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Navigating Moral for Alpha Generation: Strategies of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Shaping Social Character

Try Riduwan Santoso, Septiani Aryanti, Resmiati, Jamaludin
[1]Institut Agama Islam Latifah Mubarokiyah Tasikmalaya, Indonesia

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Corresponding Author:
Try Riduwan Santoso,
Institut Agama Islam Latifah Mubarokiyah Tasikmalaya, Indonesia
tryriduwan165@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze effective learning strategies implemented by PAI teachers in shaping students' social character in the digital age. This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive field study design, conducted at SDN 2 Sidaharja. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings of this study reveal the existence of instructional strategies planned by PAI teachers. The implementation of PAI teachers' strategies in shaping students' social character involves learning through the use of digital media and contextual methods, fostering the habit of praying in congregation, setting an example in giving alms, practicing mutual cooperation, and direct instruction on etiquette and manners. Observations indicate the development of students' attitudes and behaviors, an increase in responsibility, politeness, and social awareness among students. Students demonstrated polite behavior toward teachers and peers, were active participants in school social activities, and exhibited sensitivity toward the environment. The PAI teachers' strategy of using contextual methods proved effective in instruction because it successfully integrated moral values into students' daily lives in a holistic manner and remained relevant to the challenges of the digital age. This research limits how teacher strategy to build student character, however it needs to study how learning media and method has strongly influence to reach learning purpose.

INTRODUCTION

The digital age has fundamentally transformed the landscape of adolescents' social interactions, with the majority of Indonesian adolescents now being active social media users. Social media brings both positive and negative impacts, particularly for adolescents who are still at an age where they struggle to control their emotions. Adolescents' use of social media poses significant challenges to the development of social character, such as an increase in cyberbullying incidents and a shift in values. For example, a 2025 report by the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) highlights issues of abnormal behavior among adolescents, triggered by unhealthy social media consumption and severely limited supervision (Fristin Intan Sulistyowati, 2025). Therefore, the current social context demands serious attention to how moral values are transmitted amid the dominance of digital technology.

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The digital age makes it easy for the general public to be influenced in various aspects of behavior, attitude, and speech. Social media influences the way people think, behave, and interact, and the world of education is no exception. Amid rapid technological advancements, character education and religious morality face significant challenges, particularly in reinforcing values of individual and social piety among the younger generation (Restalia & Khasanah, 2024; Muttaqin, 2022; Samad et al., 2019).

A number of studies have examined the use of technology in Islamic Education (PAI), character education, the cultivation of moral values, and the role of teachers in addressing digital challenges (Vale & Barbosa, 2023; Vallo Hult et al., 2025; Klootwijk et al., 2025; Mintasih et al., 2024; Susanti et al., 2024). However, these studies tend to address these aspects separately. There remains a need for research that provides an integrative explanation of how PAI teachers' strategies are planned, implemented, and evaluated in shaping the social character of Alpha Generation elementary school students. This gap constitutes the scope of this study. Thus, this study does not merely question whether PAI instruction can shape students' character but further analyzes how these strategies function through planning, implementation, habit formation, modeling, the use of digital media, and the connection between educational experiences at school and the family environment.

Traditionally, character development has relied on direct interaction and setting a good example a method that must now adapt to the virtual environment (Salam El-Dakhs, 2023). Religious education teachers play a crucial role not only as instructors but also as facilitators and mentors in instilling inclusive and tolerant religious values in the digital age (Rohman, 2018; Haris et al., 2024; Nasution et al., 2025). The required strategies must go beyond merely delivering content; they must also include a personalized approach, the use of educational digital media, the integration of exemplary behavior into daily school life, and the instillation of moral values in social interactions. Nevertheless, challenges such as the digital divide and the authenticity of content remain obstacles in Islamic education. In conclusion, the role of PAI teachers in adapting moral education teaching methods in a digital environment is a relevant field of study that requires further exploration.

This study aims to analyze how PAI teachers integrate digital learning strategies, contextual approaches, exemplary behavior, habit formation, and social practices into the process of shaping students' social ethics within a digital environment. The rationale is that an integrated approach (combining digital and conventional methods) enables teachers to directly address specific ethical dilemmas arising from online interactions, such as students being exposed to content that tends to be negative, psychologically disruptive, and neglects the moral aspects of children's development. This impacts the process of internalizing social character education within the curriculum taught by teachers, which ultimately clashes with the realities of students' lives outside of school. Thus, this study argues that the effectiveness of social character development in the digital age heavily depends on Islamic Education teachers' ability to employ strategies in the teaching-learning process and to analyze how these strategies influence students' social character.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive field study conducted at State Elementary School 2 Sidaharja, Pamarican Subdistrict, Ciamis Regency, West Java Province. This school was selected because it has implemented PAI teachers' strategies to foster students' social ethics in the digital age, integrated into learning activities through

the use of an integrated method combining digital and contextual approaches. The contextual approach refers to exemplary behavior (*uswah al-hasanah*), habituation, counseling, Islamic storytelling, a personal-dialogic approach, and the reinforcement of values through religious and social school activities. SDN 2 Sidaharja serves as a representative of elementary schools that actively instill religious character values, social awareness, and love for the environment through a sustainable habituation approach.

Field studies were used to gather contextual data regarding learning practices, habituation, school culture, and the strategies employed by the Islamic Education (PAI) teachers at SDN 2 Sidaharja in shaping students' social character. The data in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through direct interaction with key informants involved in implementing the PAI teachers' strategies for shaping students' social character. Meanwhile, secondary data were sourced from lesson plans, documentation of habit-forming programs and social activities, as well as scientific literature relevant to the education aimed at fostering students' social character (Spencer et al., 2014). Interview data, documentation and observation notes were used solely for research purposes and were not disseminated beyond academic objectives. The validity of the data was strengthened through triangulation of sources and techniques by comparing information from interviews with observations and documentation, as well as by comparing the perspectives of the principal, Islamic Education (PAI) teachers, classroom teachers, students, and parents. This process was conducted to ensure that the findings did not rely solely on a single source of information.

The data collection process in this study was conducted through several complementary stages. The first stage was a desk review, which involved examining documents and archives related to Islamic Education teachers' strategies for fostering students' social character, including instructional planning documents such as teaching modules, as well as other relevant supporting documents. The second stage was non-participant observation, conducted to directly observe the implementation of PAI teachers' strategies in fostering students' social character within the school environment, such as learning activities, habit-forming exercises, and social activities that form part of the implementation of these strategies. The third stage consists of semi-structured interviews with key informants and supporting informants to gather data on the planning process, implementation, and perceptions regarding the impact of PAI teachers' strategies on the development of students' social character (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Sugiyono, 2019). These three data collection techniques were used in an integrated manner to obtain comprehensive and in-depth data in accordance with the research objectives.

The research data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis model (2018) which comprises four main stages: data collection, data reduction, data *display*, and drawing conclusions or verification. The data reduction stage involved selecting, focusing, and simplifying data from interviews, observations, and documentation relevant to the implementation of PAI teachers' strategies in shaping students' social character. The next stage was data presentation, which involved organizing the reduced data into descriptive narratives and thematic categorizations to facilitate understanding of patterns and relationships among the data. The final stage is drawing conclusions and verification, which is carried out through continuous data interpretation to gain a deep understanding of the process of revitalizing students' social moral values through the implementation of PAI teachers' strategies in shaping students' social moral character in this digital age. Data analysis was conducted continuously from the data collection process until valid and consistent findings were obtained.

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles governing qualitative research. Prior to data collection, all participants were provided with comprehensive information regarding the purpose, procedures, and potential benefits of the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their involvement was entirely voluntary. Participants were assured of their right to decline to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any stage without any adverse consequences. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained throughout the research process to protect participants' identities and personal information. All data obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation were handled responsibly and used exclusively for academic and research purposes. Furthermore, the researcher upheld the principles of research integrity, transparency, and objectivity throughout data collection, analysis, and reporting. The findings were presented accurately and honestly, without distortion or misrepresentation of participants' perspectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Planning Learning Strategies in the Form of Teaching Modules

In this study, PAI teachers' strategies are understood as a systematic process that does not stop at the selection of learning methods but encompasses planning, implementation, and evaluation. Fred R. David's strategic management perspective was used as the primary framework for understanding these three dimensions (F. David & David, 2016; F. R. David, 2011; F. R. David et al., 2020). During the planning stage, teachers determine the objectives, content, methods, media, and learning activities aimed at fostering social character. During the implementation stage, strategies are translated into teaching practices, habit formation, modeling, and social activities. Meanwhile, the evaluation stage is used to assess students' responses and behavioral changes, as well as to determine whether to continue or adjust the strategies (Do et al., 2023).

This strategic framework is integrated with theories of contextual learning, social learning, behavioral conditioning, and character education to explain how planned strategies can be translated into students' learning experiences and social behavior. Thus, strategic management theory serves as the macro framework, while pedagogical theories explain the micro mechanisms of character formation.

The research results indicate the existence of instructional strategy planning in the form of teaching modules to implement PAI teachers' strategies in shaping students' social character at SD Negeri 2 Sidaharja. Based on the results of an interview with the school principal, the existence of instructional planning in this case, teaching modules is crucial for a teacher to achieve learning objectives. The principal of SD Negeri 2 Sidaharja, Mrs. Septiani Aryanti (37) said:

> "Teaching modules are crucial for instructional planning because they serve as a structured guide for teachers, facilitate students' independent learning, enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the teaching-and-learning process, and tailor instruction to students' needs, interests, and learning styles in order to achieve learning objectives." (Interview, December 9, 2025)"

This statement indicates that a teacher is required to prepare a plan for conducting learning activities in this case, a teaching module as this serves as the primary guideline to ensure that the teaching-learning process is focused, systematic, effective, and efficient; meets curriculum requirements; saves time and effort; facilitates student assessment; and accommodates the diverse needs of students so that educational goals are optimally achieved. In this study, teaching modules serve not only as administrative documents but also as strategic planning instruments that translate character-building objectives into

concrete learning experiences. When values such as responsibility, empathy, cooperation, and good manners are incorporated into learning objectives, activities, and assessments, teachers have guidelines to ensure that learning does not stop at the mastery of religious knowledge. From a strategic management perspective, this stage constitutes the strategy formulation process that is, translating objectives into a series of planned actions.

The findings indicate that the quality of a strategy is determined not only by the methods used in the classroom but also by the extent to which the goals of character education have been incorporated from the planning stage onward. Thus, the teaching module serves as a bridge between the normative goals of character education and pedagogical practices in the classroom (Fathony & Sulendra, 2026; Handoko & Sakti, 2023; Berkowitz & Bier, 2007). Another component is the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) method, which connects Islamic teachings to the students' social context. The main strategies include Problem-Based Learning (PBL), in which students work in groups to solve social problems in their immediate surroundings; Role-Playing (Simulation), in which students act out specific social situations to experience them firsthand and practice proper etiquette and moral conduct; and Service Learning (Social Projects), which involves direct, tangible actions such as community service or collaborative efforts to clean up the environment. In this study, CTL serves to bridge the gap between normative knowledge of ethics and students' social experiences. Values such as courtesy, responsibility, empathy, and cooperation are not merely explained as concepts but are linked to situations students encounter in their daily lives. Thus, ethics education moves from knowing the good toward the experience of feeling and doing the good.

Meanwhile, PBL reinforces this process by presenting social problems that allow students to discuss an issue, consider alternative actions, and collaborate to find a solution. In the context of ethics education, this process is crucial because students do not merely receive moral rules from teachers but learn to consider the social consequences of their actions. These findings demonstrate that CTL and PBL have complementary functions. CTL provides a real-life context as a learning space, while PBL provides a problem-based learning mechanism. The combination of the two allows moral values to be translated into concrete social decisions and actions.

Teaching Strategies Using Contextual Methods

The use of digital media in this study was not limited to displaying presentation slides. Based on observations and interviews, PAI teachers used audiovisual media such as videos and visual materials to present examples of social behavior, which were then discussed with students. These media served as learning stimuli, not as the learning objectives themselves. After viewing the digital materials, students were guided to identify behaviors that were consistent or inconsistent with Islamic moral values and to relate them to their own experiences.

A contextual approach is applied by linking moral values to situations relevant to students' daily lives. For example, lessons on etiquette go beyond mere definitions; they are practiced through activities such as asking for permission, greeting teachers, and using words like "please," "sorry," "excuse me," and "thank you." Similarly, the value of cooperation is applied through collaborative activities and group discussions. Thus, the context in this study is not merely the use of technology, but the process of integrating religious values into students' concrete social experiences.

The research results indicate the implementation of teaching strategies using an integrated approach combining digital and contextual methods in direct classroom

instruction and within the school environment at SD Negeri 2 Sidaharja. The implementation of these strategies reflects a PAI teacher's efforts to shape students' social character through routine and integrated daily school activities, involving both students and teachers as integral parts of the social character education process.



Figure 1. Learning process using digital media

The use of digital media in learning demonstrates more active student engagement during the learning process. This is evident from students' attention to audiovisual materials, the emergence of questions and responses to video content, participation in group discussions, and students' ability to connect the moral messages presented with their own social experiences. These findings are understood as qualitative indicators of learning engagement, not as quantitative measures of increased motivation. This aligns with the explanation provided by PAI teacher, Pawit (43) who stated:

> "The use of digital media in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) to teach the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) exemplary social ethics has proven effective in enhancing students' understanding, motivation, and internalization of character values. These media make it easier to visualize abstract stories into content that is more concrete and engaging for the digital generation. Videos and interactive applications make it easier for students to emulate the Prophet's social moral behaviours in their daily lives" (Interview, December 11, 2025).

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) in Islamic Education is a learning model that uses real-world problems related to social behavior as a stimulus for learning (Almazroui, 2023). This model encourages students to think critically, actively, and creatively, and fosters social solidarity through group discussions. In social ethics lessons, PBL helps shape religious character because students do not merely memorize theory but solve confrontational moral problems (AlHaqwi et al., 2015). Theories of contextual learning, social learning, habituation, and character education are used to explain the mechanisms of behavior formation at each stage. This is reinforced by Pawit (43), who stated:

> "The use of the Problem-Based Learning model in instruction can enhance solidarity because group discussions foster empathy and are enjoyable, as they create a more active learning environment compared to conventional lecture methods." (Interview, December 11, 2025).

Religious practices, including performing *Dhuha* and *Dhuhr* prayers in congregation, serve as one of the strategies employed by Islamic Education teachers to shape students'

social character. These practices instill values such as togetherness, discipline, responsibility, tolerance, empathy, and cooperation; transform theoretical values into tangible behavior through regular, harmonious interactions; and foster a more positive and caring school environment. In line with these activities, Principal Septiani Aryanti (37) explained that the practice of congregational prayer takes place inside the classroom because the school does not yet have a prayer room or mosque, and is supervised by Islamic Education teachers (Interview, December 9, 2025).

Setting an example in giving alms is a crucial tool in shaping students' character and social intelligence. The habit of giving modeled by teachers or parents leaves a lasting impression on students, so that they view wealth not merely as personal property but as a means to help others. Through charity, students learn to empathize with others' hardships. This erodes selfish tendencies and cultivates sensitivity toward their surroundings. This aligns with the explanation provided by classroom teacher, Mela Pebrianti (39), who noted that the school implements a "Friday *Infaq*" program, and the funds collected are distributed as charity to students in need (Interview, December 13, 2025). The PAI (Islamic Education) teachers' strategy implemented at the school involves direct instruction on social ethics and etiquette, focusing on mastering actual behavior (psychomotor aspects) through habit formation and setting a good example, rather than merely cognitive theory.

Teachers set a direct example by participating in cleanup activities. Direct instruction on social ethics through cooperative work at school is an effective participatory educational method because it involves students as the primary actors in real-world actions, rather than merely as recipients of theory in the classroom. The goal is to foster positive social relationships, cultivate tolerance, and build a harmonious learning environment among the school community. This aligns with the explanation provided by a teacher, Yani (36), who noted that cooperative efforts are carried out routinely every day such as maintaining classroom cleanliness, cleaning the school grounds, and engaging in social activities in the neighborhood surrounding the school (Interview, December 13, 2025).

Hands-on learning (learning by doing) about social ethics, particularly etiquette and manners, is an effective method for instilling positive character and a sense of respect within the school environment (Astriana & Hayati, 2023). This approach focuses on developing habitual behaviors, rather than mere theory, so that students become accustomed to respecting one another as well as their teachers. Hands-on learning is carried out by having students role-play in specific scenarios, such as walking through a group of teachers who are chatting. Razita (9) mentioned that the manners she learned at school include shaking hands with teachers, saying "excuse me" when passing by, asking "can I borrow this?" or "please" when wanting to borrow a friend's belongings, and saying "thank you" when something is given to her. The teacher said, "We must be kind to everyone" (Interview, December 15, 2025).

An evaluation of Islamic Education teachers' strategies shows that the success of these strategies is not primarily evident in students' ability to explain moral concepts, but rather in the emergence of observable behaviors in social interactions. Based on observations and interviews, these indicators include the use of polite language, the ability to respect peers' opinions, engagement in cooperative work, concern for the environment, and the habit of practicing religious rituals more independently.

The evaluation also showed that behavioral changes did not occur uniformly among all students. There were still students who exhibited individualistic tendencies, showed little concern for their peers, or used impolite language. These findings are important

because they indicate that character-building strategies are an ongoing process and cannot be viewed as a change that is complete after a single series of lessons. From a strategic management perspective, these evaluation results serve as a basis for teachers to maintain relevant strategies while making adjustments to aspects that are not yet optimal. Thus, evaluation is not merely a measurement of outcomes but part of a strategic cycle that enables continuous improvement.

The Impact of Islamic Education Teachers' Teaching Strategies in the Digital Age

Teaching strategies are one of the keys to achieving optimal learning outcomes. Teachers must not only possess strong teaching skills but also employ effective and efficient strategies for delivering content. The impact of PAI teachers' strategies is best understood as a process of internalizing values rather than merely a change in knowledge. When students begin to use polite expressions spontaneously, respect their peers' opinions, help classmates who are struggling, and engage in social activities, the values that were previously conveyed normatively begin to manifest in their actions (Komara & Sukandar, 2025).

Lickona (2013) explains that this process illustrates the relationship between *moral knowing*, *moral feeling*, and *moral action*. Learning provides knowledge about proper behavior; social experiences help build moral awareness and feelings; and repeated practice allows those values to manifest in action. In the digital context, this strategy is crucial because students are exposed to various forms of information and behavioral models that do not entirely align with Islamic educational values. Therefore, character development cannot be achieved solely through restricting information; rather, it is necessary to build students' ability to recognize, evaluate, and respond to behavior ethically. Thus, Islamic Education (PAI) teachers serve not only as conveyors of norms but also as moral guides who help students develop the ability to discern appropriate behavior in an increasingly digitized social environment.

The research findings indicate changes in students' attitudes and behaviors after the Islamic Education (PAI) teacher implemented her strategy to foster students' social character in the digital age at Sidaharja Public Elementary School 2. These changes were identified through interviews with the teacher and students' parents, who observed the students' behavioral development both at school and at home.

Based on an interview with Pawit (43), the teacher who implemented the strategy to foster students' social character, it was explained that after the strategy was implemented, students demonstrated more positive attitudes in their daily school activities (Interview, December 18, 2025). These changes were reflected in increased responsibility, politeness, and social awareness among the students. Students demonstrated polite behavior toward teachers and peers, participated actively in school social activities, and showed sensitivity toward the environment. Additionally, the teacher observed an increase in mutual respect between students and teachers as well as among peers, along with more active student engagement in various school activities.

These findings align with the results of interviews with classroom teachers. Mela Pebrianti (39) explained that there have been changes in students' behavior during classroom learning, particularly in group discussion activities (Interview, December 19, 2025). Students demonstrated respect for their peers' opinions even when they differed refrained from interrupting others, and provided equal opportunities to speak; they offered constructive contributions rather than merely criticizing; they managed their emotions, did not get angry when their ideas were rejected, but remained calm and

thought logically; and they helped peers who were struggling to understand the topic being studied.

A similar point was made by Yani (36), who explained that following the implementation of strategies by the PAI teacher, the children demonstrated behavioral changes in their manners and etiquette within the school environment (Interview, December 19, 2025). Students demonstrated good manners and communication; they always greeted teachers and classmates with a smile, a friendly greeting, and a salutation, and naturally used the words "please," "sorry," "excuse me," and "thank you" when asking for help or interacting with others. They also show respect toward teachers by listening when teachers speak, not interrupting, and behaving humbly. Toward their peers, they also respect one another, do not discriminate, and are willing to help.

Results from interviews with students' parents also indicate the impact of the strategies implemented by the Islamic Education (PAI) teacher. MS (34) explained that there have been changes in the child's habits at home, particularly in religious aspects (Interview, December 20, 2025). The child demonstrates greater awareness in performing prayers when prayer time arrives; without needing to be reminded, the child hurries to perform congregational prayers at the mosque. Additionally, the child has become accustomed to greeting others upon entering or leaving the house, kissing hands, and always speaking politely without raising their voice or shouting.

Overall, the results of interviews with teachers and parents of students indicate changes in the students' attitudes and behaviors, encompassing aspects of social ethics such as responsibility, politeness, and social awareness. Students demonstrate polite behavior toward teachers and peers, actively participate in school social activities, and show sensitivity toward their environment. These changes are evident both in the school setting and within the family environment, as part of the process of fostering social ethics in the digital age through the implementation of strategies carried out by the Islamic Education (PAI) teacher at SDN 2 Sidaharja..

Indarti, *et al*., (2023) explain that one of the requirements for teachers in carrying out the learning process is to create instructional materials. A teaching module is one such instructional material that a teacher must develop as a reference or guideline for conducting teaching and learning activities. A teaching module is a document containing the objectives, steps, and learning media, as well as the assessments required for a single unit or topic. Teaching modules in the Merdeka Curriculum are similar to the Lesson Implementation Plans (RPP) of the 2013 Curriculum, but they include learning materials, student activity sheets, and assessments. To achieve learning outcomes and the Pancasila Student Profile (P3), educators use teaching modules.

The strategies used by PAI teachers to shape students' social character in this digital era can be outlined in the teaching modules, particularly regarding the methods employed. Teachers at SDN 2 Sidaharja use an integrated approach that combines digital and contextual methods. This aligns with the analysis by Muslimah et al., (2022) which emphasizes that context-based social ethics instruction helps educators connect social ethics learning materials with the real-life contexts of students. Social ethics education, as attitude-based learning, will be more empirical and relevant to students' lives, thereby effectively addressing the affective aspect of social ethics education. Through contextual learning, social ethics teaching methods become more varied, thereby accommodating students' learning styles (Cushman et al., 2017; Elias et al., 2008). When students' learning styles are well accommodated, learning becomes more effective and efficient.

The state of students' social character at SDN 2 Sidaharja is generally quite good, though it is not yet consistent across all aspects. Some students demonstrate polite

behavior toward teachers and peers, participate actively in school social activities, and show sensitivity toward the environment. However, issues have been identified, including individualistic attitudes, a lack of concern for peers, and the use of impolite language among certain groups. This situation aligns with Zakiyah Darajat's view that character is the result of repeated and consistent habits and behaviors, not merely the outcome of theoretical instruction (Waston & Rois, 2017). This means that even though students have received character education through Islamic Education (PAI) lessons, without structured practice and tangible role modeling, their character will not develop fully. In this context, students' social character is influenced by three main components: knowledge (cognitive), acceptance of values (affective), and actual behavior (psychomotor). These three do not always go hand in hand (Lickona, 2013a).

Islamic Education teachers play a central role in shaping students' social character. Their strategies align with the concept of moral education in Islam, as explained by Al-Ghazali, who states that a true educator is someone who is able to refine and guide their students' souls toward praiseworthy character, not merely to transfer knowledge. PAI teachers at this school not only teach religious concepts textually but also serve as spiritual and social mentors (Mardhiah & Julike, 2022). For example, when teachers incorporate the value of responsibility into discussions of zakat, this reflects a contextual learning strategy, which, according to Vygotsky's theory, is crucial in shaping students' social understanding through interaction and a supportive environment (Marginson & Dang, 2017; Siregar et al., 2024). Teachers also use discussion methods and exemplary stories as tools to foster students' affective engagement. Teachers' exemplary behavior has also been proven to be a key strength in character-building strategies. This aligns with Bandura's social learning theory, which emphasizes that individuals learn through observation and imitation of the models around them (Rahayu et al., 2023). In this context, Islamic Education (PAI) teachers serve as role models for students in terms of speech, attitude, and decision-making within a social context. As explained by Al-Ghazali exemplary behavior (*Uswah Hasanah*) is the cornerstone of character education, because moral values cannot be taught through theory alone but must be demonstrated through concrete examples set by educators (teachers, parents, leaders) who directly model good behavior (Arifin, 2018; Hidayat et al., 2025). Habit-forming activities such as congregational prayer, group work, and mutual cooperation are also an important part of strategies for fostering social character. From an educational psychology perspective, these habits constitute a form of conditioning the shaping of behavior through consistent repetition as articulated by B.F. Skinner in behaviorist theory (Vargas, 2017). Furthermore, the personalized approach used by Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers toward students with social issues reflects the humanistic approach in education.

The use of contextual teaching methods by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers has a significant impact on the development of social character among students at SDN 2 Sidaharja in the digital age. The contextual method emphasizes the connection between learning materials and the realities of students' daily lives, including social interactions in digital environments. Through this approach, PAI teachers not only transfer religious knowledge but also guide students to internalize moral values such as responsibility, politeness, and social concern. Johnson, (2002) asserts that contextual learning encourages students to discover the meaning of the material through real-life experiences, making it easier to apply the taught moral values in social life. In line with this, some research of contextual PAI learning strategies are capable of integrating cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, which are crucial in shaping students'

social ethics amid the challenges of a digital culture that tends toward individualism (Hakim et al., 2023; N. Nasution et al., 2026)

In the digital age, the development of students' social character through contextual strategies also serves as a moral filter against the negative influences of information technology. Islamic Education teachers can link moral education content to real-world phenomena such as communication ethics on social media, digital literacy culture, and attitudes of mutual respect in virtual spaces. Lickona (2013) emphasizes that effective character education must encompass moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action, all of which can be facilitated through contextual learning. Furthermore, Hidayatullah & Rohmadi, (2010) explains that ethics education will be more effective if delivered through role modeling and habits relevant to students' life contexts. This dynamic indicates a tendency toward the synchronization of values between formal and domestic education, reflected in the emergence of children's self-awareness regarding social ethics. This aligns with studies indicating that positive habit formation in elementary school creates space for students' behavioral transformation when supported by a consistent environment (Zheng & Kim, 2025). Thus, contextual-based PAI teaching strategies in the digital age not only strengthen students' religious understanding but also foster adaptive, critical social ethics grounded in Islamic values.

The findings of this study do not indicate that digital technology directly shapes or changes students' character. Rather, technology is positioned as both an environment and a medium that requires moral navigation, while the process of character formation continues through pedagogical interactions, modeling, habit formation, reflection, and social experiences facilitated by teachers.

CONCLUSION

The strategies employed by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers using contextual methods are not only effective in instilling social moral values in a conventional manner but are also capable of shaping students' ethical awareness as they interact in their daily lives. The results of this study also reveal a particularly interesting new finding: that the strategies employed by PAI teachers using contextual methods not only impact the formation of students' social moral character at school but also extend tangibly into the home environment. Students demonstrate consistent behaviors such as politeness, responsibility, and digital media ethics because the moral values they learn are directly linked to their daily experiences, both in family interactions and in the use of digital technology. These findings confirm that contextual PAI instruction is capable of bridging the gap between formal education at school and informal education at home in the digital age. The contextual approach enables students not only to understand moral concepts cognitively but also to reflect them in social behavior across different environments. At school, students show greater respect for teachers and peers, while at home they are more responsive to family values and social responsibilities. This demonstrates that the success of fostering social ethics is significantly influenced by the alignment of teaching methods with students' lived realities amid the tide of digitalization.

Based on these conclusions, it is recommended that PAI teachers continue to develop contextual learning strategies that involve collaboration between schools and parents. Schools need to foster synergy in character education through intensive communication with families and the positive, purposeful use of digital media. Furthermore, future research should focus on strengthening the role of the home environment in supporting PAI learning strategies so that the development of students' social character in the digital age can proceed in a sustainable and comprehensive manner.

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