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Integrating Religious Values into Character Education: Exploring Teachers' Strategies in SMK Negeri 4 Sidrap

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Abstrak : Minat baca merupakan salah satu komponen penting dalam pengembangan literasi yang dapat berkontribusi terhadap kemampuan siswa dalam mengorganisasikan gagasan, menyusun argumen, dan menghasilkan teks tertulis yang koheren. Namun, banyak siswa sekolah menengah pertama masih mengalami kesulitan dalam mengembangkan keterampilan menulis teks eksposisi, khususnya dalam menghasilkan gagasan yang relevan, menyusun informasi secara logis, menggunakan kosakata yang tepat, serta mendukung argumen dengan bukti faktual. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menginvestigasi hubungan antara minat baca dan keterampilan menulis teks eksposisi pada siswa UPT SMP Negeri 2 Baranti, Kabupaten Sidenreng Rappang, Sulawesi Selatan, Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain korelasional untuk mengkaji hubungan antara minat baca siswa dan kemampuan mereka dalam menulis teks eksposisi. Minat baca diukur menggunakan angket terstruktur yang mencakup aspek kesenangan membaca, frekuensi membaca, motivasi membaca, dan keterlibatan siswa terhadap bahan bacaan. Sementara itu, keterampilan menulis teks eksposisi dinilai melalui tes menulis berdasarkan beberapa indikator, yaitu pengembangan isi, organisasi teks, penggunaan kosakata, penggunaan bahasa, serta ketepatan mekanika penulisan. Data direncanakan dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif dan uji korelasi Pearson Product–Moment untuk mengetahui distribusi variabel serta menentukan kekuatan dan arah hubungan antara kedua variabel, dengan memperhatikan asumsi statistik yang relevan. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan bukti empiris mengenai hubungan antara keterlibatan membaca dan kemampuan menulis siswa pada jenjang sekolah menengah pertama di Indonesia. Temuan penelitian ini juga diharapkan dapat memberikan kontribusi terhadap pengembangan strategi pembelajaran berbasis literasi yang mengintegrasikan aktivitas membaca dengan pembelajaran keterampilan menulis teks eksposisi.
Kata Kunci: minat baca; menulis teks eksposisi; keterampilan menulis; pengembangan literasi; siswa sekolah menengah pertama; penelitian korelasional.

***Abstract**: Religious character education is an essential component of holistic educational development, particularly in vocational schools where students are expected to demonstrate academic competence, professional responsibility, moral awareness, and positive social behavior. This article examines the integration of religious values into character education, focusing on teachers' strategies, religious habituation, moral guidance, and the development of students' spiritual and social responsibilities. The proposed research context is SMK Negeri 4 Sidrap, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. A descriptive qualitative approach is adopted as the methodological framework, emphasizing classroom and school-based observations, teacher interviews, and documentary analysis. The existing research material identifies several relevant educational practices, including congregational prayers, Qur'anic recitation, daily supplications, teacher role modeling, charitable activities, and the promotion of discipline and tolerance. These practices provide an analytical framework for examining how religious values may be integrated into students' daily school experiences. However, the available empirical evidence does not establish that these activities have been implemented or produced particular outcomes at SMK Negeri 4 Sidrap. Accordingly, the article outlines an evidence-based framework for investigating teachers' strategies and highlights the need for school-specific field data before drawing empirical conclusions. The study is expected to contribute to understanding religious character education in vocational learning environments.*
***Keywords:** Religious Values; Character Education; Teachers' Strategies; Islamic Religious Education; Vocational Schools*

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Introduction

Education plays a fundamental role in developing individuals who possess not only intellectual competence and professional skills but also ethical awareness, social responsibility, and moral integrity. In contemporary educational systems, schools are increasingly expected to prepare students to respond to technological advancements, cultural diversity, social transformation, and changing workplace demands. Consequently, educational success cannot be measured exclusively through academic achievement or technical proficiency. It must also consider the development of positive attitudes, ethical decision-making, interpersonal relationships, and responsible behavior.

Character education has emerged as an important approach to achieving these objectives. Lickona (1991) conceptualized character education as an integrated process involving moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral behavior. This perspective emphasizes that students must not only understand ethical principles but also develop the motivation and practical ability to apply those principles in everyday situations. Character development, therefore, requires consistent educational experiences that connect knowledge, attitudes, and actions.

Within the Indonesian educational context, character education is closely associated with the national educational objective of developing individuals who demonstrate faith, moral integrity, independence, responsibility, creativity, and social awareness. Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System establishes the importance of developing students' spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and practical competencies. These objectives provide a foundation for integrating ethical and spiritual development into formal educational activities.Religious values represent one dimension of character education. In Islamic educational settings, these values include faith, sincerity, honesty, discipline, respect, compassion, responsibility, and social solidarity. Religious character education extends beyond the transmission of religious knowledge because its broader objective is to encourage students to demonstrate religious and moral principles through observable behavior.

Religious education may therefore contribute to character development through both formal instruction and school-based experiences. Classroom activities can introduce students to ethical concepts, while school routines provide opportunities to practice those concepts. For example, religious habituation activities may support regularity, self-discipline, cooperation, and awareness of spiritual responsibilities. Similarly, social service activities can create opportunities for students to practice generosity, empathy, and collective responsibility.However, participation in religious activities should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of successful character development. Students may participate because of institutional requirements, social expectations, or external supervision rather than internal moral commitment. Effective character education therefore requires attention to the relationship between students' participation, understanding, motivation, and independent behavior.

Teachers occupy a central position in this process. Bandura's (1977) social learning theory explains that individuals can acquire attitudes and behavioral patterns by observing

influential models. In educational environments, teachers function as important social models because their interactions, decisions, communication styles, and everyday behavior are continuously observed by students.Teacher role modeling becomes especially relevant in religious character education. Students may learn honesty, patience, fairness, responsibility, and respect not only from formal instruction but also from how teachers demonstrate these qualities in school activities. When teachers consistently practice the values they teach, students encounter practical examples of ethical conduct.

Conversely, inconsistencies between teachers' explanations and their behavior may weaken the credibility of character education. Therefore, teachers' professional responsibilities include creating supportive environments in which religious and moral principles are demonstrated consistently.

Previous educational research also suggests that character development can be supported through participatory and contextual learning. Hermansyah, Mohamed, and Nirmala (2024) examined learning-through-play strategies for strengthening character education among elementary school students in Sidrap Regency. Their work highlights the relevance of interactive educational experiences for developing responsibility, cooperation, and discipline. Although the educational level differs from vocational schooling, the study offers a relevant perspective on the importance of practical learning experiences.

Similarly, Mohamed and Hermansyah (2025) explored the integration of digital values learning into character education. Their review indicates that character development can be approached through varied instructional strategies, including digital storytelling, participatory activities, and contextual learning. These findings suggest that character education should not be restricted to conventional lectures or religious instruction.Vocational schools provide a particularly important context for examining character education. Students in vocational education are expected to develop competencies that support future employment and participation in professional environments. Workplace readiness involves more than technical knowledge; it also requires punctuality, integrity, collaboration, respect for others, and responsible decision-making.

Consequently, religious character education in vocational schools may contribute to broader educational objectives by connecting spiritual values with professional ethics and social responsibility. Religious instruction, teacher modeling, school routines, and collaborative activities may provide complementary opportunities for students to develop these competencies.

Nevertheless, the implementation of character education presents several challenges. Students have diverse family backgrounds, religious experiences, learning motivations, and social environments. These differences may influence their participation in school activities and their interpretation of religious values.Furthermore, institutional programs may encounter challenges involving student discipline, limited supervision, inconsistent participation, and differences between school expectations and students' everyday behavior. Such conditions highlight the importance of investigating how teachers adapt their strategies to students' needs.

The existing research document used to develop the present article identifies religious habituation, teacher guidance, moral modeling, and social responsibility as central components of character education. It also documents concerns involving irregular participation in religious activities, punctuality, and student discipline. These observations are useful for developing research questions, but they cannot be transferred as empirical findings to another school.

The present article focuses on SMK Negeri 4 Sidrap as the proposed research setting. Its central concern is how teachers integrate religious values into character education through instructional practices, behavioral modeling, school routines, and social activities.

Three research questions guide the investigation:

1. What strategies do teachers use to integrate religious values into character education at SMK Negeri 4 Sidrap?
2. How are spiritual and social responsibilities incorporated into school-based character education practices?
3. What supporting factors and challenges influence the implementation of teachers' strategies?

By addressing these questions, the study seeks to contribute to discussions of teacher professionalism, religious character education, and holistic student development in vocational education.

Literature Review

Character education refers to a systematic educational process through which learners develop ethical understanding, positive attitudes, and responsible behavioral practices. Rather than treating morality as an isolated subject, character education encourages schools to incorporate ethical values into curriculum content, teaching methods, interpersonal relationships, and institutional culture.

Lickona (1991) argued that effective character education involves the integration of moral cognition, moral emotion, and moral action. Moral cognition enables students to recognize ethical principles and evaluate behavioral choices. Moral emotion encourages empathy, concern, and commitment to positive values. Moral action involves the practical demonstration of ethical behavior in everyday situations.

This framework suggests that character development requires more than memorizing moral concepts. Students need opportunities to apply ethical principles, reflect on their actions, and develop consistency between their beliefs and behavior.

Berkowitz and Bier (2005) emphasized that effective character education programs generally involve intentional school-based strategies and supportive educational environments. Their work provides a foundation for understanding character education as a coordinated institutional responsibility rather than the exclusive responsibility of individual teachers.

In vocational education, character education has additional relevance because students are preparing to enter professional and social environments that require ethical conduct. Discipline, honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and respect are essential qualities for professional development.

Religious Values and Moral Development

Religious values are principles derived from religious teachings that guide individuals' relationships with God, themselves, other people, and their surrounding environment. In Islamic education, religious values are closely connected to the development of akhlak, which refers to moral character and ethical conduct.Religious character development involves spiritual responsibilities and social responsibilities. Spiritual responsibilities include religious awareness, worship, gratitude, and commitment to religious teachings. Social responsibilities involve honesty, tolerance, compassion, cooperation, generosity, and respect for others.

These dimensions should be understood as interconnected rather than independent. Religious practices may provide opportunities for spiritual reflection, while social activities allow students to express ethical values through interpersonal relationships.

However, religious participation and moral development are not identical concepts. Students' involvement in religious routines provides evidence of participation but does not, by itself, establish changes in honesty, empathy, responsibility, or other character attributes.

Therefore, religious character education should incorporate reflective learning, opportunities for ethical decision-making, and attention to students' actual behavior.

2.3 Teachers as Role Models and Moral Educators

Teachers contribute to character development through instruction, guidance, motivation, and behavioral modeling. Bandura (1977) explained that observational learning occurs when individuals acquire behavioral patterns through interactions with influential social models.Within school environments, teachers represent important models of ethical behavior. Their attitudes toward students, professional discipline, communication, and responses to conflict may influence students' perceptions of acceptable behavior.

Teacher role modeling can support religious character education when teachers demonstrate consistency between religious instruction and everyday conduct. For example, fairness in classroom assessment, respectful communication, punctuality, and willingness to help students can reinforce ethical principles introduced during instruction.

Teachers also act as facilitators who provide opportunities for students to discuss moral problems, reflect on decisions, and understand the consequences of their actions.

This approach positions teachers as active contributors to students' moral development rather than merely transmitters of religious information.

Religious Habituation as a Character Education Strategy

Habituation refers to the repeated practice of particular activities or behaviors intended to develop consistency and familiarity. In religious education, habituation may involve regular prayers, Qur'anic recitation, daily supplications, charitable activities, and other forms of religious participation.

The educational rationale behind habituation is that repeated engagement can provide opportunities for students to develop routines and practice self-regulation.

Nevertheless, repetition alone does not guarantee the internalization of religious values. Meaningful habituation should be accompanied by explanation, reflection, positive reinforcement, and opportunities for independent decision-making.

Teachers therefore need to consider whether students understand the values underlying religious activities and whether those values are reflected in their behavior beyond the immediate activity.

Social Responsibility and Religious Character

Religious character education includes social values such as empathy, tolerance, cooperation, generosity, and responsibility. These values can be developed through classroom collaboration, community service, charitable activities, and positive school relationships.Social responsibility is especially important in vocational education because students are expected to function effectively in collaborative professional environments.Activities that encourage students to assist others, respect differences, and fulfill collective responsibilities can provide practical opportunities for moral learning.

Research by Hermansyah et al. (2024) highlights the relevance of interactive educational activities for developing cooperation and responsibility. In another context, research on the cultural values of Mappatabe' in Bugis society demonstrates the importance of respect, politeness, and moral behavior within local educational and social practices.

These perspectives indicate that character education may be strengthened by connecting religious principles with students' social experiences and cultural environments.

Conceptual Framework

The proposed study examines religious character education through four interconnected dimensions.

Dimension	**Educational focus**	**Potential evidence**
Teacher role modeling	Demonstration of moral and religious values	Observations and teacher interviews
Religious habituation	Consistent participation in religious practices	Activity schedules and participation records
Moral guidance	Ethical understanding and responsible behavior	Interviews, classroom observations
Social responsibility	Cooperation, tolerance, and concern for others	Social activities and observed interactions

The framework assumes that teachers' strategies, school culture, and students' experiences interact in shaping opportunities for character development. It does not assume that participation in any particular activity automatically produces measurable character improvement.

Research Method

This study is designed using a descriptive qualitative approach to investigate teachers' strategies for integrating religious values into character education at SMK Negeri 4 Sidrap, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Qualitative research is appropriate for exploring educational practices, teacher experiences, institutional routines, and the meanings participants attach to character development.

Creswell and Poth (2018) explain that qualitative inquiry enables researchers to investigate complex social phenomena within their natural settings. Similarly, Yin (2018) emphasizes the importance of examining educational practices within their institutional contexts.

The proposed study adopts a school-based qualitative case study design. Its principal focus is to understand how teachers plan, implement, and evaluate activities intended to strengthen students' religious character.The original research material uses a descriptive qualitative approach. However, its observations, interviews, and findings concern a different research location. Consequently, new fieldwork is required before the present study can be reported as completed empirical research at SMK Negeri 4 Sidrap.

Research Setting and Participants

The proposed research setting is SMK Negeri 4 Sidrap. The school is selected as the intended context for investigating religious values within vocational education.

The relevant participant groups would include Islamic Religious Education teachers, school administrators responsible for student development, and students who participate in school-based character education activities.Purposive sampling is proposed to identify participants with direct knowledge of the implementation of religious character education. Selection should consider participants' involvement in planning, supervising, or participating in the relevant educational activities.

The number of participants, demographic characteristics, and duration of fieldwork have not been established from the available source document and therefore must be documented during the actual research.

Data Collection Techniques

Three complementary data collection techniques are proposed: observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis.

Observation. Direct observation would examine classroom interactions, teacher role modeling, religious routines, student participation, and social activities. Particular attention would be given to the relationship between teachers' guidance and students' observable behavior.

Semi-structured interviews. Interviews would explore teachers' perspectives on character education, the strategies they employ, institutional support, student participation, and challenges encountered during implementation.

Document analysis. Relevant documents may include school activity schedules, religious education programs, attendance records, student development guidelines, and records of social or religious activities. Only documents actually obtained from the research setting should be used as evidence.

Research Instruments

The proposed research instruments consist of observation sheets, interview guides, and document analysis forms.The observation guide would focus on teachers' behavior, religious activities, classroom interactions, and students' social responsibilities. Interview questions would address instructional strategies, religious habituation, behavioral guidance, and perceived implementation challenges.The document analysis form would organize institutional evidence according to the study's research questions.

Data Analysis

The proposed data analysis follows the interactive approach developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification.uring data condensation, interview transcripts, observation notes, and relevant documents would be reviewed and categorized according to recurring patterns. The analysis would focus on teacher role modeling, religious habituation, moral guidance, social responsibility, and implementation challenges.

Data display would involve organizing the identified themes into narrative descriptions and thematic matrices. The final stage would involve interpreting the relationships between teachers' strategies and the observed implementation of religious character education.

Trustworthiness and Research Ethics

The credibility of the findings would be strengthened through triangulation of observations, interviews, and documents. Member checking may be employed to verify interpretations with relevant participants.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) identify credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as important criteria for qualitative research trustworthiness.

Before collecting data, the researchers should obtain the necessary institutional permissions and informed consent. Participants' identities should be protected, and the reporting of findings should avoid identifying individual students unnecessarily.

No interviews, observations, or institutional records from SMK Negeri 4 Sidrap have been supplied for this draft. Therefore, this section describes the research methodology to be implemented rather than procedures verified as completed.

Results and Discussion

The available research material identifies several strategies for religious character development. These findings can inform the analytical framework of the proposed study, but they must not be presented as findings obtained at SMK Negeri 4 Sidrap.The source study reports that teachers contribute to religious character education as educators, guides, motivators, and role models. Religious activities documented in the original research include congregational

Dhuha and Dhuhr prayers, Qur'anic recitation, recitation of Asmaul Husna, Friday Yasin recitation, and prayers before and after learning activities.

The material also identifies social and moral practices, including charitable activities, guidance in good conduct, tolerance, and discipline. These practices are relevant to the study's conceptual focus on spiritual and social responsibility.

Table 1. Religious Character Education Practices Identified in the Source Material

Theme	**Documented practices**	**Educational interpretation**
Religious habituation	Dhuha and Dhuhr prayers, Qur'anic recitation	Opportunities for spiritual engagement and routine development
Teacher role modeling	Guidance, motivation, moral example	Demonstration of expected values
Moral guidance	Guidance in good conduct and discipline	Support for ethical understanding
Social responsibility	Charitable activities and tolerance	Opportunities for cooperation and concern for others
Implementation challenges	Irregular participation and punctuality concerns	Need for consistent guidance and evaluation

Source: Analytical synthesis of the supplied thesis. These are not verified findings from SMK Negeri 4 Sidrap.

Teacher Role Modeling in Religious Character Education

The original research identifies teachers as central actors in developing students' religious character. Teachers are described as educators, guides, motivators, and role models who provide direction and examples of expected behavior.This finding is consistent with Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of observational learning. Students may develop behavioral expectations by observing how teachers communicate, fulfill responsibilities, respond to challenges, and interact with others.

In the context of religious character education, teacher role modeling can connect religious principles with observable school behavior. For example, punctuality, fairness, respectful communication, and responsibility may provide concrete examples of values that students encounter during religious instruction.However, the source material does not establish the magnitude of teachers' influence on student behavior. Nor does it provide evidence that specific teacher-modeling strategies have been implemented at SMK Negeri 4 Sidrap.The proposed research should therefore investigate how teachers demonstrate religious and ethical values in daily interactions and how students interpret these behaviors.

Religious Habituation and Spiritual Responsibility

Religious habituation constitutes a prominent theme in the available source material. The

original study describes routine activities involving congregational prayers, Qur'anic recitation, Asmaul Husna, Friday Yasin recitation, and daily supplications.

These activities represent institutional opportunities for students to engage with religious practices and develop familiarity with spiritual responsibilities.

From a character education perspective, habituation may support regularity, responsibility, and participation in collective activities. Nevertheless, its educational value depends partly on how teachers explain the meaning of the activities and encourage students to connect them with everyday conduct.The original source also documents challenges concerning participation in congregational prayers. Its observations include instances of students not attending scheduled religious activities.

This finding demonstrates an important distinction between the existence of a school program and consistent student participation. The presence of religious routines does not necessarily mean that all students participate regularly or internalize the intended values.

For the proposed investigation at SMK Negeri 4 Sidrap, the research should examine the existence, implementation, and educational meaning of any relevant religious routines, rather than assuming that the activities described in the original source are present at the new school.

Moral Guidance, Discipline, and Student Responsibility

The available research material identifies moral guidance and discipline as components of religious character education. It describes concerns involving punctuality, attendance, and students' compliance with school expectations.These observations suggest that character education programs need to address behavioral consistency as well as religious participation.

Discipline should not be understood exclusively as obedience to institutional rules. Within an educational framework, it can also involve self-regulation, awareness of responsibilities, and the capacity to make appropriate decisions without continuous external supervision.Lickona (1991) emphasizes the importance of moving from moral knowledge toward moral action. This distinction is relevant because students may understand school rules without consistently applying them.

Teacher guidance can help students recognize the consequences of their behavior, reflect on their responsibilities, and develop more independent forms of ethical decision-making.

Nevertheless, the available evidence does not support a causal conclusion that religious activities improved students' discipline. Such a conclusion would require additional evidence, including longitudinal observations or systematically documented behavioral changes.

Integration of Spiritual and Social Values

The original study distinguishes religious character education through responsibilities toward God and responsibilities toward other people.Spiritual responsibilities are represented by religious practices, while social responsibilities are reflected in charitable activities, tolerance, discipline, and moral guidance.

This distinction provides an important analytical foundation for understanding religious character education as a multidimensional process.Religious education that emphasizes worship without social responsibility may provide an incomplete account of moral development. Conversely, social responsibility can be strengthened when students are encouraged to connect ethical behavior with their religious understanding.For example, charitable activities may provide opportunities to practice generosity, while cooperative school activities can encourage respect and mutual assistance.

The relevance of these values is also reflected in Hermansyah, Mohamed, and Nirmala (2024), whose work on interactive character education emphasizes cooperation, responsibility, and positive social behavior.

The integration of spiritual and social values is therefore a promising area for further investigation in vocational education. However, the specific forms of integration at SMK Negeri 4 Sidrap remain to be established through field data.

Religious character education may have practical relevance for vocational students because professional environments require ethical conduct, reliability, cooperation, and respect for others.

Teachers can potentially connect religious values with professional competencies through classroom discussion, collaborative activities, school routines, and reflective learning.

For instance, honesty can be discussed in relation to academic integrity and workplace ethics. Responsibility can be connected to task completion, punctuality, and professional obligations. Tolerance and cooperation can be explored through group assignments and interactions among students.

These connections provide a conceptual basis for integrating character education with vocational learning objectives.However, the proposed study must distinguish between educational implications and empirically demonstrated outcomes. The available research material does not provide evidence that religious character education has improved vocational competencies or professional readiness at SMK Negeri 4 Sidrap.The available evidence provides a useful account of religious habituation, teacher modeling, and social responsibility. Nevertheless, several questions remain unanswered in the proposed research context.First, the specific religious character education programs implemented at SMK Negeri 4 Sidrap have not been documented.

Second, teachers' experiences, instructional strategies, and perceptions of implementation challenges at the school have not been collected.Third, the available material does not establish how students at the proposed school interpret religious values or demonstrate them in everyday behavior.Finally, the relationship between religious habituation and vocational students' ethical or professional development requires further investigation.

Addressing these gaps would allow the proposed study to contribute school-specific empirical evidence rather than relying on findings from another educational institution.

Conclusion

The available research material demonstrates that religious character education can be examined through interconnected dimensions of teacher role modeling, religious habituation, moral guidance, and social responsibility. The source findings identify teachers as educators, guides, motivators, and behavioral examples, while documented educational activities include congregational prayers, Qur'anic recitation, daily supplications, charitable practices, tolerance, and discipline. These practices provide a meaningful analytical foundation for understanding how religious values may be incorporated into everyday school experiences. However, the findings originate from a different research setting and cannot be attributed to SMK Negeri 4 Sidrap without independent verification.

The proposed study at SMK Negeri 4 Sidrap should therefore investigate teachers' actual strategies through direct observations, interviews, and institutional documents. Particular attention should be given to the relationship between religious participation, ethical understanding, student discipline, and social responsibility. Future findings may contribute to the development of contextually appropriate character education strategies in vocational schools. Until the necessary field data are collected, the present manuscript should be treated as a research-oriented draft rather than a completed empirical study of SMK Negeri 4 Sidrap.

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