



The Professionalism of Islamic Education Teachers in Enhancing the Character of High School Students

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Article History:

Received: June 28, 2025; Revised: July 21, 2025; Accepted: July 29, 2025; Published: August 16, 2025

Abstract: Professionalism of Islamic Education Teachers in Improving the Character of Senior High School Students

Objective: This study aims to analyse the professionalism of Islamic education teachers in improving student character at SMA Negeri 1 Kota Jambi. **Method:** This study used a qualitative descriptive method. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The research subjects included the school principal, Islamic education teachers, and students. Data analysis was conducted using the interactive analysis model by Miles and Huberman. **Results:** The social competence of Islamic education teachers significantly influences the formation of students' character. Islamic education teachers possess practical teaching skills, good communication abilities, and the capacity to guide students spiritually, morally, and socially. **Conclusion:** The professionalism of Islamic education teachers plays an important role in shaping students' character, which requires consistent efforts from teachers, not only in classroom learning but also in the development of moral and spiritual values. **Contribution:** This study identifies the challenges faced by Islamic education teachers, which can be used as a basis for the development of character education policies in schools, as well as providing practical recommendations for improving the quality of character education at the secondary school level.

Keywords: Professionalism; Islamic Education Teachers; Character; Senior High School Students

Abstrakt: Profesionalisme Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam Dalam Meningkatkan Karakter Siswa Sekolah Menengah Atas

Tujuan: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis profesionalisme guru Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) dalam meningkatkan karakter siswa di SMA Negeri 1 Kota Jambi. **Metode:** Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Subjek penelitian terdiri dari kepala sekolah, guru PAI, dan siswa. Analisis data dilakukan dengan model analisis interaktif dari Miles dan Huberman. **Hasil:** Kompetensi sosial guru PAI sangat berpengaruh dalam membentuk karakter siswa. Guru PAI memiliki kemampuan mengajar yang efektif, komunikasi yang baik, serta kemampuan dalam membimbing siswa dalam aspek spiritual, moral, dan sosial. **Kesimpulan:** Profesionalisme guru PAI berperan penting dalam membentuk karakter siswa, yang memerlukan upaya konsisten dari guru, tidak hanya dalam pembelajaran di kelas, tetapi juga dalam pengembangan nilai moral dan spiritual. **Kontribusi:** Penelitian mengidentifikasi tantangan yang dihadapi oleh guru PAI, yang dapat dijadikan dasar dalam pengembangan kebijakan pendidikan karakter di sekolah-sekolah, serta memberikan rekomendasi yang bermanfaat bagi peningkatan kualitas pendidikan karakter di tingkat sekolah menengah.

Kata Kunci: Profesionalisme; Guru PAI; Karakter; Siswa Sekolah Menengah Atas.

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To cite this article:

Edmilizar, D., Risnita, R., & Madyan, M. (2025). The Professionalism of Islamic Education Teachers in Enhancing the Character of High School Students. *At-Ta'lim: Media Informasi Pendidikan Islam*, 24(1), 170-180. <http://dx.doi.org/10.29300/attalim.v24i1.8935>

A. INTRODUCTION

Teachers are a key element in the education system, especially in schools. All other components, ranging from curriculum, facilities and infrastructure, costs, and so on, will not mean much if the essence of learning, namely the interaction between teachers and students, is not of high quality (Patimah & Kherrmarinah, 2025). All other components, especially the curriculum, will only come to life when implemented by teachers. The role of teachers in transforming educational inputs is so crucial that many experts assert that there will be no change or improvement in quality in schools without changes and professionalism among teachers (Buana et al., 2025). Understanding this, it is necessary to continuously have professional and educated teachers who can produce human resources with the will and ability to improve quality (Yunanti & Amaliyah, 2025). This is important because the modern world of education has experienced rapid progress in line with the demands of global development.

Professional teachers are a requirement that must be met in order to improve the quality of the educational process in schools (Hasanah & Mulyadi, 2025). This means that teachers have an important role to play when it comes to education as a place to develop their profession. Therefore, teachers are very responsible for improving student development quality (Illahi, 2020). Professional teachers are also required to play their role and responsibility in instilling and developing good values, and helping students shape and build their character with good values

Islamic education teachers are not only required to teach but must also be able to foster moral norms or character in their students (Firdaus et al., 2018). Islamic education teachers provide education or knowledge in the field of religion and guide students towards maturity and forming a moral Muslim personality, so that there is a balance between happiness in this world and the hereafter (Jafri, 2021). All educational activities aim to shape the nobility and character of human beings. The task of a teacher is not merely to transfer knowledge to students but also to guide and shape good personalities, especially for Islamic education teachers (Hamidah et al., 2019). The role of a teacher is not merely a transfer of knowledge but, more importantly, a transfer of character.

Islamic education aims to shape the character of *akhlakul kharimah*. It emphasizes the formation of conscience, instilling and developing clear and definite divine attributes, both in the relationship between humans and Allah SWT, as well as in relationships with fellow humans (Sajadi, 2019). One of the important missions entrusted to the Prophet Muhammad SAW in this world is too perfect *akhlak*.

Realistically, despite the government's intense focus on education, various obstacles are still found at State Senior High School 1 in Jambi City. However, improvements in the quality of education have not been seen or felt by the students themselves. Based on the author's initial observations, it was found that teacher professionalism is still low, which has also resulted in a decline in teacher discipline (tardiness, absenteeism, etc.). This is evident during the first period. Out of approximately 18 classes (grades X, XI, and XII), only around 60%–75% of classes begin on time, meaning the remaining teachers arrive late.

Additionally, the principal has not supervised the teachers in carrying out their primary duty, which is teaching. As a result, the teachers' enthusiasm and motivation to teach remain relatively low. This situation is evident when the bell rings after recess; teachers do not immediately enter the classroom but continue discussing with their colleagues in the office, and only enter the classroom after five to ten minutes.

State Senior High School 1 in Jambi City is a senior high school that implements character values not only through civic education (PKN) subjects but also instils character education by Islamic education teachers in Islamic education lessons, such as *Akhlakul Kharimah* and the instillation of religious values. State Senior High School 1 in Jambi City was chosen as the research object because there are several interesting aspects of the atmosphere at State Senior High School 1 in Jambi City. One of them is that since the student admission system was

changed to a zoning system, State Senior High School 1 in Jambi has received many students from the Legok area, which is known for its unruly children.

The abovementioned conditions cannot be ignored, as they will lead to the continued low quality of education locally, nationally, and internationally. The impact of low teacher professionalism is significant. As is well known, teachers are the cornerstone of education (Hikmah, 2023). As the ideal figures closest to students in school, the quality of teachers' performance can be seen in the behaviour of the students they teach (Habibullah, 2019).

Previous studies have shown that teacher competence, particularly in teaching ability, communication, and spiritual and moral guidance, significantly influences students' character development (Fikroh et al., 2025). This study builds on this understanding by focusing on real-world applications at SMA Negeri 1 Kota Jambi, highlighting strategies used by Islamic education teachers, such as modelling, habit formation, and instilling religious values. Additionally, this study identifies the challenges Islamic education teachers face, including internal and external factors that influence student character development, contributing to developing a more contextual and relevant character education theory (Prayatni et al., 2025).

This study identifies the gap between theory and practice in the professional development of Islamic education teachers in improving student character at SMA Negeri 1 Kota Jambi. Although previous studies have highlighted the importance of Islamic education teachers' competencies in shaping student character, most research has focused on theoretical aspects without considering the local context and practical challenges teachers face. This study fills this gap by exploring in depth how Islamic education teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Kota Jambi apply their competencies in shaping student character and the challenges and obstacles they face, such as the influence of the external environment and resource constraints, which have not been widely explored in the existing literature.

This study aims to analyse the professionalism of Islamic education teachers in improving student character at SMA Negeri 1 Kota Jambi. The research focuses on the competencies of Islamic education teachers in teaching, communicating, and guiding students' moral development, the strategies applied in character formation through religious values, and the challenges faced from internal factors (students) and external factors (social environment and technology). This study will also explore the impact of these competencies and strategies on student character formation at the school.

B. METHOD

The research method used is a qualitative research design. Qualitative research is descriptive and tends to use process and meaning analysis, focusing more on this study with a theoretical framework that serves as a guide, so that the research focuses on the facts in the field. Researchers participate in the conditions or events being studied, so the results of qualitative research require in-depth analysis from the researchers. The qualitative descriptive method was used to describe the professionalism of Islamic education teachers in improving student character at State Senior High School 1 in Jambi City.

The subjects of this study were the principal, Islamic education teachers, who were used as key informants, and students at State Senior High School 1 in Jambi City. The research subjects were selected using snowball sampling, a technique for selecting samples from data sources, which starts with a small number and gradually increases. This was done because the small amount of data was insufficient to provide complete data.

Data collection was conducted to obtain the information desired by the researcher. The data collection process used (1) observation, (2) interviews, and (3) documentation. Triangulation was used to enhance the validity and reliability of the data by comparing findings from various sources and methods. This study applied two types of triangulations. Source Triangulation, which compares data from teachers, students, and school principals, and Method

Triangulation, which compares the results of observation, interviews, and documentation to ensure consistency and identify differences that need to be explored further.

Data analysis uses Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis, which consists of three types of data analysis: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. These three types of analysis are used interactively in the study to provide a comprehensive understanding and to facilitate researchers in making valid and relevant decisions based on the data collected.

The data validity checking techniques used are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Data validity testing is done by expanding observations, increasing diligence, triangulation, discussing with peers, and analysing the case. Applying these validity techniques can produce more valid, reliable, and accountable data and findings. This is very important in ensuring the research is of high quality and can contribute meaningfully to the studied field.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

1. Competence of Islamic Education Teachers in Shaping Student Character

The competence of Islamic education teachers at SMAN 1 Kota Jambi in shaping student character consists of (1) social competence of Islamic education teachers; (2) pedagogical competence; (3) personality competence; (4) professional competence. The findings indicate that Islamic education teachers' abilities, knowledge, and skills at SMAN 1 Kota Jambi are key factors in learning success. Islamic education teachers at this school are very concerned about individual abilities and productive competitiveness, which other teachers can use as examples. In addition, the firm personality of teachers in the learning process can influence students' character. When teachers explain good character, students practice it in their daily lives. Furthermore, teachers' personalities become role models for their students; what teachers do reflect on their students.

2. Strategies of Islamic Education Teachers in Shaping Student Character

Strategies implemented by Islamic education teachers at SMAN 1 Kota Jambi in shaping student character at SMAN 1 Kota Jambi (1) Teaching and advising children about the importance of education; (2) Teaching and advising children about the importance of education; (3) Encouraging students to engage in good activities or behavior; (4) Encouraging students to engage in good activities or behavior. The findings reveal that teachers teach exemplary behaviour and speech, such as always greeting others, shaking hands, teaching students to speak politely, and encouraging them to pray in congregation so that they become accustomed to these practices in their daily lives. The formation of character and the instillation of values are influenced by several factors, especially the environment, namely the family, school, and community. This means that even though teachers at school try to set a good example, if a good family and community environment does not support them, the instillation of values and the formation of attitudes will not be effective. Therefore, character building requires the efforts of all parties, including the environment, school, community, and family.

3. Challenges and Obstacles Faced by Islamic Education Teachers in Shaping Student Character

Islamic education teachers at SMAN 1 Kota Jambi often face challenges in shaping student character, especially considering their role in guiding and providing teaching related to Islamic values. Some challenges that Islamic education teachers may face in shaping student character involve Social and Cultural Conditions, where challenges may arise from diverse social and cultural conditions among students. Islamic education teachers must understand and respond to this diversity with an inclusive approach, busy Schedules and Curriculum Pressure, where time constraints and pressure to complete the curriculum can be obstacles.

Discussion

1. Competence of Islamic Education Teachers in Shaping Student Character

The competence of an Islamic education teacher involves a deep understanding of Islamic teachings, teaching skills, and the ability to guide and educate students at school. Based on the observations conducted by the researcher, social competence is one of the most important competencies. Teachers need to have good social competence because they rely not only on their ability to teach in front of the class but also on setting an example in their daily lives for others.

Islamic education teachers must have a solid understanding of the principles of Islamic teachings, including faith, worship, morals, and Islamic law (Llorent-Bedmar et al., 2020). They must also understand diversity in Islam and be able to teach the values of tolerance and harmony among religious communities. In addition to the above, several other things are necessary to support the competence of Islamic education teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Kota Jambi, including teaching skills, namely the ability to design and implement learning that is interesting and relevant to students' lives.

Teachers of Islamic education must also master effective teaching methods, such as discussion, presentation, and practical activities that can facilitate understanding of Islamic concepts (Saada, 2023). Islamic education teacher must have good communication skills to convey information clearly and understandably to students, as well as the ability to listen and respond to students' questions and thoughts appropriately (Gaffas, 2019). Then, the ability to guide and educate, Islamic education teachers at this school have the advantage of guiding students in their spiritual, moral, and social development.

Islamic education teachers must also possess awareness of students' individual development and the ability to provide appropriate support (Prasertcharoensuk et al., 2015). There is also the use of educational technology, namely the ability to use technology in the learning process, such as multimedia presentations, online learning resources, and electronic learning platforms (Huang et al., 2024).

In addition, teaching material development requires communication skills and the ability to develop teaching materials the ability to develop teaching materials that are in line with the curriculum and the needs of students (Chan et al., 2027). Islamic education teachers at this school possess creativity in designing engaging and meaningful learning activities, and a professional attitude and professional ethics in providing Islamic education (Yusuf & Wekke, 2015).

Involvement in professional development activities to continuously improve the quality of teaching. Interaction with parents and the community, as well as communicating with parents to provide information about their children's progress, is a strength of Islamic education teachers at this school (Oktari et al., 2018). Involvement in community activities to strengthen the relationship between the school and the surrounding environment. Each of these competencies is interrelated and very important for an Islamic education teacher to create an effective learning environment that supports the holistic development of students.

2. Strategies of Islamic Education Teachers in Shaping Student Character

The figure of a teacher is very much needed to create character or personality in students (Goetz et al., 2013). Therefore, teachers must be able to implement various strategies to shape the character of students (Bruggeman et al., 2021). If a teacher applies these characteristics in their daily life, students will likely emulate their teacher's character, because teachers are role models for students.

In shaping student character, the following are some strategies used by Islamic education teachers, including (1) Role modelling. Islamic education teachers must be real examples of Islamic values, such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, and patience. This role modelling will be easier for students to imitate and internalize; (2) Habituation. Creating routines and

good habits at school, such as praying in congregation, reading the Qur'an, and greeting others. Habituation helps students internalize religious values in their daily lives; (3) Instilling Religious Values and delivering Islamic education material interestingly and contextually so that students can easily understand and relate it to their daily lives. Integrating religious values into other subjects, such as the Indonesian language, mathematics, and science. Providing concrete examples of how religious values are applied in various situations; (4) Contextual Approach. Relating learning materials to students' real lives so that they can see the relevance of religious values in their lives. Using active and participatory learning methods, such as discussions, question and answer sessions, and role-playing. Creating a fun and supportive learning atmosphere so students feel comfortable and motivated to learn; (5) The Role of Teachers as Facilitators, Mentors, and Inspirers. Islamic education teachers act as facilitators who provide opportunities for students to learn and develop their potential. Islamic education teachers act as mentors who guide students in understanding and practising religious values. Islamic education teachers inspire and encourage students to become better individuals; (6) Collaboration with Other Parties. Cooperating with parents and the community to shape students' character and utilizing the school and community environment as learning resources.

3. Challenges and Obstacles Faced by Islamic Education Teachers in Shaping Student Character

Internal factors hinder the shaping of student character, namely, factors originating from within each student due to a lack of education and guidance from parents since childhood. In addition to internal factors, external factors pose a significant challenge to Islamic education teachers in shaping student character (Fitrianah, 2024).

External factors are obstacles from outside the urban community that are indifferent to various problems faced by students, even though the community is considered a continuation of education from the school level. The community environment, usually called non-formal education, also greatly influences students' lives, especially in shaping their character (Sakti et al., 2024).

Character education in schools has the same essence as moral or ethical education (Birhan et al., 2021). With the implementation of character education in schools, the goal must be achieved by forming students' personalities to become good people, which is not at all tied to numbers and grades. Thus, character education is value education, which involves instilling noble values derived from Indonesian culture (Prayitno et al., 2022). Character education aims to shape an individual's personality through moral education, the results of which are evident in their actions, such as good behaviour, honesty, responsibility, respect for parents, hard work, and so on (Hart et al., 2020).

Character is the nature, traits, or fundamental aspects of a person that are abstract (Khasanah & Lestari, 2024). People often refer to it as temperament or disposition. Hornby and Panwal, as cited by Abdul Majid, state that character is a quality, mental or moral strength, name, or reputation. According to Ryan and Bohlin, character consists of three core elements: knowing what is good, loving what is good, and doing what is good (Pane & Patriana, 2016).

Character education is behaviour based on students' inherent traits (Rahmawati & Utomo, 2024). The students' character at SMA Negeri 1 Kota Jambi is shaped by individuals, namely teachers as educators at the school, according to their behaviour. For Islamic education teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Kota Jambi, character and morality do not differ significantly. Both actions occur without further thought because they are already ingrained in the mind; in other words, both can be referred to as habits. If students at SMA Negeri 1 Kota Jambi behave dishonestly, they have manifested bad behaviour.

Conversely, if someone behaves honestly, that person is manifesting noble behaviour. A person has character if moral principles guide their behaviour (Pantić & Wubbels, 2012). In their activities, all students have a character of mutual respect, and even a system of mutual assistance has become the nature and habit of all students at this school. This is a significant achievement in the world of education, where in this increasingly modern era, we can shape

students' character through local cultural values. Of course, cooperation between teachers and parents must be active, and this is proven by good cooperation between teachers and parents of students. It is important to remember that the competence of Islamic education teachers can vary depending on the educational context and national policies (Nuryana, 2022).

Teacher training programs and educational policies can influence the competency standards applied in a region or country (Almerich et al., 2016). Based on the above explanation, character education at SMA Negeri 1 Kota Jambi should focus more on the five-character values described above as indicators of character education, namely: first, religious, which is an attitude and behaviour that is obedient in carrying out the teachings of one's religion. Second, Honesty. This refers to behaviour based on efforts to become a person who is always trustworthy in words, actions, and work. Third, Discipline. This refers to actions demonstrating orderly behaviour and obeying rules and regulations. Fourth, Responsibility. This refers to the attitude and behaviour of a person when carrying out tasks and obligations. Fifth, Independence. This refers to the attitude and behaviour of not easily relying on others to complete tasks.

The types of activities created to support the character-building process of students include extracurricular activities based on the students' religious activities (Romadhon et al., 2019). Additionally, the school organizes weekly charitable activities involving all students, teachers, and educational staff. In religious activities, the school conducts dzikir (remembrance of God) and other Islamic activities to foster mutual education and instil religious character values between teachers and students.

D. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

1. Research Implications

The implications of this study indicate that the competence of Islamic education teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Kota Jambi greatly influences the character formation of students, because Islamic education teachers are not only responsible for delivering material, but also serve as role models, facilitators, and motivators in developing character through Islamic teachings. Additionally, implementing appropriate strategies by Islamic education teachers can produce students with noble moral values and high personal qualities. However, challenges such as insufficient religious foundations among students, harmful environmental influences, time constraints, and limited skills in utilising technology pose obstacles that must be addressed. Therefore, developing teachers' competencies and implementing more effective teaching strategies are crucial to overcoming these challenges and achieving optimal character education goals.

2. Research Contribution

The contribution of this study is to provide deeper insights into the important role of Islamic education teachers' competencies in shaping students' character at SMA Negeri 1 Kota Jambi. This study also identifies various strategies implemented by Islamic education teachers to shape student character and the challenges faced in implementing these strategies. With the results of this study, it is hoped that practical recommendations can be provided for the development of Islamic education teachers' professionalism, improving the quality of teaching and learning, as well as addressing issues related to student character development, particularly in facing challenges from internal and external factors that influence the educational process.

E. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Recommendations for further research include exploring external factors that influence student character formation, such as the influence of the community environment and digital technology, as well as how Islamic education teachers can overcome these challenges. Further

research could also be conducted to examine the long-term impact of character formation by Islamic education teachers on students' social and professional development. In addition, research focusing on developing and implementing training for Islamic education teachers to improve their skills in integrating technology into character education is also highly relevant, given the increasingly important role of technology in education today.

F. CONCLUSION

Research shows that social competence is important for Islamic education teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Kota Jambi in shaping students' character. In addition, practical teaching skills, good communication skills, and the ability to listen and respond to students' questions greatly support teachers' competence. Islamic education teachers at this school can also guide students in spiritual, moral, and social development, which is key in shaping their character.

Islamic education teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Kota Jambi implement various strategies to shape students' character, such as setting a good example, forming habits, and instilling religious values. In addition, a contextual approach that is tailored to students' needs is also applied, with teachers acting as facilitators, mentors, and inspirers. Collaboration with other parties is also an important part of efforts to shape students' character optimally.

In the effort to shape students' character, there are challenges from both internal and external factors. Internal factors originate from within the students, such as a lack of parental guidance. Meanwhile, external factors, such as the community's lack of concern for students' problems, also pose obstacles. The community, which should serve as an extension of education, often negatively influences students' character, making the challenge of character formation even more complex.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to express his deepest gratitude to the Principal, Islamic Education Teachers, and SMA Negeri 1 Kota Jambi students for the facilities, support, and cooperation provided during this research process. Without all parties' assistance and active participation, this research would not have been carried out successfully. Hopefully, the contributions made will be helpful in the development of education at this school and for further research.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

All authors discussed the results and contributed to the final manuscript. DE: Conceptualization, Research framework & Writing - Original Draft. RN: Conceptualization. MD: Conceptualization.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest financial, professional, or personal that could have influenced the results or interpretation of this research.

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