Determinants of Islamic Religious Teachers' Effectiveness in Moral Development of Public High School Students

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A B S T R A C T

Moral development is a central goal of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in Indonesian public high schools, yet PAI teachers face intersecting institutional, sociocultural, and pedagogical challenges. This study investigates key factors that support or hinder their efforts to foster students' akhlak. Using a qualitative case study at State High School 13 Makassar, data were gathered through interviews, observations, and document analysis, then analyzed thematically within the framework of Islamic character education. The findings highlight enabling conditions such as well-equipped religious facilities, routine worship and Qur'an literacy, strong parental involvement, and consistent leadership and supervision. Conversely, digital and peer environmental pressures, uneven student readiness, and limited instructional time act as major barriers. These factors interact, with institutional support enhancing the effectiveness of reflective pedagogy and family–school collaboration, while external challenges demand systemic interventions. The study proposes a determinants-of-effectiveness framework that views moral formation as the product of dynamic interactions across institutional, pedagogical, and sociocultural systems. This framework provides actionable insights for policymakers, teacher educators, and school leaders to reinforce PAI's moral mission, particularly in urban, media-saturated contexts, thus contributing to the broader discourse on character education in pluralistic societies.

1. Introduction

The moral formation of students in Indonesian public high schools is increasingly framed as a multidimensional task in which Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers act as catalysts of value internalization, socio-emotional growth, and civic responsibility. Scholarship across diverse contexts underscores that character education succeeds when moral ideals are embedded in coherent learning ecologies that integrate classroom pedagogy, school culture, family participation, and community norms (Badri & Malik, 2024; Bujuri et al., 2023; S. Mahmud, 2023;

Ritonga & Desrani, 2023; Zulfikar et al., 2023). In Indonesia, this agenda has been advanced through religious moderation–oriented curricula, the revitalization of pesantren traditions, and school–community partnerships that align maqāṣid al-sharīʿah with contemporary youth development (Artika et al., 2025; Hasibuan et al., 2025; S. Mahmud, 2023; Ritonga & Desrani, 2023). Emerging studies also link character outcomes to teachers' digital literacy, culturally responsive instruction, and cross-disciplinary initiatives that integrate environmental stewardship and citizenship with Islamic values (Amrullah et al., 2025; Fahmi et al., 2025; Habibah et al., 2025; Malla et al., 2023; Posangi et al., 2025; Rekan & Mokhtar, 2025; Yagdı, 2025). At the same time, comparative and policy-oriented work in Indonesia and abroad suggests that institutional trust, teacher professionalism, and the navigation of plural public spheres remain decisive conditions for moral education in state schools (Ahmed, 2025; Aydinli & Badawia, 2025; Gmoser et al., 2024; Iqbal & Safitri, 2025; M. E. Mahmud, 2025; Tuna, 2022).

Despite these advances, the landscape that PAI teachers inhabit is complex. Indonesian public schools are tasked with cultivating akhlak within heterogeneous classrooms marked by digital saturation, multicultural interactions, and shifting regulatory frameworks (Amalia et al., 2024; Fahmi et al., 2025; Mujahidin et al., 2025; Nurhidayah & Pewangi, 2025; Salim et al., 2024). Evidence points to uneven teacher competencies, gaps in pedagogical support systems, and variability in school leadership and supervision that together shape the fidelity and impact of moral education (Arif et al., 2025; Kurniawan et al., 2024; M. E. Mahmud, 2025; Nata et al., 2024; Posangi et al., 2025).

Teachers also navigate contested narratives—ranging from religious moderation and interreligious tolerance to debates on sexuality, extremism, and national identity—requiring high levels of reflective practice, dialogical skill, and ethical discernment (Darmi et al., 2024; Fitriani, 2023; Pabbajah, 2023; Pratiwi et al., 2025; Purwanto et al., 2024; Şenel & Demmrich, 2024). In practice, these pressures translate into supporting and hindering factors that are not merely additive but interactive, producing distinct opportunity structures for moral development across schools and regions (Awad, 2024; Aydinli & Badawia, 2025; Rashed et al., 2025; Yagdı, 2025).

The main research problem addressed in this study is the limited explanatory clarity regarding which determinants most strongly support—or impede—the effectiveness of PAI teachers in fostering students' moral character within Indonesian public high schools, and how these determinants interact. While prior scholarship identifies many ingredients of success, findings are often reported as isolated best practices, program evaluations, or normative guidelines, making it difficult for schools to prioritize interventions or anticipate trade-offs (Ismail et al., 2024; Rohman et al., 2024; Sholeh et al., 2024; Susanti et al., 2024). Moreover, the digital turn in instruction intensifies both affordances and constraints: teachers who leverage technology can scaffold critical-contextual learning and student engagement, yet digital divides, inadequate training, and content governance concerns can undermine moral formation goals (Askar et al., 2025; Kurniawan et al., 2024; Mujahidin et al., 2025; Nata et al., 2024; Sapiudin et al., 2025).

Consequently, systems need actionable, context-sensitive frameworks that synthesize institutional, pedagogical, cultural, and technological determinants into a coherent account of supports and barriers (Ahmed, 2025; Aydinli & Badawia, 2025; S. Mahmud et al., 2024; Rashed et al., 2025).

A general solution proposed across the literature emphasizes whole-school approaches that align leadership, teacher professional learning, curriculum design, and community partnerships to create sustained moral climates (Amalia et al., 2024; M. E. Mahmud, 2025; Posangi et al., 2025; Salim et al., 2024; Wahyudin et al., 2024). Within such approaches, professional development and supervision are pivotal levers to enhance PAI teachers' pedagogical, spiritual, and digital competencies, support reflective practice, and institutionalize moderation-oriented pedagogy (Ainissyifa et al., 2024; Hanafi et al., 2023; Mulyana, 2023; Posangi, 2024; Purwanto & Saepudin, 2023). Strengthening ties with parents and communities, including pesantren and local civic actors, further amplifies the consistency of value transmission and expands the repertoire of experiential learning opportunities (Amrullah et al., 2025; Fadhilah, 2023; Ritonga & Desrani, 2023; Saiful et al., 2025). Finally, policy coherence and school-level governance— such as curricular clarity, assessment alignment, and protection of inclusive learning spaces—serve as structural enablers for educators' moral work (Amalia et al., 2024; Iqbal & Safitri, 2025; Salim et al., 2024).

Specific solutions in prior research include competency-focused training that integrates ushul fiqh reasoning, critical-contextual pedagogy, and digital fluency for future and in-service PAI teachers (Arif et al., 2025; Sapiudin et al., 2025). Programmatic interventions demonstrate the value of e-modules, collaborative learning, and project-based and problem-based designs for enhancing moral reasoning, motivation, and prosocial dispositions (Fakhruddin et al., 2025; Habibah et al., 2025; Rofik et al., 2022; Tambak & Sukenti, 2023). Parallel strands show that integrating environmental ethics, citizenship, and multicultural education into Islamic studies enriches students' moral imaginaries and civic competencies (Afriyanto & Anandari, 2024; Amalia et al., 2024; Amrullah et al., 2025; Fahmi et al., 2025; Rekan & Mokhtar, 2025; Takunas et al., 2024). These pedagogical models often depend on leadership that scaffolds supervision, resources, and professional cultures conducive to experimentation and reflective practice (M. E. Mahmud, 2025; Mulyana et al., 2023; Posangi et al., 2025).

A second cluster of solutions concerns moderation and dialogical engagement. Studies highlight the necessity of systematically embedding religious moderation, interreligious dialogue, and pluralism-fostering approaches into teacher education, curriculum, and school routines to counter intolerance and reduce polarization (Fitriani, 2023; Gmoser et al., 2024; Ibda et al., 2024; Pabbajah, 2023; Purwanto et al., 2024; Tuna, 2024). In culturally diverse classrooms, teachers who mobilize local wisdom, narratives of compassion, and community arts traditions can translate abstract values into lived dispositions (Asrori et al., 2025; S. Mahmud et al., 2024; Yusuf et al., 2023). At the same time, careful governance of controversial topics— ranging from sexuality to extremism—requires pedagogies that are ethically

grounded, age-appropriate, and dialogically structured (Darmi et al., 2024; Llorent-Bedmar et al., 2020; Pratiwi et al., 2025; Şenel & Demmrich, 2024).

A third set of contributions maps enabling and hindering conditions. Enablers typically include strong instructional leadership, targeted supervision, collaborative teacher learning communities, and accessible digital infrastructure; inhibitors include workload pressures, fragmented policy signals, resource deficits, and insufficient assessment tools for affective outcomes (Mulyana et al., 2023; Otaya et al., 2023; Posangi, 2024; Posangi et al., 2025; Siregar, 2023; Syukur et al., 2024). The literature also notes the importance of teacher identity work and moral modeling (qudwah), particularly in public settings where students encounter diverse media ecosystems and social influences (Baba et al., 2021; Gonzalez-Doğan, 2023; Kurniawan et al., 2024; Manik et al., 2023; Mujahidin et al., 2025). Where school–family partnerships are robust, teachers' moral goals are reinforced across home and community contexts; where they are weak, teachers face a steeper climb in aligning norms and expectations (Fadhilah, 2023; Saiful et al., 2025).

Taken together, this body of work provides a rich repertoire of strategies but leaves several gaps that the present study addresses. First, few studies synthesize supports and barriers into a single determinant's framework tailored to Indonesian public high schools; the evidence tends to be siloed by theme (digital literacy, moderation, leadership) or by institution type (pesantren versus state schools) (Afriyanto & Anandari, 2024; Amalia et al., 2024; Aydinli & Badawia, 2025; Nata et al., 2024; Rohman et al., 2024).

Second, research often under-specifies the interactions among determinants—how, for example, supervision quality conditions the payoff of digital tools, or how community partnerships mediate the handling of controversial issues (Askar et al., 2025; Posangi et al., 2025; Pratiwi et al., 2025). Third, there is limited fine-grained analysis of metropolitan public high schools where cultural diversity, media exposure, and policy demands are especially pronounced, such as in Makassar, and where teachers must reconcile national frameworks with local realities (Amalia et al., 2024; Iqbal & Safitri, 2025; Saiful et al., 2025; Wahyudin et al., 2024).

This study therefore proposes a determinants-of-effectiveness framework that integrates institutional (leadership, supervision, policy coherence), pedagogical (models of learning, assessment, moderation pedagogy), technological (digital literacy, infrastructure), and sociocultural (family–community partnerships, diversity management) dimensions to explain the supporting and hindering factors shaping PAI teachers' moral formation work in Indonesian public high schools. The novelty lies in (i) treating supports and barriers as interacting systems rather than isolated variables; (ii) operationalizing moderation-oriented pedagogy alongside digital and experiential designs; and (iii) situating analysis in a metropolitan public-school context in Eastern Indonesia to surface contextual contingencies and transferability limits (Afriyanto & Anandari, 2024; Ainissyifa et al., 2024; Kurniawan et al., 2024; M. E. Mahmud, 2025; Posangi et al., 2025; Purwanto & Saepudin, 2023). The scope encompasses PAI teachers, school leaders, and relevant stakeholders in Indonesian state high schools, with a focal case in Makassar, while

drawing comparative insights from national and international literature to inform generalizability (Ahmed, 2025; Aydinli & Badawia, 2025; Tuna, 2022; Yagdı, 2025).

Accordingly, the study pursues the following objectives: to identify and categorize the principal supporting and hindering factors that influence PAI teachers' effectiveness in cultivating students' moral character in Indonesian public high schools; to analyze how these determinants interact across institutional, pedagogical, technological, and sociocultural layers; and to generate an evidence-informed framework and set of practical recommendations for school improvement. The research is guided by three questions: (1) What institutional, pedagogical, technological, and sociocultural factors most strongly support PAI teachers' efforts to foster akhlak in Indonesian public high schools? (2) What barriers impede these efforts, and how do they manifest in practice? (3) How do these factors interact to shape outcomes, and what design principles follow for schools seeking to strengthen moral development at scale? Through this integrative approach, the study aims to clarify priorities for leadership, teacher professional learning, and community partnership so that PAI teachers can more reliably and equitably cultivate students' moral character in Indonesia's diverse and evolving public-school system (Amrullah et al., 2025; Ibda et al., 2024; Rashed et al., 2025; Sholeh et al., 2024).

2. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative, field-based descriptive design to examine determinant supporting and inhibiting factors shaping Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers' roles in students' moral development within a naturalistic school setting. A qualitative case orientation was selected because research on moral formation and teacher practice in Islamic schooling benefits from contextually grounded inquiry, iterative meaning-making, and thick description of processes that unfold in authentic pedagogic environments (Badri & Malik, 2024; Bujuri et al., 2023; S. Mahmud, 2023; Malla et al., 2023; Ritonga & Desrani, 2023; Zulfikar et al., 2023).

Consistent with prior Islamic education research, the design privileged in situ observations of religious routines and classroom life, dialogic engagement with key actors, and interpretive analysis of textual artifacts aligned to character education aims (Anwar et al., 2025; Parinduri & Ibarra, 2025; Posangi et al., 2025; Rekan & Mokhtar, 2025). Within Indonesia's public-school milieu, case study logics have been used to illuminate pedagogical tensions and culturally responsive enactments; this study follows that trajectory to reveal how institutional supports and constraints mediate teachers' moral formation work (Faaza, 2022; K Altinyelken, 2022; Purwanto et al., 2024; Rizal et al., 2023; Shibuya et al., 2023; Yusoff, 2024; Zamsiswaya et al., 2024).

The case site was State High School 13 Makassar, a public high school in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The study concentrated on the bounded system of PAI moral

development activities at this site, enabling an intensive, multi-source portrayal of teachers' roles, routines, and decision points in context (Posangi et al., 2025; Purwanto et al., 2024; Yusoff, 2024). Choosing a single school facilitated coherent tracing of how leadership practices, facilities, and communal rituals scaffold or impede teachers' moral pedagogy while minimizing cross-site variation (Badri & Malik, 2024; Ritonga & Desrani, 2023; Zulfikar et al., 2023). The qualitative descriptive field orientation and its implementation at State High School 13 Makassar mirrored the locally documented approach, which defined the work as descriptive qualitative field research aimed at depicting the effectiveness of PAI teachers in Islamic and character education (Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Budi Pekerti) and explicitly grounded data production in natural settings.

Participants comprised PAI teachers at State High School 13 Makassar, the school principal, and a subset of students with direct experience of PAI moral cultivation activities. Purposeful selection ensured that informants possessed experiential knowledge of the phenomena of interest and could articulate both enabling conditions and barriers to teachers' moral work (Askar et al., 2025; Mulyana, 2023; Purwanto & Saepudin, 2023). In the underlying field protocol, informants included the principal for contextual framing of students' moral conditions, PAI teachers as focal agents, and students as moral formation recipients, thereby creating multi-vocal accounts of practice and outcome. The on-site documentation shows interviews with four named PAI teachers (Ramadiyah, Klarisa, Suniggar, Rosmila) and three students (Sabrial—Grade XI, Syukur—Grade XII, and Nabila—Grade X), reflecting this purposeful and role-diverse composition. Complementing interviews, visual documentation captured school religious spaces and routines—e.g., the mosque, congregational prayer, Qur'an literacy on Friday mornings—ensuring that participants' accounts were situated against observed religious life.

Data collection integrated three techniques—nonparticipant observation, semi-structured interviewing, and document analysis—aligned with qualitative case traditions in Islamic education (Anwar et al., 2025; Purwanto et al., 2024; Rekan & Mokhtar, 2025; Yusoff, 2024; Zamsiswaya et al., 2024). Observations focused on PAI classroom interactions and schoolwide religious routines (e.g., congregational prayers, Qur'an literacy), allowing capture of teacher modeling, habituation strategies, and student responses in real time (Badri & Malik, 2024; Zulfikar et al., 2023). Semi-structured interviews were conducted using researcher-developed guides tailored to PAI teachers and students (e.g., strategies, modeling, guidance, routine habituations, coordination, time constraints, family roles), enabling probing while maintaining comparability across interviews. In addition, the principal was interviewed to contextualize school policies and moral climate. Document analysis targeted PAI syllabi, learning plans, and other school artifacts to triangulate reported practices with formal curricular intentions and scheduled routines.

The instrumentation combined structured observation field notes, audio-recorded interviews, and a document checklist. Interview guides were accompanied by pragmatic recording tools (audio recorder, notebook, writing implements, camera) to preserve accuracy and facilitate verbatim transcription and contextual memoing. Observational field notes captured time-stamped episodes of teacher modeling,

prompts, corrective guidance, and student behavioral shifts during religious routines; interview transcriptions were anonymized and assigned role-based codes; documents were cataloged and excerpted for alignment with observed enactments (Bujuri et al., 2023; S. Mahmud, 2023; Malla et al., 2023; Sapiudin et al., 2025).

Procedurally, the study followed an iterative cycle of site entry, rapport building, observation, interviewing, and corroboration. Formal access and ethical authorization were secured from university and local education authorities; letters of permission, research endorsements, ethics clearance, and plagiarism-free certification appear in the appendices, underscoring compliance with institutional and local requirements. Classroom and routine observations were conducted across multiple days to capture variability of practice; interviews were scheduled after observations so that prompts could reference witnessed episodes, and document analysis proceeded in parallel as relevant artifacts (e.g., PAI syllabi) were obtained (Parinduri & Ibarra, 2025; Posangi et al., 2025; Rekan & Mokhtar, 2025). Data sufficiency was determined by thematic saturation—i.e., the point at which additional observations or interviews no longer yielded novel categories germane to supporting and inhibiting factors—consistent with qualitative case norms in Islamic education (Purwanto et al., 2024; Shibuya et al., 2023; Yusoff, 2024; Zamsiswaya et al., 2024).

Data were analyzed using an interactive, inductive approach articulated in the local protocol and widely used in qualitative studies: iterative cycles of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Observational and interview materials were first reduced through open coding to identify action-oriented segments (e.g., teacher modeling, habituation routines, corrective guidance, institutional facilitation/barriers). Reduced segments were organized into matrices connecting actors, routines, and perceived supports/inhibitors to visualize cross-source patterns and divergences, before successive rounds of axial coding integrated categories into higher-order themes that accounted for the case (e.g., "institutional scaffolds for moral habituation," "time and coordination constraints"). Finally, provisional assertions were examined against disconfirming evidence and iteratively reformulated until stable, warranted claims were achieved, maintaining an audit trail of analytic decisions. The analytic strategy aligns with interpretive case practices in Islamic education, where thematic integration at the intersection of pedagogy, ritual practice, and institutional context is central (Badri & Malik, 2024; Bujuri et al., 2023; S. Mahmud, 2023; Posangi, 2024; Purwanto et al., 2024).

Trustworthiness was pursued through triangulation, member checking, reflexivity, and documentation of an analytic audit trail. Source triangulation connected teacher, student, and principal perspectives; method triangulation integrated observation, interview, and document evidence; time triangulation spanned multiple routine episodes (e.g., daily prayers, Friday Qur'an literacy). Interview summaries and emergent themes were returned to selected participants for confirmation and clarification to enhance credibility, while detailed memos and matrix repositories supported dependability and confirmability (Setiawan et al., 2020). These strategies mirror quality practices reported in comparable Islamic

education inquiries that pair multi-actor data with iterative verification to sustain interpretive rigor (Askar et al., 2025; Purwanto et al., 2024; Rizal et al., 2023; Shibuya et al., 2023; Zamsiswaya et al., 2024).

Ethical safeguards included informed consent, confidentiality, and secure data handling. Names used in field documentation were pseudonymized in analytic files; role labels (e.g., "Teacher–1," "Student–2") preserved analytic traceability while protecting identities. All participants were informed about study aims, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw without penalty; permissions and institutional approvals are archived in the appendices. Finally, the study's scope is delimited to one public high school, the PAI subject domain, and school-based routines; the intent is transferability through thick description rather than statistical generalization, in line with extant case work in Islamic schooling (Badri & Malik, 2024; Purwanto et al., 2024; Ritonga & Desrani, 2023; Yusoff, 2024; Zulfikar et al., 2023).

3. Results and Discussion

Results

The analysis explicates how supporting and inhibiting determinants converge in the day-to-day moral formation work of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at State High School 13 Makassar. Drawing on observation, semi-structured interviews, and school artifacts, we found that a supportive school ecology—comprising adequate religious facilities, routinized worship and Qur'anic literacy, and active home–school partnerships—substantially amplifies teachers' capacity to cultivate akhlak. Conversely, teachers' efforts are inhibited by external environmental pressures (especially social media–mediated cultures), uneven student readiness, and classroom time constraints. These patterns are consistent with and elaborated by contemporary scholarship on character education in Islamic schooling and state school contexts, which similarly foregrounds the interplay of institutional, pedagogical, technological, and sociocultural variables in shaping moral outcomes (Ahmed, 2025; Amrullah et al., 2025; Askar et al., 2025; Bujuri et al., 2023; Darmi et al., 2024; Habibah et al., 2025; Ibda et al., 2024; Iqbal & Safitri, 2025; Kurniawan et al., 2024; S. Mahmud, 2023; Nata et al., 2024; Posangi et al., 2025; Purwanto et al., 2024; Ritonga & Desrani, 2023; Sapiudin et al., 2025; Tuna, 2022; Yagdı, 2025).

Empirically, three enabling conditions were most salient. First, the school's infrastructure and religious spaces functioned as stable anchors for moral routines: the on-campus mosque, prayer areas, and logistical support made daily dhuha prayers, congregational worship, and Qur'an literacy feasible and habitual. As one teacher emphasized, "the school provides strong support for the implementation of religious activities such as dhuha prayers, tadarus, and flash Islamic boarding schools; Facilities such as school mosques are very supportive," noting that habituation simplifies downstream guidance. This aligns with evidence that material affordances and spatial cues scaffold religious affect and practice,

strengthening character formation through repeated, communally shared rites (Badri & Malik, 2024; Mubarok et al., 2024; Nazar, 2024; Wajdi et al., 2024). Across settings, studies of pesantren and state schools similarly find that well-resourced sacred spaces and structured routines facilitate the internalization of moral norms via ritualized practice and affective modeling (Hasibuan et al., 2025; S. Mahmud, 2023; Ritonga & Desrani, 2023).

Second, schedulized religious activities exerted a compounding effect. Regular dhuha, tadarus, and Friday Qur'an literacy, supplemented by periodic pesantren kilat, cultivated predictable rhythms that teachers leveraged for modeling (qudwah), corrective feedback, and narrative framing of virtues. The literature corroborates that routinized, community-embedded practices accelerate habituation, provide shared reference points for moral discourse, and enable teachers to interleave cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains (Habibah et al., 2025; Kistoro et al., 2023; S. Mahmud, 2023; Zulfikar et al., 2023). When routines are paired with dialogical engagement and task-structured learning (e.g., project-based or collaborative designs), students report stronger meaning-making and prosocial dispositions (Fakhruddin et al., 2025; Rofik et al., 2022).

Third, robust collaboration with parents emerged as a decisive amplifier. Teachers described systematic communication with families, especially for students requiring intensified attention, which translated into consistent expectations across school and home. As one teacher observed, "support from parents is significant... With strong support from home, the directing process becomes much easier and more effective." This echoes evidence that home–school alignment correlates with greater stability of prosocial habits, faster remediation of lapses, and more durable internalization of values (Amalia et al., 2024; Awad, 2024; Fadhilah, 2023; Saiful et al., 2025). Comparative work further suggests that parental engagement can buffer the volatility of public digital cultures and strengthen students' civic and ecological commitments when integrated with Islamic ethical frames (Amrullah et al., 2025; Rekan & Mokhtar, 2025; Taufiqurrochman, 2025).

At the same time, teachers identified three classes of barriers that complicate moral formation. The most frequently cited impediment was the influence of out-of-school environments. One teacher argued that "The most significant obstacle is the influence of the external environment... unhealthy social media or associations," which manifested as reduced prayer discipline and lapses in adab. The international and Indonesian literature increasingly documents how algorithmically intensified media ecologies, peer subcultures, and polarized public discourses can dilute school-based moral messages or create competing normative scripts—particularly for adolescents negotiating identity (Askar et al., 2025; Darmi et al., 2024; Fitriani, 2023; Mujahidin et al., 2025; Shibuya et al., 2023). Where schools embed moderation pedagogy, interreligious dialogue, and critical digital literacy, the negative spillovers can be partly neutralized (Gmoser et al., 2024; Ibda et al., 2024; Nata et al., 2024; Purwanto et al., 2024; Sapiudin et al., 2025; Tuna, 2024).

A second barrier concerns heterogeneous student readiness and fluctuating awareness. Teachers reported that a subset of students exhibited low intrinsic motivation for worship or struggled to sustain respectful comportment across settings. Scholarship attributes such variation to developmental trajectories, moral identity salience, and the mismatch between classroom discourse and students lived cultural repertoires; interventions that cultivate moral intelligence, dialogic agency, and reflective practice show promise (Kistoro et al., 2022; Latipah, 2021; Manik et al., 2023; Saodi et al., 2024). Integrating multicultural and citizenship education within PAI has been associated with higher social cohesion and more resilient prosocial norms in diverse classrooms (Afriyanto & Anandari, 2024; Fahmi et al., 2025; Putkonen & Poulter, 2023; Yagdı, 2025).

The third barrier is structural: limited curriculum time for PAI relative to the breadth of moral objectives. One teacher noted that time allocated to PAI "It is often felt that it is not enough to delve into the moral aspects as a whole." Studies of policy and timetable constraints in state schools similarly report that the breadth of moral and moderation goals outstrips the instructional minutes available, creating a reliance on cross-curricular infusion and co-curricular routines to achieve depth (Amalia et al., 2024; Nurdin et al., 2024; Salim et al., 2024). Leadership, supervision, and policy coherence are repeatedly identified as levers to reconfigure schedules, create integrative projects, and secure space for reflective, dialogical pedagogy (Ainissyifa et al., 2024; M. E. Mahmud, 2025; Mulyana et al., 2023).
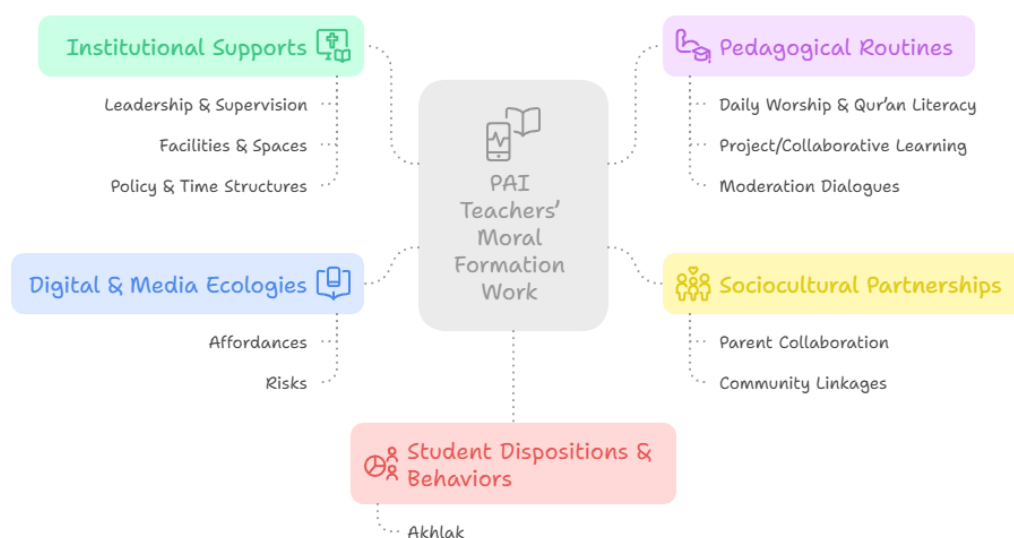

Figure 1. Concept Map of Determinants Shaping PAI Teachers' Moral Formation Work

Caption: Conceptual synthesis of field patterns with literature, showing how institutional supports and sociocultural partnerships enable pedagogical routines while external media ecologies introduce both affordances and risks. See citations in-line. To consolidate the evidence, base and make the results operational for school improvement, we summarize the primary supporting factors, their observed manifestations, and theoretical anchors.

Table 1. Supporting Factors for Akhlak Formation, Illustrative Evidence, and Literature Anchors

Factor	Illustrative field evidence	Literature anchors
Facilities and sacred spaces	Availability and use of school mosque; ease of organizing dhuha, congregational prayer, tadarus; teacher testimony that habituation becomes "lebih mudah dan efektif" once routines stabilize	(Badri & Malik, 2024; Hasibuan et al., 2025; Ritonga & Desrani, 2023; Wajdi et al., 2024)
Routinized religious activities	Daily worship and Qur'an literacy; periodic pesantren kilat; teachers' modeling and corrective guidance embedded in routines	(Habibah et al., 2025; Kistoro et al., 2023; S. Mahmud, 2023; Zulfikar et al., 2023)
Parent–school collaboration	Active communication with parents for students needing extra guidance; reported ease in alignment of expectations	(Amalia et al., 2024; Awad, 2024; Fadhilah, 2023; Rekan & Mokhtar, 2025; Saiful et al., 2025)
Leadership and supervision	Coordinated scheduling; monitoring of routines; provision of ICT and mentoring	(Ainissyifa et al., 2024; M. E. Mahmud, 2025; Mulyana, 2023; Posangi, 2024)
Pedagogical innovation	Integration of collaborative/project methods around virtues; linkages to citizenship and ecology	(Amrullah et al., 2025; Fakhruddin et al., 2025; Rofik et al., 2022; Taufiqurrochman, 2025)

Caption: Table synthesizes enabling conditions observed in the case with representative scholarship that theorizes and corroborates their positive effects on moral formation. The inhibitory dynamics likewise demonstrate patterned regularities across cases, theory, and policy analyses.

Table 2. Hindering Factors and Indicative Mitigation Levers Aligned with Scholarship

Hindering factor	Manifestation in case	Literature-consistent mitigation
External environment and social media	Diminished prayer discipline; lapses in adab linked to peer culture and online content	Critical digital literacy for PAI, moderation-integrated pedagogy, dialogic engagement with controversial issues (Askar et al., 2025; Ibda et al., 2024; Mujahidin et al., 2025; Nata et al., 2024; Purwanto et al., 2024; Tuna, 2024)
Uneven student readiness	Low intrinsic motivation in a subset; variable responsiveness to routines	Moral intelligence, multicultural and citizenship integration, reflective practice (Afriyanto & Anandari, 2024; Fahmi et al., 2025; Latipah, 2021; Saodi et al., 2024; Yagdı, 2025)
Time constraints for PAI	Insufficient minutes to develop akhlak in depth	Cross-curricular infusion, co-curricular routines, leadership-driven schedule design and supervision (Amalia et al., 2024; M. E. Mahmud, 2025; Mulyana, 2023; Posangi et al., 2025)

Caption: Table pairs the case's primary barriers with mitigation levers evidenced in the literature, emphasizing systemic alignment rather than isolated fixes. Beyond these core patterns, two cross-cutting findings deserve emphasis. First, the presence of facilities and routines alone does not guarantee deep internalization; their effects are mediated by pedagogical quality and supervision. The literature indicates that when routines are reflexively taught—inviting students to connect practice to ethical reasoning, civic responsibility, and environmental stewardship—the

durability of akhlak increases (Amrullah et al., 2025; Rekan & Mokhtar, 2025; Taufiqurrochman, 2025). Our observations suggest that teachers who framed dhuha and tadarus not only as obligations but as occasions for cultivating empathy, patience, and communal responsibility elicited more consistent prosocial behaviors across settings. This is consonant with studies that integrate moderation, pluralism, and dialogical inquiry into PAI, which report higher tolerance and stronger moral agency (Fitriani, 2023; Gmoser et al., 2024; Ibda et al., 2024; Purwanto et al., 2024; Tuna, 2024).

Second, digital ecologies are double-edged. While external social media cultures often challenge school norms, digital tools also enable modeling, reflection, and contextual learning when teachers possess appropriate competencies and supervision supports are present. Evidence from teacher education and school-based interventions shows that digitally integrated, critical-contextual PAI can scaffold students' discernment and align online practices with Islamic virtues (Nata et al., 2024; Sapiudin et al., 2025). In our case, teachers' concerns about social media's effects coexisted with emerging uses of digital resources for Qur'an literacy and value discussion; however, scaling these affordances requires targeted professional learning and monitoring (Askar et al., 2025; Kurniawan et al., 2024; Posangi et al., 2025).

Synthesizing across evidence sources, the results substantiate a determinants-of-effectiveness perspective: facilities and routines create opportunity structures; leadership, supervision, and parental collaboration orchestrate and stabilize those structures; pedagogical quality, including dialogical moderation and integrative projects, converts opportunities into dispositions; digital ecologies exert variable pressure that can hinder or, under guided conditions, extend moral formation work. The empirical accounts from teachers—emphasizing the ease that follows habituation, the necessity of parental cooperation, and the sobering impact of external cultures—map closely to this layered framing and to multi-site evidence reported in Indonesia and beyond (Ahmed, 2025; Amalia et al., 2024; Amrullah et al., 2025; Askar et al., 2025; Aydinli & Badawia, 2025; Badri & Malik, 2024; Bujuri et al., 2023; Fadhilah, 2023; Habibah et al., 2025; Iqbal & Safitri, 2025; S. Mahmud, 2023; Nata et al., 2024; Posangi et al., 2025; Purwanto et al., 2024; Rekan & Mokhtar, 2025; Salim et al., 2024; Yagdı, 2025; Zulfikar et al., 2023).

Finally, taken together, the supporting and inhibiting factors clarify plausible leverage points for improvement within Indonesian public high schools. Strengthening supervision to coach moderation-integrated pedagogy; securing time and schedule coherence for rituals and reflective inquiry; equipping teachers with digital-critical competencies; and institutionalizing proactive parent engagement appear especially impactful. These directions resonate with current reform discussions on aligning Kurikulum Merdeka with Islamic values, ensuring that character education remains a whole-school, community-anchored endeavor (Ainissyifa et al., 2024; Amalia et al., 2024). By explicating how determinants interact rather than operate in isolation, the results provide actionable priorities for school leaders and teacher educators seeking to amplify the moral formation

mission of PAI in diverse, media-saturated urban contexts (Ibda et al., 2024; M. E. Mahmud, 2025; Posangi et al., 2025; Tuna, 2022).

Discussion

The findings regarding the supporting and inhibiting determinants of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers' roles in moral development affirm that moral internalization in Indonesian public schools occurs through a matrix of ritual habituation, exemplary modeling (*qudwah*), value communication, and interconnected institutional ecologies. This framework is congruent with theories of religious habituation in Islamic education that position sacred spaces, symbols, and repeated practices as affective and behavioral anchors for character formation (Badri & Malik, 2024; Ritonga & Desrani, 2023; Zulfikar et al., 2023). From a contextual learning perspective, religious communities of practice within schools operate as "social laboratories" in which students interpret virtues through guided experience within a shared community (Hasibuan et al., 2025; Wajdi et al., 2024). In particular, narratives from parents, teachers, and community leaders about *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* objectives linked to worship routines reinforce the cognitive–affective bridge of virtuous conduct (Bujuri et al., 2023; S. Mahmud, 2023). Accordingly, the observed patterns in this case affirm the theoretical proposition that character grows within a network of practices, spaces, and social relations intentionally designed for pedagogical purposes.

The alignment between results and theory is most evident in the role of institutional ecologies—especially religious facilities and shared spaces—as illustrated in Figure 1 and summarized in Table 1. The school mosque, prayer areas, and supporting infrastructure enable the regular performance of *dhuha* prayers, daily congregational worship, and Qur'an literacy, thereby providing consistent "opportunity structures" for habituation (Badri & Malik, 2024). Research on pesantren architecture and sacred space design suggests that spatial configurations—from layout to green landscaping—carry normative influence on behavior and ecological consciousness, which can be embedded into PAI pedagogy (Mubarok et al., 2024; Nazar, 2024). However, such structural opportunities rarely yield optimal outcomes without consistent governance and instructional supervision; studies on supervision and leadership emphasize that oversight combining ICT support, ritual monitoring, and pedagogical coaching correlates with the quality of religious education implementation (M. E. Mahmud, 2025; Posangi et al., 2025). Within the national policy context, the integration of madrasah models into the formal system and the alignment of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* with Islamic values underscore the necessity of coherent institutional design so that space, time, and practice converge toward shared moral goals (Amalia et al., 2024; Wahyudin et al., 2024; Yussuf & Salenda, 2024).

The dimension of habituation and ritualization reported by teachers—*dhuha* prayers, *tadarus*, Friday Qur'an literacy, and *pesantren kilat*—aligns with evidence that communal rites accelerate norm internalization, provide shared moral reference points, and normalize proper conduct (*adab*) (S. Mahmud, 2023; Zulfikar et al., 2023). However, literature cautions that habituation without reflective processing

may result in situational compliance rather than moral agency; therefore, routines should be integrated with moderation dialogues, collaborative tasks, and value-based projects to strengthen cognitive–affective connections (Habibah et al., 2025; Kistoro et al., 2022, 2023). Collaborative strategies—whether problem-solving or project-based—have been shown to enhance historical literacy, academic self-concept, and the explicit practice of virtues and responsibility (Fakhruddin et al., 2025; Rofik et al., 2022). In parallel, moderation approaches, interreligious education, and dialogical engagement with controversial issues broaden ethical horizons and foster tolerance—an essential quality in multicultural public schools (Fitriani, 2023; Gmoser et al., 2024; Purwanto et al., 2024; Tuna, 2024).

Findings regarding parental collaboration reinforce research stressing the importance of home–school coherence for stabilizing prosocial habits. In the field data, intensive communication for students requiring extra attention resulted in aligned expectations and mutually reinforcing social controls; this mirrors studies on family partnerships and character development in Generation Alpha (Fadhilah, 2023). Religious family traditions and community networks can serve as cultural capital sustaining ritual consistency and cooperative ethos when channeled through structured communication (Awad, 2024; Saiful et al., 2025). When partnerships extend to civic and ecological issues, schools can mobilize community learning resources to concretize values, as seen in eco-*tahfiz* programs and PAI–environment integration strategies (Amrullah et al., 2025; Rekan & Mokhtar, 2025). In plural settings, international literature suggests that home–school synergy can mitigate identity tensions and strengthen PAI's role in civic education (Aydinli & Badawia, 2025; Yagdı, 2025). In practical terms, these insights reinforce the recommendations in Table 1 for schools to normalize teacher–parent communication channels and community-based learning agendas.

Conversely, the most persistent barrier—external environments and digital cultures—highlights the paradox of media ecologies: abundant learning resources coexist with discourse streams that may undermine school norms. Teachers noted declines in prayer discipline and respectful comportment, which the literature links to the combined effects of platform algorithms, peer pressure, and public issue polarization (Askar et al., 2025; Darmi et al., 2024; Mujahidin et al., 2025). Effective responses shift from mere prohibition to integrating critical digital literacy into PAI, embedding moderation into controversial issue discussions, and fostering cross-discourse dialogue that equips students with an ethical compass for navigating digital spaces (Ibda et al., 2024; Nata et al., 2024; Purwanto et al., 2024; Tuna, 2022). Strengthening curriculum functions and digital literacy policy management in public schools has also been shown to influence students' religious motivation and information safety (Bin Youssef Shaheen et al., 2024; Nurdin et al., 2024). Furthermore, comprehensive sexuality education, public speaking health, and conflict management approaches demonstrate that guided dialogue can transform sensitive topics into learning opportunities for citizenship and empathy (Koç, 2021; Shibuya et al., 2023; Tuna, 2020).

Variation in student readiness—from worship motivation to consistent *adab*—functions as an intermediary between institutional determinants and digital

ecologies. Research on moral intelligence and teacher self-awareness in Islamic schools underscores the need for pedagogies that foster reflection, empathy, and self-regulation, ensuring that habits do not remain merely ceremonial compliance (Latipah, 2021; Saodi et al., 2024). The integration of multicultural and civic education into PAI has been correlated with higher social cohesion and more resilient prosocial norms in diverse classrooms (Afriyanto & Anandari, 2024; Fahmi et al., 2025). In Northern European contexts, instructional designs that navigate the existentiality of traditions have been reported to strengthen moral agency among Muslim minority students (Kjelling & Markeng, 2025; Putkonen et al., 2025), with supportive practices such as the "best interests of the child" approach in Qur'an teaching (Markeng & Berglund, 2024). Considering these challenges, PAI in public schools can take a curricular position as a safe identity dialogue space while maintaining firm ethical commitments (Alanazi, 2025; Ansyari, 2023).

The time constraints for PAI instruction identified by teachers represent a structural issue repeatedly noted in policy literature. Analyses of religious school transformations and inter-ministerial agreements indicate that the breadth of character and moderation objectives often exceeds the instructional minutes available (Salim et al., 2024). Recommended solutions include cross-curricular infusion—ensuring all subjects contribute to moral formation—and strengthening co-curricular programs for deeper value engagement through projects and service learning (Ainissyifa et al., 2024; Amalia et al., 2024). The success of such models depends on leadership and supervision that orchestrate schedules, provide reflective spaces, and maintain consistency across teachers (M. E. Mahmud, 2025; Mulyana et al., 2023; Posangi et al., 2025). Within this framework, Table 2 clarifies that time allocation is not merely a scheduling issue, but an instructional design challenge integrating rituals, dialogue, and action.

Positive aspects of digital ecologies emerge when teacher competencies and institutional supports are adequate. Models of critically contextualized, digitally integrated *fiqh* instruction can help pre-service teachers align ethical reasoning with daily platform practices (Kurniawan et al., 2024; Nata et al., 2024; Sapiudin et al., 2025). Digital literacy training for PAI teachers, including the use of AI tools for module design, has been reported to improve planning performance and diversify resources (Kurniawan et al., 2024; Nata et al., 2024). Interactive media—from PAI–civics e-modules to educational games and digital Qur'an literacy programs—can enrich learning if guided by reflective pedagogical principles (Faidah et al., 2023; Susanti et al., 2024; Zainuddin & Matsum, 2023). At the same time, professionalization and strengthening of teacher professional identity through pre-service education and continuous training remain crucial to ensure epistemic integrity and moderation consistency (Ahmed, 2025; Arif et al., 2025; Malla et al., 2023; Succarie, 2024; Zaqiah et al., 2024). Competency development must also be sensitive to the linguistic and cultural diversity of PAI classrooms (Akrim & Gunawan, 2021; Kousar & Brett, 2022).

Based on cross-findings coherence and literature, the argumentative position of this study asserts that supporting determinants—religious facilities, scheduled rituals,

parental collaboration, leadership-supervision, and pedagogical innovation—function as "opportunity structures" that need to be converted into meaningful habituation through reflective, dialogical teaching. Conversely, inhibiting determinants—dominant digital and social ecologies, heterogeneous student readiness, and time limitations—require systemic solutions rather than isolated remediation. Policy and practice recommendations for immediate implementation include consolidating supervision mechanisms that combine coaching and ICT to monitor PAI quality; scheduling arrangements that provide value-reflection slots beyond face-to-face PAI hours and ensure character infusion across subjects; institutionalizing critical digital literacy and moderation pedagogy into routine learning scenarios; normalizing parent collaboration channels through home–school learning agendas; and developing cross-disciplinary PAI projects on citizenship and ecology that mobilize community resources (Amrullah et al., 2025; Anwar et al., 2025; Aydinli & Badawia, 2025; Gmoser et al., 2024; Ibda et al., 2024; Latipah, 2021; Mulyana et al., 2023; Parinduri & Ibarra, 2025; Posangi et al., 2025; Purwanto et al., 2024; Rekan & Mokhtar, 2025; Taufiqurrochman, 2025; Tuna, 2024; Yagdı, 2025; Yusoff, 2024). These actions remain logically consistent with the operational conclusions drawn from Figure 1 as well as Tables 1 and 2, underscoring the necessity of orchestrating structures, practices, partnerships, and critical literacies to uphold *akhlak* in the architecture of diverse public schools (Amalia et al., 2024; Badri & Malik, 2024; Salim et al., 2024).

4. Conclusion

This study identified and analyzed the interrelated determinants that shape the capacity of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in Indonesian public high schools to foster *akhlak*. The results reveal that well-resourced religious facilities, routinized worship and Qur'an literacy practices, strong parental collaboration, and supportive leadership–supervision structures act as enabling conditions that significantly enhance teachers' effectiveness. Conversely, pervasive external influences—particularly from digital and peer cultures—heterogeneous student readiness, and limited curriculum time emerged as primary obstacles that require systemic rather than individual interventions. The interplay between these supports and barriers underscores the necessity of an integrated, whole-school approach to moral formation that combines structural opportunity, reflective pedagogy, and sustained home–school alignment.

The implications of these findings extend beyond the immediate case, suggesting that public high schools in diverse, media-saturated contexts can strengthen moral development by embedding critical digital literacy within PAI, institutionalizing moderation-based dialogues, and designing cross-curricular, community-linked projects. This research contributes to the body of knowledge by offering a determinants-of-effectiveness framework that operationalizes moral formation as the interaction of institutional, pedagogical, and sociocultural systems, rather than as the sum of discrete teaching activities.

Future research should examine how these determinants function across varied sociocultural and policy environments, particularly in rural and non-Java contexts, and investigate longitudinally how sustained structural supports influence the durability of moral dispositions. In addition, comparative studies between Islamic and secular moral education models could provide deeper insights into adaptable strategies for character education in pluralistic school systems.

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