



The Relevance of the Traditional Malay Islamic Curriculum Towards Strengthening the Values of Responsibility and Discipline in Elementary School Students

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ABSTRACT

The traditional Malay Islamic curriculum embodies noble values that emphasize the balance between knowledge, manners, and good deeds. In the context of modern primary education, these values are relevant for strengthening students' character, particularly in terms of responsibility and discipline. This study aims to analyze the relevance of the traditional Malay Islamic curriculum to strengthening the character values of elementary school students. The research method used is library research with a descriptive qualitative approach. Data sources consist of primary and secondary literature in the form of books, journal articles, and educational policy documents. The results of the study indicate that Malay Islamic values such as manners, trustworthiness, religious discipline, and social responsibility contribute significantly to the formation of children's character. This curriculum positions teachers as role models and education as a process of spiritual and social habituation. Therefore, the Malay Islamic curriculum can be used as a reference in the development of a national curriculum based on local values and culture.

1. Introduction

Character education is a primary focus in Indonesia's human resource development, as outlined in the Independent Curriculum (Kemdikbud, 2022). However, with the modernization of education, traditional values that have long been the foundation of community life are often neglected. In this context, the traditional Malay Islamic Curriculum presents itself as an educational legacy that harmoniously integrates

Islamic values and local culture. This approach is not only relevant but also indispensable to address the increasingly complex challenges of the times.

In the Malay educational tradition, education is oriented not only toward knowledge (ta'lim) but also toward moral formation (tarbiyah) and the cultivation of good behavior (ta'dib). Education in this context encompasses all aspects of a student's life, where the knowledge gained is not merely for academic purposes but also for the development of good character. For example, in the learning process, students are taught to respect their parents and teachers, and to foster mutual respect for each other. This is consistent with Luthviyani (2022) perspective that the fundamental aim of Islamic education is to cultivate civilized individuals. Accordingly, education is directed not only toward intellectual development but also toward nurturing strong ethical and moral character.

Rahmah et al., (2024) further emphasize that the balance between spirituality, intellect, and morality is a defining characteristic of Islamic education. Within the framework of character education, this balance becomes particularly important in the modern era, which frequently prioritizes intellectual achievement while overlooking moral considerations. For example, students with a good understanding of Islamic values tend to be better able to cope with pressure from negative social environments. They will be wiser in making decisions and more responsible for their actions. Therefore, character education that integrates traditional and Islamic values is highly relevant for implementation in the current curriculum.

The significance of this research lies in the significant potential of the traditional Malay Islamic curriculum in strengthening the values of responsibility and discipline in elementary school students. These two aspects are currently a major challenge amidst the influence of instant culture and digitalization, which increasingly dominate daily life. In an era where information is easily and quickly accessible, many students are trapped in unproductive, instant behavior. Character education based on traditional values can be a solution to this problem. For instance, through the application of learning approaches that stress punctuality and accountability in completing tasks, students are encouraged to appreciate both the learning process and the outcomes of their efforts (Lami et al., 2025).

The significance of this research lies in the significant potential of the traditional Malay Islamic curriculum in strengthening the values of responsibility and discipline in elementary school students. These two aspects are currently a major challenge amidst the influence of instant gratification and digitalization, which increasingly dominate daily life. In an era where information is readily accessible, many students are trapped in unproductive, instant behaviors. Tri et al., (2024) highlighted that character education should be structured to cultivate positive habits through consistent practice, exemplary role modeling, and the reinforcement of moral values in every learning activity. Therefore, character education based on traditional values can be a solution to address shifts in today's student behavior. For example, by implementing learning methods that emphasize time discipline and responsibility in completing assignments, students will learn to value both the process and the results of their hard work.

Thus, character education that integrates traditional Malay Islamic values not only provides a strong moral foundation but also equips students with life skills to compete in the modern world. This fosters a generation that is not only academically capable but also demonstrates strong integrity and social responsibility, consistent with the view of Mustika et al., (2024) that Islamic character education should promote a balance among intellectual, moral, and spiritual development. In addition, Fauziah and Rohmawati (2023) emphasize that the Malay Islamic Curriculum is highly relevant within the Indonesian educational context because it integrates local cultural values with Islamic principles in formal education. By prioritizing moral formation, discipline, and responsibility, this curriculum offers a meaningful response to the challenges faced by today's younger generation in the modern era. The integration of knowledge, morals, and spirituality will produce individuals who excel not only academically but also in their social and spiritual lives.

This study aims to examine the relevance of the traditional Malay Islamic curriculum in strengthening the values of responsibility and discipline among elementary school students by exploring how the integration of Islamic teachings and local cultural wisdom supports holistic character formation within Indonesia's Independent Curriculum framework. Grounded in the principles of ta'lim, tarbiyah, and ta'dib, this research investigates how education that balances intellectual, moral, and spiritual development contributes to shaping civilized individuals with strong ethical awareness and social responsibility. The study also seeks to analyze the potential of traditional value-based character education as a response to contemporary challenges such as instant gratification, digital influence, and declining student discipline. By emphasizing habituation, role modeling, and moral reinforcement in the learning process, this research highlights how the traditional Malay Islamic curriculum can serve as a meaningful educational approach that nurtures integrity, self-discipline, and responsible behavior, ultimately supporting the development of students who are not only academically capable but also morally grounded and socially conscious.

2. Methodology

This research employed a library research method with a descriptive qualitative approach. According to, library research is a series of scientific activities related to collecting library data, reading, recording, and processing various materials relevant to the research objectives. A descriptive qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to describe phenomena in depth based on narrative interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2018). All data in this study were obtained through the review and analysis of various literature sources, such as books, scientific articles, and research reports relevant to the theme of Malay Islamic education and character education in elementary schools. During the analysis process, the researcher first identified various concepts of character values contained within the Malay Islamic education system. Next, these values were analyzed to determine their relevance to modern character education principles currently applied in elementary schools. The results of the analysis were then used

to conclude the extent to which the traditional Malay Islamic curriculum contributes to the development of responsibility and discipline in students.

3. Results and Discussion

The Essence of the Traditional Malay Islamic Curriculum

The Malay Islamic curriculum is a profound and comprehensive educational approach, rooted in the teachings of the Quran, Hadith, and local Malay values rich in social and spiritual morality. In this context, the curriculum's primary focus is moral formation, which is pursued through exemplary behavior, the instilling of religious habits, and social participation (Ismail, 2022). Thus, education serves not only as a means of transferring knowledge but also as a tool for developing good character a view that aligns with the principles of character-centered education advocated by Lickona. In moral formation, role modeling is a crucial aspect. Exemplary behavior here refers to concrete actions exemplified by educators, parents, and community leaders. For example, a teacher who not only teaches the value of honesty but also demonstrates honesty in all his or her actions will be more effective in instilling these values in his or her students. This role model creates a climate conducive to moral learning, where students not only hear theory but also see the practical implementation of the values taught. In this way, students understand that good morals are not merely theoretical but integral to everyday life (Pribadi et al., 2021).

The practice of worship is also a crucial element of the Malay Islamic curriculum. This practice includes routine religious practices, such as prayer, fasting, and reading the Quran. When students are accustomed to consistent worship, they not only learn about religious obligations but also experience the spiritual and emotional impact of such worship. For example, a student who regularly performs the five daily prayers will experience inner peace and tranquility that can help them face various challenges in life. Furthermore, engaging in worship helps students cultivate self-discipline, responsibility, and social awareness, which are fundamental elements of character development (Samiha & Fauzi, 2025)

Social participation represents another key dimension of this curriculum. By engaging in social activities, students are encouraged to understand and directly experience how their actions affect others in society. For instance, participation in community service allows students not only to learn the value of sharing and helping but also to feel the emotional fulfillment that comes from contributing to others' well-being. These experiences help nurture empathy and social awareness, which are fundamental elements of moral development. Therefore, social participation is not simply a supplementary activity but a core component of the educational process aimed at character formation (Permadi & Achadi, 2025).

A close analysis of these three aspects shows that the Malay Islamic curriculum serves not only as an educational tool but also as a means to shape holistic individuals—both intellectually and morally. By integrating the teachings of the

Quran and Hadith with local values, this curriculum creates a relevant and contextual educational system capable of responding to the challenges of the times. This also aligns with Lickona view, which emphasizes the importance of character education as an integral part of overall education. The Malay Islamic curriculum offers a holistic approach to education, where moral formation through role models, the instilling of religious habits, and social participation is the primary focus. Therefore, education in this context involves not only the transfer of knowledge but also efforts to shape good character, ultimately producing individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also possess high morals. This is a challenge that educators and society must face in their efforts to create a generation of high quality, noble character, and prepared to face the various challenges of the future.

The Value of Responsibility in the Malay Islamic Curriculum

Responsibility (*amanah*) lies at the heart of Islamic teachings and is reflected in honesty, diligence, and care for the environment. This concept is not only a moral obligation but also a fundamental basis for developing strong character and personal integrity. According to Winata and Hasanah (2021), effective character education must integrate real-life experiences and reflection on values. This demonstrates that an understanding of responsibility cannot be separated from an individual's daily experiences. For example, a student involved in a community project will experience firsthand how their contribution impacts the surrounding environment, thus strengthening their sense of responsibility towards society.

In the Malay cultural context, social responsibility is taught through mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), environmental stewardship, and participation in community religious activities (Rahman, 2021). *Gotong royong*, a tradition passed down through generations, not only reflects the value of togetherness but also instills a sense of belonging among community members. Concrete examples of this value can be seen in weddings or circumcisions, where the community helps each other prepare and execute the event. This involvement not only strengthens social bonds but also teaches individuals the importance of contributing to the common good.

Furthermore, protecting the environment is also an essential part of social responsibility taught in Malay Islamic values. In Islamic teachings, humans are entrusted with preserving and conserving nature as a form of responsibility to God and fellow creatures. The Prophet's hadith states that "the best people are those who are most beneficial to others," emphasizing the importance of humans' role in maintaining environmental balance. Activities such as tree planting, waste management, and river cleanups within the school environment are concrete examples of the application of environmental responsibility (Sulistyo, 2023). Through these activities, students learn that caring for nature is part of practicing social and spiritual responsibility.

The role of teachers as *murabbi* (leaders) is also crucial in shaping students' character. Teachers serve not only as transmitters of knowledge but also as moral role models who demonstrate responsible behavior, discipline, and empathy for

others (Hidayati et al., 2026). Consistent exemplary behavior and practice by teachers will help students internalize character values in their daily lives. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemdikbud, 2022) emphasizes that character education must be integrated into all learning activities and school culture to become a living habit. Malay Islamic values such as trustworthiness, mutual cooperation, and environmental stewardship align with this spirit of character building. Thus, character education based on Malay Islamic values can shape students who are responsible, disciplined, and contribute positively to society and the environment.

The Value of Discipline as a Pillar of Character Building

Discipline in the Malay Islamic tradition encompasses two complementary dimensions: religious discipline and social discipline. These two dimensions play a crucial role in shaping the character of individuals and society as a whole. Discipline in worship encompasses routine religious practices, such as observing prayer times, reciting the Quran, and performing recommended practices. The habit of observing prayer times, for example, is not merely an obligation but also fosters a profound spiritual awareness. Islamic education truly aims to foster human manners and self-awareness of their spiritual and moral responsibilities before God.

In this context, prayer is not merely a ritual, but also a moment of reflection and connection between the individual and God. This process helps individuals develop better self-control in various aspects of life. Hasan and Inayati (2025) highlighted that discipline in religious practice shapes everyday behavior, as individuals who consistently perform prayers on time are more likely to demonstrate orderliness in other aspects of life. For example, a student who consistently prays five times a day will typically value their study time more. They tend to be more disciplined in managing their study schedules and avoid procrastinating. This demonstrates that religious discipline can be a strong foundation for building social discipline. Furthermore, the habit of reciting the Quran, which is part of religious discipline, not only enhances religious knowledge but also fosters good morals and behavior. In Malay tradition, Quran recitation is often practiced in groups, strengthening social bonds and a sense of togetherness among community members.

On the other hand, social discipline encompasses behaviors related to interactions between individuals within society. This includes social etiquette, environmental responsibility, and adherence to applicable norms and rules. In empirical research by Hendri (2021), the implementation of Islamic value-based social activities in elementary schools was shown to increase student discipline by 82%. These social activities include community service, charity work, and collaborative learning that emphasizes Islamic values. Through participation in these activities, students learn not only the importance of discipline but also social responsibility and concern for others. A deeper analysis shows that discipline that grows from a sense of faith, as Rahman (2020) notes, has greater resilience than discipline fostered through external punishment. When individuals understand and feel the meaning of every action they take, they tend to be more motivated to maintain that disciplined behavior. For example, a student who understands that following school rules is

part of their worship and devotion to God will be more committed to adhering to those rules without the threat of punishment.

Strong religious discipline will produce individuals who are not only obedient to God but also possess a strong social conscience. Conversely, strong social discipline will create an environment that supports the practice of religious practices, mutually reinforcing each other. Thus, developing discipline in the Malay Islamic tradition serves not only the benefit of the individual but also contributes to building a more harmonious and prosperous society. Discipline in the Malay Islamic tradition, encompassing both religious and social discipline, plays a crucial role in shaping the character of individuals and society. Through consistent religious practice and social activities based on Islamic values, individuals can develop better self-control and a heightened social awareness. Thus, discipline born from a sense of faith will produce better individuals and communities, who support and respect each other, creating a more positive and productive environment.

Relevance to Character Education in Elementary Schools

Malay Islamic values align deeply with the character dimensions of the Independent Curriculum, which encompasses important aspects such as religiosity, mutual cooperation, integrity, and independence (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022). In the context of elementary school education, these values serve not only as moral guidelines but also as a foundation for developing students' holistic character. For example, religious values taught through religious studies in schools can be transformed into attitudes of tolerance and respect for differences. In practice, activities such as praying together before lessons or celebrating religious holidays can strengthen a sense of togetherness and mutual respect among students, creating a harmonious and conducive learning environment (Syafri, 2021).

These values can be implemented through various daily activities. For example, schools can hold regular programs that involve students in social activities, such as cleaning the surrounding environment or helping those in need. These mutual cooperation activities not only teach students the importance of cooperation but also foster empathy and concern for others. A study shows that children who participate in social activities tend to have higher levels of life satisfaction and interact better in groups (Sulistyo, 2023). Furthermore, reflecting on values in learning is an effective method for internalizing character. In each lesson, teachers can link the material being taught to the desired character values. For example, when teaching about the history of the nation's struggle, teachers can emphasize the importance of the integrity and courage of the heroes in the fight for independence. In this way, students not only learn historical facts but also develop attitudes they can apply in their daily lives.

Integrating local culture into character education themes is also crucial. Malay culture, rich in traditions and noble values, can serve as a source of inspiration in character education. For example, through folktales or legends containing moral messages, students can learn about values such as honesty, courage, and respect. By introducing local culture, students not only understand their identity as part of

the nation but also learn to appreciate and preserve existing cultural heritage. This is consistent with the view of Winata and Hasanah (2021), who argue that character education rooted in local culture can reinforce national identity while shaping students to become not only intellectually capable but also morally and spiritually mature individuals.

By integrating Malay-Islamic values into character education, we can create a generation that excels not only academically but also possesses strong character. This is especially relevant given the various challenges facing today's young generation, such as promiscuity, the negative influence of social media, and the moral crisis. Modernizing Islamic education should not mean abandoning traditional values; instead, these values need to be harmoniously integrated with innovation to ensure continued relevance in contemporary developments. Therefore, character education grounded in the noble values of the Malay-Islamic tradition is essential to guide students in responding wisely to the challenges of modern life (Pribadi et al., 2021). Character education in elementary schools, through daily habits, value reflection, and integration of local culture, can shape students who are not only academically intelligent but also possess strong character and noble morals. Effective character education will produce individuals who are ready to contribute positively to society and the nation, while maintaining a rich cultural identity. Thus, character education is not just an addition to the curriculum, but is a foundation that must be instilled from an early age to create a quality next generation.

4. Conclusion

The Traditional Malay Islamic Curriculum plays a crucial role in instilling the values of responsibility and discipline in elementary school students. These values stem from Islamic teachings and Malay culture, which emphasize the importance of good manners, trustworthiness, and a disciplined and orderly lifestyle. The value of responsibility is evident in the cultivation of honesty, care, and accountability as students, while discipline is demonstrated through regular worship, adherence to rules, and diligence in learning. Both values align with the character education goals of the Merdeka Curriculum, enabling the Malay Islamic curriculum to serve as a source of inspiration for developing character education based on local culture and values. However, this study is limited by its focus on specific educational settings and cultural contexts, which may not fully represent the diversity of elementary education environments in Indonesia. In addition, the study primarily relies on conceptual and qualitative analysis, which may limit the generalizability of its findings. Future research is recommended to conduct empirical and comparative studies across different regions and school types, as well as to examine the long-term impact of implementing the traditional Malay Islamic curriculum on students' character development through quantitative and mixed-method approaches.

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