

Strengthening children's moral development through home-based islamic religious education: A literature review on the role of muslim familie

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ABSTRACT

Children's character development is a fundamental foundation for forming a generation that is faithful and possesses noble morals. This study aims to analyze the role of Muslim families in shaping children's moral character through Islamic Religious Education implemented in the home environment. Employing a library research method, this study systematically reviews books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and other relevant scholarly sources that discuss family-based Islamic education and children's moral development. The findings reveal that the family functions as the primary educational environment and serves as the first school for children. Effective moral formation is achieved through early internalization of Islamic values, particularly through parental role modeling, religious habituation, and value-based communication grounded in Islamic teachings. This study contributes to the literature by highlighting the strategic role of consistent and affectionate family-based Islamic education in fostering children's noble character, emphasizing the importance of parental involvement in moral and religious education at home.

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Introduction

Islamic education plays a crucial role in shaping children's moral development, particularly within the family as the earliest and most influential educational environment (Rustina, 2020). Previous studies emphasize that children's character formation in Muslim families is cultivated through various practices, including parental role modeling, the habituation of daily prayers, Qur'anic recitation and memorization, and the internalization of the exemplary character of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) (Affandi et al., 2024). These practices position the family as a central agent in transmitting Islamic values and moral conduct from an early age (Fatima, 2024).

Nevertheless, recent literature also highlights persistent challenges that hinder the effectiveness of moral education in the home (Dulyapit & Ulfa, 2025). Parents' increasing work demands, limited quality interaction with children, and the pervasive influence of digital technology have been identified as major factors weakening parental engagement in Islamic moral education (Masturin, 2023). Although several studies report generally positive outcomes of family-based Islamic education, these findings often remain descriptive and fragmented, lacking an integrated analytical framework that explains *how* and *why* specific educational models within Muslim families contribute to children's moral development (Wijaya et al., 2021).

Conceptually, moral education in the family encompasses three interrelated domains: the development of faith and morality, intellectual growth, and personality and social competence (Nur & Syafitri, 2022). In Islamic pedagogy, parents bear a fundamental responsibility for fulfilling children's educational rights, as inadequate moral and religious education may have long-term consequences for children's personal and social development (Alim, 2020). To address this responsibility effectively, appropriate educational methods are required (Khoiri et al., 2024). An-Nahlawi's framework of Islamic educational methods such as dialogue, Qur'anic and Prophetic storytelling, parables, exemplary conduct, habituation, reflection, advice, and motivational reinforcement has been widely recognized as effective in shaping moral character and encouraging adherence to divine guidance (Bucky Wibawa Karya Guna et al., 2024).

Empirical studies further underscore the pivotal role of parents as role models, mentors, and facilitators in children's moral and intellectual growth (Azmi et al., 2024). As first educators, parents are expected not only to support formal schooling but also to provide continuous moral guidance within the home environment (Rodiyah et al., 2023). This expectation is consistent with Indonesian Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, which defines education as a conscious and planned effort to foster learners' spiritual, moral, intellectual, emotional, and practical potential in a holistic manner.

However, recent research indicates a structural imbalance in educational practice in Indonesia, where cognitive achievement often receives greater emphasis than affective and moral development (Husaeni, 2023). This imbalance risks producing academically competent individuals with insufficient moral grounding. Since the family is the primary context in which moral values are first internalized, parental involvement in Islamic education at home becomes increasingly critical (Kusumawati et al., 2023). Studies confirm that values instilled within the family tend to have a more enduring influence on children's character than those acquired in later educational settings (Nilnal et al., 2024).

Furthermore, contemporary studies reveal alarming trends related to moral and religious decline among children and adolescents, particularly in the digital era (Abdillah & Nugraha, 2024). The growing dominance of social media, global cultural influences, and mobile technology has transformed children's lifestyles and learning patterns, often diverting them from religious practices and moral reflection (Husaeni, 2023). National surveys report declining participation among adolescents in congregational prayers and religious study activities, alongside the emergence of symbolic religiosity that is not always accompanied by genuine moral practice (Nilnal et al., 2024). While schools especially through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) are expected to address these challenges, existing studies indicate limitations related to cognitively oriented instruction, insufficient role modeling, and weak contextualization of religious values in students' lived experiences (Ramatni et al., 2025).

Despite the growing body of research on Islamic education, a clear research gap remains. Many recent studies focus either on school-based Islamic education or on isolated aspects of parental roles, without systematically examining home-based Islamic Religious Education as an integrated moral education model within Muslim families, particularly in the context of contemporary digital challenges (Muttaqin, 2023). Moreover, few studies explicitly employ theoretical perspectives that explain the mechanisms of moral transmission within the family (Ma'udah, 2022).

To address this gap, this study adopts Bandura's Social Learning Theory as its analytical framework, emphasizing that children acquire moral behaviors and values through observation, imitation, and modeling. By situating parents as primary moral models and examining how Islamic educational practices within the family interact with external influences such as technology and media, this study offers a more comprehensive understanding of children's moral development. The novelty of this study lies in its integrative analysis of Islamic educational models in the family context through a social learning perspective, providing theoretical and practical insights for strengthening family-based Islamic moral education in the contemporary era.

Method

This study employs a literature review methodology using a library-based research design, which is suitable for examining conceptual, theoretical, and empirical discussions related to children's moral development through Islamic education within the family context (Snyder, 2021). The purpose of this approach is to synthesize existing knowledge, identify dominant themes, and construct a comprehensive understanding of how Islamic educational practices in the family contribute to children's moral formation (Perruso, 2016).

Research Design and Object of Study

The object of this study is scholarly literature that discusses children's moral education, Islamic Religious Education, and the role of Muslim families in the home environment (Ahmad et al., 2022). The review focuses on how moral values are transmitted, internalized, and reinforced through family-based Islamic education, particularly in response to contemporary challenges such as digital media exposure and reduced parental involvement (Sari & Asmendri, 2020).

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through a systematic literature search conducted using both digital and printed sources (Safrudin et al., 2023). Digital literature was accessed via reputable academic databases and platforms, including Google Scholar and institutional repositories, while printed sources were obtained from academic books and reference texts available in university libraries. The types of sources collected comprised peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, e-books, conference proceedings, policy documents, and government publications related to Islamic education and child development (Ramatni et al., 2025). To ensure relevance and quality, the literature search employed specific keywords and combinations, such as *Islamic education*, *family-based education*, *children's moral development*, *parental role in Islam*, and *home-based religious education*. The search was limited to publications that explicitly addressed Islamic educational practices in the family context and their implications for children's moral character.

Source Selection Criteria

The selection of literature followed clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria to enhance transparency and replicability. Sources were included if they:

1. Discussed Islamic Religious Education or moral education within the family setting;
2. Focused on children or adolescents as the primary subjects;
3. Presented theoretical frameworks, empirical findings, or conceptual discussions relevant to moral development; and
4. Were published in reputable academic outlets or official publications.

Sources were excluded if they lacked clear relevance to the research focus, did not address moral or religious education, or were opinion-based without scholarly grounding. Preference was given to recent publications (within the last ten years) to ensure contemporary relevance, while seminal classical works were retained when necessary for theoretical grounding.

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected literature was analyzed using a qualitative content analysis approach. This process involved several systematic stages. First, the selected texts were read thoroughly to identify recurring concepts, themes, and arguments related to Islamic educational practices and moral development. Second, the data were categorized and coded based on key analytical themes, such as parental role modeling, religious habituation, communication patterns, educational methods, and challenges posed by digitalization (Ramatni et al., 2025). Third, the categorized data were interpreted through relevant theoretical perspectives, particularly Social Learning Theory, to explain how moral values are learned through observation, imitation, and interaction within the family. Finally, a comparative analysis was conducted to identify convergences and divergences among scholars' viewpoints, enabling a critical synthesis rather than a mere descriptive summary.

Evaluation and Synthesis

To ensure the credibility of the analysis, the selected sources were continuously evaluated in terms of their methodological rigor, theoretical contribution, and contextual relevance (Panggih Mulyo et al., 2023). The synthesis stage involved integrating findings from multiple sources to formulate

a coherent conceptual framework explaining the mechanisms of family-based Islamic moral education. This process ultimately allowed the researcher to propose informed conclusions and conceptual insights that can be applied in both academic and practical educational contexts.

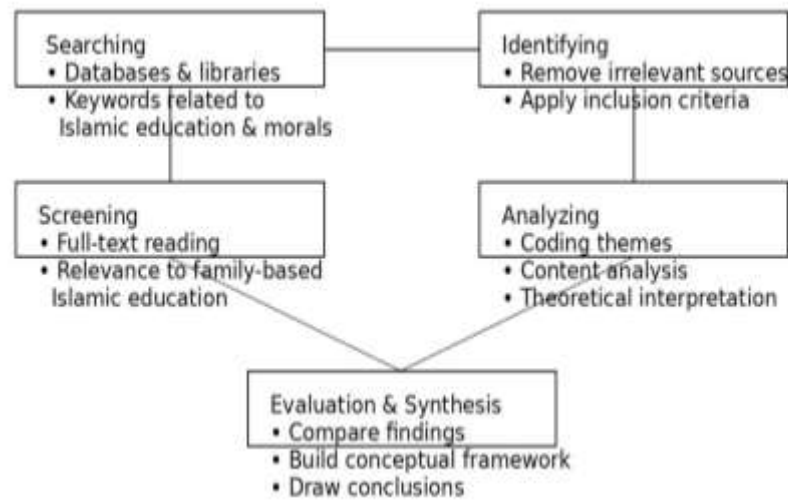


Figure 1. Literature Review Process Flow Diagram

Result

The results of this literature review reveal consistent evidence across multiple studies regarding the central role of Muslim families—particularly parents—in shaping children’s moral character through Islamic Religious Education at home. The findings are organized into key thematic areas to provide a clearer and more systematic presentation of the data. \

Parents as Primary Moral Role Models

The study by Nilnal et al. (2024) strongly emphasizes that parents function as the primary moral role models for children. Within the family environment, children observe, imitate, and internalize behaviors demonstrated by their parents, making parental conduct a decisive factor in moral development (Nilnal et al., 2024). Parents are responsible not only for teaching Islamic values theoretically but also for embodying those values in daily life. This includes safeguarding children’s dignity (hifz al-‘ird), guiding behavior according to Islamic ethics, and cultivating habits that reflect faith-based morality.

Parental efforts identified in the literature include creating a harmonious and affectionate family atmosphere, strengthening children’s religious understanding, managing family time effectively, supervising children’s media consumption and social interactions, and establishing cooperation with schools to ensure consistency between home and formal education. These practices collectively contribute to the formation of children’s noble character (akhlaq karimah).

Limitations and Challenges in Parental Involvement

Despite the acknowledged importance of parental roles, several studies identify notable limitations in parental involvement. Nur and Syafitri (2022) report that many parents are unable to provide consistent attention and full responsibility for their children’s moral education (Nur & Syafitri, 2022). These shortcomings are often linked to socioeconomic pressures, particularly parents’ obligations to earn a livelihood, which reduce the quantity and quality of parent–child interactions. Additionally, Nudin (2020) highlights that limited religious knowledge among parents weakens their confidence and effectiveness in delivering Islamic moral education at home (Nudin, 2020). As a result, moral instruction may become sporadic, symbolic, or delegated entirely to schools, thereby reducing the impact of family-based education. These findings suggest that

parental willingness alone is insufficient without adequate religious literacy and supportive conditions.

Islamic Family Education Strategies

Research by Mala and Hunaida (2023) identifies several effective strategies for implementing Islamic education within the family (Mala & Hunaida, 2023). These include fostering open and positive communication between parents and children, consistently applying Islamic values in everyday activities, wisely utilizing technology as a learning tool rather than a distraction, and ensuring that parents consistently serve as moral exemplars. The findings indicate that when Islamic values are integrated into daily routines such as prayer, respectful communication, honesty, discipline, and empathy children are more likely to internalize these values as part of their identity. Family-based Islamic education is thus not limited to formal instruction but operates continuously through lived experience.

Family as the Foundation of Moral and Social Development

Across the reviewed studies, the family is consistently described as the first and most influential educational environment. Values internalized within the family tend to have a long-lasting effect on children's moral orientation, social behavior, and future contributions to society. Strong Islamic family education not only produces pious individuals but also contributes to the development of a morally grounded community. Well-structured Islamic family education enables children to grow into individuals who are spiritually aware, ethically responsible, and socially constructive. This reinforces the idea that strengthening family-based Islamic education is a strategic investment in both individual character formation and broader societal well-being.

Table 1. Summary of Key Findings from Reviewed Studies

Author(s) & Year	Focus of Study	Key Findings	Identified Challenges
Nilnal et al. (2024)	Parental role in moral education	Parents are primary moral role models; exemplary behavior strongly influences children's morals	Inconsistent parental attention
Nur & Syafitri (2022)	Family responsibility in education	Moral education is a parental obligation and children's right	Economic pressures limit involvement
Nudin (2020)	Religious knowledge of parents	Adequate religious literacy strengthens moral education	Limited parental religious understanding
Mala & Hunaida (2023)	Islamic family education strategies	Effective strategies include communication, habituation, role modeling, and wise technology use	Misuse of technology
Various studies	Family-based Islamic education	Family is the most influential environment for lasting moral formation	Weak coordination with schools

Overall, the results demonstrate that children's moral development through Islamic education is most effective when parents actively engage as role models, educators, and facilitators within the home environment. While families possess strong potential to shape moral character, this potential is often constrained by socioeconomic demands, limited religious competence, and technological distractions. These findings highlight the urgent need for strengthening parental

capacity, enhancing religious literacy, and promoting integrated collaboration between families and educational institutions to sustain effective Islamic moral education.

Discussion

Faith and Moral Formation in the Family

The findings of this study confirm that the family environment plays a decisive role in shaping children's faith and moral character through Islamic Religious Education. From a theoretical perspective, this result strongly aligns with Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which emphasizes that children acquire values, attitudes, and behaviors primarily through observation and imitation of significant figures in their immediate environment. Parents, as the most proximal and influential models, become the primary agents through whom Islamic moral values are transmitted. The reviewed studies demonstrate that children internalize moral behaviors not merely through verbal instruction but through consistent exposure to parental conduct that reflects Islamic teachings. This finding corroborates previous studies (Rusli, 2020) that highlight parental role modeling as the most effective mechanism of moral education. However, this study advances the literature by showing that moral formation becomes fragile when parental behavior is inconsistent or when religious instruction is symbolic rather than practiced (Mastorci et al., 2024). This nuance supports Bandura's assertion that incongruence between observed behavior and taught values weakens learning outcomes. Thus, moral education in Islamic families cannot rely solely on doctrinal transmission but must be embodied in everyday interactions (Andika et al., 2023).

Memorization, Understanding, and Internalization: Bridging Classical and Contemporary Perspectives

Classical Islamic educational thought, particularly Al-Ghazali's principle that understanding follows memorization (*al-fahmu ba'da al-ḥifẓ*), provides an important conceptual lens for interpreting the findings. Memorization of *tauhid*, Qur'anic verses, and prophetic traditions introduces children to foundational religious concepts at an early stage. However, this study's synthesis of recent literature suggests that memorization alone is insufficient unless followed by contextual explanation and consistent practice (Sulthon, 2020). This observation resonates with contemporary educational research, which emphasizes that meaningful learning occurs when cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains are integrated. Compared with earlier studies that emphasize rote religious instruction, this study highlights a shift toward experiential and relational learning, where faith and morality are cultivated through daily routines, emotional bonds, and reflective dialogue within the family. This synthesis bridges classical Islamic pedagogy with modern developmental psychology, demonstrating that Islamic education at home is most effective when traditional methods are adapted to children's developmental stages and contemporary contexts community (Suud Sarim Karimullah, 2023).

Qur'anic Foundations and Moral Responsibility: Beyond Normative Claims

The Qur'anic injunctions cited in this study particularly Surah Thaaha (20:132) and Surah Luqman (31:13) establish a strong normative foundation for family-based Islamic education. However, this study goes beyond normative claims by demonstrating how these injunctions are operationalized or neglected in real family contexts (Martiasuti, 2020). While Islamic texts clearly position parents as moral educators, the reviewed studies reveal a gap between religious ideals and lived realities, especially under socioeconomic pressures and technological distractions (Fauzan & Amroni, 2020). This finding critically extends previous research by showing that moral decline among children cannot be attributed solely to external factors such as globalization or digital media. Instead, it reflects a structural weakening of the family's educational function, where limited parental time, religious literacy, and intentional engagement undermine the implementation of Qur'anic guidance. This insight underscores the importance of contextualizing Islamic education through *ijtihad* that responds to modern challenges without compromising core religious values.

Parental Roles, Constraints, and Moral Transmission

Consistent with earlier studies, this study confirms that parents are widely recognized as the first educators, yet many struggle to fulfill this role effectively (Bonanati & Rubach, 2022). The

critical contribution of this study lies in its identification of parental constraints as a mediating factor in moral education outcomes. Economic demands, long working hours, and limited religious competence reduce parents' ability to provide sustained moral guidance, creating gaps that are often filled by uncontrolled media exposure. From the perspective of Social Learning Theory, these gaps allow alternative models such as social media influencers, peers, and digital content to compete with parental influence. Unlike previous studies that treat technology primarily as a moral threat, this study analytically demonstrates that technology becomes problematic mainly when parental mediation is weak (Tang & Chang, 2021). Thus, moral degradation is not an inevitable consequence of modernization but a result of insufficient parental engagement in guiding children's interpretive frameworks.

Implications for Islamic Religious Education and Family Policy

The findings of this study carry significant theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the study strengthens the integration of Islamic educational philosophy with social learning theory, offering a more comprehensive explanation of how moral values are transmitted within families. This integrative approach contributes novelty by framing Islamic home education not merely as doctrinal instruction but as a dynamic process of modeling, interaction, and habituation. Practically, the findings imply that efforts to improve children's morality should not be limited to school-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Instead, systematic programs aimed at enhancing parental religious literacy, parenting skills, and moral awareness are essential. Collaboration between schools, mosques, and families should be strengthened to ensure coherence between formal education and home-based moral formation. At a policy level, the results suggest that family education should be recognized as a strategic component of national character development. Supporting parents through counseling, community education, and digital literacy programs can empower families to reclaim their central role in moral education.

Contribution and Analytical Significance of the Study

By critically engaging with classical Islamic scholarship, contemporary empirical studies, and modern learning theory, this study offers a nuanced understanding of children's moral development in Muslim families. Its main contribution lies in highlighting that effective moral education is relational, modeled, and contextual, rather than instructional alone. The study thus fills a gap in the literature by positioning the family as an active moral ecosystem shaped by religious values, parental agency, and socio-technological realities.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the family—particularly parents—plays a crucial and strategic role in shaping children's moral character through Islamic Religious Education implemented in the home environment. Consistent religious education from an early age provides children with a strong moral and spiritual foundation, enabling the internalization of core Islamic values such as honesty, responsibility, respect, discipline, and compassion. These values are most effectively transmitted through parental role modeling, daily religious habituation, guidance, supervision, and emotionally supportive interactions within the family. The primary contribution of this study lies in its integrative analysis of Islamic educational principles, contemporary empirical literature, and Social Learning Theory to explain how children's moral development occurs within Muslim families. By positioning the home as a dynamic moral learning environment rather than a supplementary educational space, this study extends existing research that often focuses predominantly on school-based Islamic education. The findings demonstrate that moral education cannot be delegated solely to formal institutions such as schools or madrasahs; instead, it must originate within the family as the first and most influential educational setting. In this regard, parents with adequate religious literacy and active involvement emerge as key agents in producing morally upright and socially responsible generations. Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations. As a literature-based study, its findings are dependent on the scope, quality, and perspectives of existing research and do not include direct empirical data from families, children, or educators. Additionally, variations in cultural, socioeconomic, and contextual factors across Muslim families may not be fully

captured, limiting the generalizability of the conclusions. The study also focuses primarily on normative and theoretical dimensions of Islamic education, leaving practical implementation challenges underexplored.

Future research is therefore recommended to employ empirical approaches, such as qualitative case studies, surveys, or mixed-method designs, to examine how Islamic Religious Education is practiced in diverse family contexts. Further studies could also explore the impact of digital technology on family-based moral education, parental strategies for mediating media influences, and the effectiveness of collaborative programs between families, schools, and religious institutions. Such research would provide deeper insights into practical models of Islamic home education and contribute to the development of more responsive and sustainable strategies for children's moral development in contemporary society. In conclusion, strengthening the role of Muslim families in home-based Islamic Religious Education is essential for fostering morally grounded individuals and building a virtuous and civilized society. Sustained parental engagement, supported by educational institutions and community initiatives, remains the cornerstone of effective moral formation in the modern era.

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