggests that disciplinary outcomes cannot be attributed solely to religious education but should be understood as the result of multiple interacting influences within students' educational and social environments.

The findings consistently demonstrate positive and statistically significant relationships between Islamic Religious Education, moral development, and student discipline. Islamic Religious Education was positively associated with students' moral development ($r = .426$) and student discipline ($r = .498$). The contribution of Islamic Religious Education was found to be 18.1% for moral development and 24.8% for student discipline. These results indicate that Islamic Religious Education contributes to character formation among primary school students, particularly in fostering moral values and encouraging disciplined behavior within the school context.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that Islamic Religious Education (IRE) contributes positively to both students' moral development and disciplinary behavior. The statistical analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between Islamic Religious Education and moral development ($r = .426$), as well as between Islamic

Religious Education and student discipline ($r = .498$). These findings indicate that religious education plays an important role in supporting character formation among primary school students.

The positive relationship between Islamic Religious Education and moral development is consistent with the fundamental objectives of Islamic education. Islamic Religious Education is not merely intended to transmit religious knowledge but also to cultivate values, attitudes, and behaviors that reflect Islamic teachings. According to Daradjat (1996), Islamic Religious Education is a conscious effort to guide learners toward understanding, appreciating, and practicing Islamic teachings in their daily lives. Therefore, successful religious education should be reflected not only in students' cognitive understanding of religious concepts but also in their moral conduct and behavior.

The findings further support Nata's (2006) argument that *akhlak* represents a system of values that governs human behavior based on Islamic principles derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah. Through continuous exposure to religious teachings, students are expected to internalize moral values and translate them into everyday actions. The positive correlation identified in this study suggests that students who experience more effective Islamic Religious Education tend to demonstrate stronger moral characteristics, including honesty, responsibility, respect, and positive social interactions. These findings reinforce the notion that moral development is closely associated with the educational experiences students receive in school.

The results are also in line with the educational philosophy of Al-Ghazali, who emphasized that the ultimate purpose of education is the formation of noble character. From this perspective, educational success cannot be measured solely through academic achievement but must also consider the development of virtuous behavior and moral integrity. Similarly, Al-Attas (1980) argued that education should cultivate *adab*, enabling individuals to recognize and act according to proper moral and social order. The present findings suggest that Islamic Religious Education contributes to this process by providing students with moral guidance and opportunities to practice ethical behavior within the school environment.

Although the relationship between Islamic Religious Education and moral development was statistically significant, the coefficient of determination indicated that Islamic Religious Education explained only 18.1% of the variance in moral development. This finding suggests that moral formation is influenced by multiple factors beyond formal religious instruction. Family environment, parental guidance, peer relationships, community values, and social experiences may all contribute substantially to students' moral development. Consequently, the cultivation of moral character should not be viewed solely as the responsibility of schools but rather as a collaborative effort involving families, communities, and educational institutions.

The study also found that Islamic Religious Education contributed positively to student discipline. The correlation coefficient ($r = .498$) indicates a moderate positive relationship between the two variables, suggesting that students who reported more positive experiences of Islamic Religious Education also tended to exhibit higher levels of discipline. This finding is understandable because Islamic teachings place strong emphasis on obedience, responsibility, self-control, and commitment to established rules. These values are closely related to disciplinary behavior in educational settings.

The stronger contribution of Islamic Religious Education to discipline (24.8%) compared with moral development (18.1%) is particularly noteworthy. One possible explanation is that disciplinary behavior is more directly observable and more frequently reinforced through school routines and religious practices. Activities such as attending prayers on time, following classroom procedures, respecting school regulations, and completing assigned responsibilities provide concrete opportunities for students to practice discipline on a daily basis. Consequently, the influence of Islamic Religious Education may be more readily reflected in students' disciplinary behavior than in

broader moral dispositions, which often develop through longer-term socialization processes.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research reported in the literature review. Ahmad Ahzan Sofiyan (2023) found that Islamic Religious Education positively influenced students' disciplinary character, contributing 24.10% to disciplinary development. Similarly, Sudarni (2020) reported that the exemplary behavior of Islamic Religious Education teachers significantly influenced students' character formation. These studies, together with the present findings, suggest that religious education and teacher guidance can play a meaningful role in supporting positive behavioral outcomes among students.

Furthermore, the findings support Marimba's (1981) view that education is fundamentally a process of guidance aimed at developing an ideal personality. In the context of Islamic education, this process involves not only knowledge acquisition but also the development of habits, attitudes, and behaviors consistent with Islamic values. The relatively high levels of moral development and discipline observed among respondents suggest that Islamic Religious Education may contribute to character-building efforts when implemented through effective instruction, teacher role modeling, and value-based educational practices.

Nevertheless, several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the results. First, the study involved only 40 students from a single primary school, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study relied on self-reported questionnaire data, which may be influenced by respondents' perceptions and social desirability bias. Third, the moderate magnitude of the observed relationships indicates that other influential factors affecting moral development and discipline were not included in the present analysis. Future studies may therefore incorporate additional variables such as parental involvement, peer influence, school climate, and teacher-student relationships to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of character formation among primary school students.

Despite these limitations, the findings provide empirical support for the role of Islamic Religious Education in promoting moral development and student discipline. The results highlight the importance of strengthening religious education programs not merely as academic subjects but as integral components of character education. Schools should therefore continue to integrate religious values into classroom instruction, extracurricular activities, and school culture to support the holistic development of students and foster positive behavioral outcomes.

Conclusion

This study examined the contribution of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) to moral development and student discipline among primary school students at SDN Cihideung Ilir 01, Bogor Regency, Indonesia. The findings revealed that Islamic Religious Education was positively and significantly associated with both moral development and student discipline. The correlation analysis showed a moderate positive relationship between Islamic Religious Education and moral development ($r = .426$), as well as between Islamic Religious Education and student discipline ($r = .498$). Furthermore, Islamic Religious Education contributed 18.1% to the variance in students' moral development and 24.8% to the variance in student discipline.

These findings suggest that Islamic Religious Education serves as an important component of character education by fostering positive moral values and encouraging disciplined behavior among primary school students. Although the magnitude of the relationships was moderate, the results indicate that religious education can support students' character formation when implemented through meaningful learning experiences, value internalization, and positive teacher role modeling.

The study contributes to the growing body of literature on religious education and character development by providing empirical evidence of the role of Islamic Religious Education in shaping students' moral and disciplinary outcomes. The findings also highlight the importance of integrating character-building objectives into religious instruction and school-based educational practices.

From a practical perspective, schools should strengthen the implementation of Islamic Religious Education through interactive learning approaches, character-based activities, and consistent reinforcement of moral values in daily school life. Teachers should be encouraged to serve as role models who demonstrate ethical behavior and discipline, thereby facilitating the internalization of positive values among students.

Given the relatively modest proportion of variance explained by Islamic Religious Education, future research should examine additional factors that may influence moral development and student discipline, such as parental involvement, peer relationships, school climate, and community influences. Studies involving larger samples and multiple school settings are also recommended to enhance the generalizability of the findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of character formation in primary education.

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