



## Character Education from an Islamic Perspective as a Foundation for Ethical and Responsible Citizenship

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Article Info :	ABSTRACT
Accepted: 22-12-2025 Approved: 12-01-2026 Published: 02-03-2026	<p><b>Background</b> : In the contemporary global context, rapid social change driven by globalization and technological advancement has generated ethical challenges such as moral degradation and declining civic responsibility.</p> <p><b>Objective</b> : Therefore, this study examines character education from an Islamic perspective as a foundation for fostering ethical and responsible citizenship.</p> <p><b>Method</b> : Using a qualitative library research approach, the study analyzes and synthesizes scholarly literature published between 2020 and 2025 from peer-reviewed journals indexed in SINTA and Scopus, with a focus on key concepts of Islamic character education, particularly the integration of faith (<i>iman</i>), knowledge (<i>ilm</i>), and righteous action (<i>'amal salih</i>), and their implications for moral development and civic behavior.</p> <p><b>Findings and Implications</b> : The findings indicate that Islamic character education offers a comprehensive value-based framework that integrates spiritual, moral, and social dimensions of education, contributing to the formation of individuals with strong moral awareness, ethical conduct, and social responsibility. Theoretically, this study contributes to the discourse on character and citizenship education by articulating an Islamic normative framework that complements and enriches predominantly secular models of ethical citizenship. Practically, it provides insights for the development of educational curricula and civic education programs that promote moral integrity, social cohesion, and responsible civic engagement in pluralistic societies.</p> <p><b>Conclusion</b> : The study concludes that Islamic character education constitutes a relevant and viable foundation for developing ethical and responsible citizenship in both national and global contexts.</p>
<b>Keywords:</b> Islamic character education; ethical citizenship; moral education	

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### INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary global context, rapid social transformation driven by technological advancement, globalization, and cultural pluralism has significantly reshaped patterns of human interaction and civic life. While these

developments offer substantial opportunities for progress, they also generate ethical challenges, including moral relativism, social fragmentation, and declining civic responsibility (Kistoro et al., 2023). As societies increasingly confront issues such as corruption, intolerance, violence, and environmental neglect, the need for a strong moral foundation in education becomes increasingly urgent. Consequently, character education has emerged as a strategic response to cultivate ethical awareness, moral integrity, and responsible citizenship in both national and global contexts (Alfani, 2023).

Character education is widely understood as an educational approach that aims to develop core moral values, ethical reasoning, and socially responsible behavior among learners. Internationally, it is regarded as an essential component of holistic education that complements cognitive and technical competencies. Effective character education not only fosters individual moral development but also contributes to social cohesion, democratic participation, and sustainable development. However, many contemporary character education frameworks tend to adopt secular or value-neutral approaches, which may limit their capacity to address deeper moral motivations and the spiritual dimensions that shape ethical conduct and civic responsibility, particularly in religiously grounded societies (Sumiharsono et al., 2023).

From an Islamic perspective, education is inherently value-oriented and inseparable from moral and spiritual development. Islamic education emphasizes the integration of faith (*iman*), knowledge (*ilm*), and righteous action (*amal salih*) as the foundation of human character. Ethical principles such as justice (*adl*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), compassion (*rahmah*), honesty (*sidq*), and social responsibility are deeply embedded in Islamic teachings and serve as guiding norms for individual and communal life. These values function not only as personal virtues but also as social and civic imperatives that regulate public life and collective responsibility (Musadad, 2025 ; Irawan et al., 2024).

Character education grounded in Islamic teachings offers a comprehensive moral framework that integrates personal morality with public responsibility. Islam conceptualizes human beings as moral agents and vicegerents (*khalifah*) entrusted with maintaining justice, harmony, and social welfare (Arif, 2024). Within this worldview, ethical behavior and responsible citizenship are not merely social expectations but religious obligations. Accordingly, character education becomes a transformative process that cultivates morally conscious individuals who are socially engaged and committed to the common good (Prabowo, 2025).

In the context of citizenship, Islamic character education emphasizes adherence to ethical norms, respect for social diversity, commitment to justice,

and active participation in societal development. These principles closely correspond with contemporary conceptions of ethical and responsible citizenship, which stress accountability, respect for human dignity, and contribution to societal well-being. By internalizing Islamic moral values, individuals are expected to demonstrate ethical decision-making, civic engagement, and social responsibility in both local and global contexts (Izadi & Hanif, 2025; Baidi, 2021).

Despite the growing body of literature on character education and Islamic education, existing studies tend to focus either on general moral development or on normative religious values without sufficiently examining how Islamic character education systematically contributes to the formation of ethical and responsible citizenship. Moreover, empirical and conceptual analyses that explicitly position Islamic character education as a foundational framework for civic responsibility in contemporary pluralistic societies remain limited. This gap indicates the need for a focused examination of character education from an Islamic perspective as a coherent moral foundation for ethical and responsible citizenship. Addressing this gap is both theoretically and practically significant, as it offers a value-based and spiritually grounded alternative that complements existing character education models while promoting social harmony, moral integrity, and responsible citizenship without undermining universal human values or religious identity (Badri, 2020; Maarif, 2024).

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative library research approach to analyze and synthesize concepts, theories, and scholarly findings related to Islamic character education as a foundation for ethical and responsible citizenship. This method was selected because the study is conceptual and normative in nature, focusing on critical interpretation of academic literature rather than empirical data collection through field research. The data sources consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles indexed in SINTA and Scopus published between 2020 and 2026. SINTA-indexed journals were selected to represent nationally recognized scholarly works relevant to Islamic education within Muslim-majority socio-cultural contexts, while Scopus-indexed journals were used to strengthen international perspectives and ensure alignment with global academic discourse.

The inclusion criteria comprised articles focusing on Islamic education, character or moral education, and citizenship or civic responsibility, whereas non-peer-reviewed publications, irrelevant studies, and duplicated articles were excluded. Data collection was conducted through systematic literature

searches using keywords such as *Islamic character education*, *moral education*, and *ethical citizenship*. The selected literature was analyzed using thematic content analysis, involving data reduction, thematic categorization, and interpretative synthesis. This process enabled a comprehensive understanding of how Islamic character education contributes to the formation of ethical and responsible citizenship, while enhancing the academic validity and relevance of the study.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Islamic Character Education as a Value-Based Moral Framework

Islamic character education is fundamentally grounded in a value-based moral framework that integrates spiritual, ethical, and social dimensions of human development. Unlike value-neutral educational approaches, Islamic education explicitly emphasizes moral formation (*tarbiyah akhlaqiyyah*) as an inseparable component of intellectual growth. Core Islamic values such as faith (*iman*), knowledge (*ilm*), and righteous action (*amal salih*) function as interconnected pillars that shape individual character and guide ethical behavior in both private and public spheres. Through this integrative framework, education is not merely aimed at producing knowledgeable individuals, but morally responsible persons (Jelita, 2025; Maarif & Rofiq, 2023).

From an Islamic perspective, moral values are derived from divine sources and are internalized through continuous educational processes that involve cognition, emotion, and action. Ethical principles such as justice (*adl*), honesty (*sidq*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), and compassion (*rahmah*) are cultivated not only as personal virtues but also as social obligations (Berkowitz, 2022). These values form a coherent moral system that regulates human conduct and encourages accountability toward God, society, and the environment. As a result, Islamic character education provides a stable moral compass amid contemporary ethical challenges (Arifin & Anwar, 2024). Before illustrating the conceptual structure of Islamic character education, it is important to understand that its effectiveness lies in the integration of spiritual foundations, moral values, and social responsibility. This integration enables learners to translate internal moral awareness into concrete ethical actions within society.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework of Islamic Character Education

The diagram above illustrates that Islamic character education operates through a dynamic relationship between spiritual foundations (*iman*), ethical knowledge (*'ilm*), and practical moral action (*'amal*). These three components interact continuously to shape individual character (*akhlaq*), which subsequently manifests in ethical behavior and social responsibility (Rahman & Yusoff, 2025). After internalization, moral values are expressed through attitudes and actions that contribute to social harmony, justice, and responsible civic engagement. Thus, Islamic character education functions as a holistic moral framework rather than a fragmented instructional model (Birhan, 2021).

### Islamic Character Education and the Formation of Ethical and Responsible Citizenship

Islamic character education plays a crucial role in shaping ethical and responsible citizenship by positioning moral values as the foundational basis of civic behavior. From an Islamic perspective, individuals are viewed not merely as legal subjects of the state but as moral and social agents who bear both spiritual and civic responsibilities (Huda et al., 2021). The concept of human beings as *khalifah* (vicegerents) underscores that individuals are entrusted with the responsibility to uphold justice, maintain social order, and contribute to collective well-being within society and the state (Chairunnisa, 2022). His moral ontology differentiates Islamic character education from many international civic education models that primarily emphasize legal compliance, political participation, or democratic procedures.

Ethical citizenship within the framework of Islamic character education is characterized by the integration of moral awareness, adherence to just social norms and laws, and active participation in public life. Values such as honesty, trustworthiness, responsibility, tolerance, and social concern are not treated

as abstract norms but are internalized as guiding principles for concrete behavior (Das, 2022 ; Kistoro & Latipah, 2022). In contrast, much of the international literature on character and citizenship education particularly within secular frameworks tends to conceptualize ethics as socially constructed or value-neutral, often detached from transcendent moral accountability. Islamic character education, therefore, offers a distinctive contribution by grounding civic responsibility in spiritual commitment and moral obligation, thereby reinforcing ethical consistency in both private and public spheres. To clarify the relationship between Islamic character education and the formation of ethical and responsible citizenship, a concise conceptual framework is presented below.

**Table 1.** Conceptual Framework of Islamic Character Education and Ethical Citizenship

Conceptual Stage	Core Components	Meaning for Citizenship
Islamic Moral Values	Faith, justice, trustworthiness, honesty	Ethical and spiritual foundation of civic behavior
Character Internalization	Moral and ethical awareness	Formation of individual attitudes and value orientation
Social Behavior	Responsibility, tolerance, law-abiding conduct	Manifestation of values in social life
Ethical Citizenship	Active participation and social contribution	Moral enactment of citizenship roles

Source: Data Processed

Table 1 demonstrates that Islamic moral values form the foundational basis of character development, which is internalized as moral awareness and subsequently expressed through responsible social behavior. This process culminates in ethical and responsible citizenship, where individuals not only comply with legal norms but also actively contribute to social harmony, justice, and the common good. This integrated framework highlights that Islamic character education provides a holistic, value-based approach to citizenship formation that extends beyond procedural and legalistic models commonly emphasized in international literature (Amri, 2020).

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Islamic character education provides a comprehensive and value-based moral framework that integrates spiritual foundations, ethical understanding, and practical behavior. By emphasizing the interrelated principles of faith (*iman*), knowledge (*ilm*), and righteous

action (*'amal salih*), Islamic character education goes beyond cognitive development and places moral formation at the core of the educational process. This integrative approach enables individuals to internalize ethical values and translate them into consistent personal character (*akhlak*), offering a stable moral compass in addressing contemporary ethical and social challenges.

Furthermore, Islamic character education plays a strategic role in shaping ethical and responsible citizenship by positioning moral responsibility as both a civic and spiritual obligation. The internalization of Islamic moral values such as justice, honesty, trustworthiness, tolerance, and social responsibility fosters citizens who are not only law-abiding but also morally conscious and socially engaged. From this perspective, citizenship is understood not merely as legal status or political participation, but as an ethical commitment to social harmony, justice, and the common good within pluralistic societies.

Finally, the use of a qualitative library research approach drawing on reputable SINTA- and Scopus-indexed journals strengthens the academic validity and contextual relevance of this study. Future research is recommended to extend this conceptual analysis through empirical investigations, such as case studies or mixed-methods research, to examine the implementation and impact of Islamic character education in diverse educational and socio-cultural settings. Such studies would contribute to a deeper understanding of its practical effectiveness in fostering ethical and responsible citizenship in both national and global contexts.

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