

Creative Methods in Teaching Islam for Character Development in Elementary Education

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Abstract

This study examines how creative methods such as play, storytelling, arts, social projects, and interactive media in Islamic education shape positive character traits including honesty, discipline, responsibility, empathy, and religiosity in elementary school children. Using a qualitative literature review method based on Crowther and Lancaster, this research synthesizes theoretical arguments from Islamic pedagogy, developmental psychology, and creative education. Findings indicate that play teaches honesty through logical consequences and discipline through agreed rules. Storytelling builds empathy through emotional identification with characters and religiosity through beloved role models. Arts develop responsibility through meticulous creative processes. Social projects provide authentic experiences in caring for others. Interactive media offer visualization of abstract concepts and instant feedback. Integration of multiple methods accommodates diverse learning styles. Teacher consistency and role modeling determine success. This theoretical framework offers guidance for teachers to shift from lecture based instruction to child centered creative approaches. Schools should provide adequate support for pedagogical innovation.

Keywords: Creative Methods, Islamic Education, Character Development, Elementary Education, Moral Values

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana metode-metode kreatif seperti bermain, mendongeng, seni, proyek sosial, dan media interaktif dalam pendidikan Islam membentuk sifat-sifat karakter

positif, termasuk kejujuran, kedisiplinan, tanggung jawab, empati, dan keagamaan pada anak-anak sekolah dasar. Dengan menggunakan metode tinjauan pustaka kualitatif berdasarkan Crowther dan Lancaster, penelitian ini mensintesis argumen-argumen teoretis dari pedagogi Islam, psikologi perkembangan, dan pendidikan kreatif. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa bermain mengajarkan kejujuran melalui konsekuensi logis dan kedisiplinan melalui aturan yang disepakati. Bercerita membangun empati melalui identifikasi emosional dengan tokoh-tokoh cerita dan keagamaan melalui teladan yang dicintai. Seni mengembangkan rasa tanggung jawab melalui proses kreatif yang teliti. Proyek sosial memberikan pengalaman otentik dalam peduli terhadap sesama. Media interaktif menawarkan visualisasi konsep-konsep abstrak dan umpan balik instan. Integrasi berbagai metode mengakomodasi gaya belajar yang beragam. Konsistensi guru dan teladan yang ditunjukkan menentukan keberhasilan. Kerangka teoretis ini memberikan panduan bagi guru untuk beralih dari pengajaran berbasis ceramah ke pendekatan kreatif yang berpusat pada anak. Sekolah harus memberikan dukungan yang memadai untuk inovasi pedagogis.

Kata Kunci: Metode kreatif, pendidikan Islam, pengembangan karakter, pendidikan dasar, nilai-nilai moral.

A. Introduction

Character education has become a primary focus in the national education systems of various countries, including in the teaching of Islamic Religious Education at the elementary school level. Elementary school-aged children are in the golden age of moral and spiritual values formation. During this period, the foundations of honesty, discipline, a sense of responsibility, compassion, and religious devotion begin to take root deeply. In essence, education is the key to building good character in every student.¹ Conventional teaching methods that rely on lectures, memorization, and written exercises are often ineffective in instilling such abstract values. Children need direct experiences that involve emotions and real actions, not just theoretical knowledge about what is right and what is wrong. Ideal Islamic education should be able to touch the heart, awaken self-awareness, and guide students' behavior in a positive direction. However, the reality on the ground shows that some educators are still stuck in boring and repetitive teaching patterns. As a result, the moral messages being conveyed are not fully absorbed by the children.²

Creativity in choosing teaching methods is key to overcoming these challenges. Playing, storytelling, creating art, participating in social activities, and using interactive media are approaches that are well-suited to the characteristics of elementary school-aged children.³ A child's world is one of play, imagination, and exploring their surroundings. A school environment steeped in a religious atmosphere strongly supports the character development of students.⁴ When Islamic values are conveyed through fun games, children do not feel like they are learning something difficult. Instead, these values are absorbed naturally. For example, role-playing activities about sharing food with less fortunate friends teach empathy in a tangible and easily understandable way. Telling stories of the prophets

¹ Nuraini, R., Halizah, S. N., Sinambela, E. A., Mujisulistyo, Y. F., Darmawan, D., Arrozi, F., & Arifin, S. (2024). Upaya membentuk kepribadian unggul peserta didik melalui pendidikan Al-Qur'an. *Jurnal Pendidikan, Penelitian, dan Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 4(1), 57-64.

² Hidayah, T. N., Kosasih, A., Hidayah, T. N., & Kosasih, A. (2025). The Transformation of Islamic Education to Strengthen the Morals and Ethics of 21st Century Students. *Jurnal Pendidikan Nusantara*, 4(2), 102–112.

³ Vasilevna, Y. E. (2024). Using Multimedia Resources as A Means To Enhance The Creative Potential Of Primary School Students. *Emergent*, 3(4).

⁴ Darmawan, D., & Mahbubah, S. M. (2026). Iklim Religius Madrasah dan Pembentukan Karakter Siswa MI (Madrasah Religious Climate and Character Formation of MI Students). *Jurnal Ilmiah Wahana Pendidikan*, 12(3. C), 245-270.

and their companions who were known for their honesty and trustworthiness will leave a deeper impression if presented in a lively style and supported by engaging visual aids. Art activities, such as coloring calligraphy or creating simple paintings on the theme of cleanliness, can instill a love for the values of beauty within Islamic teachings. These creative methods are not merely entertainment but educational tools designed to achieve the goals of character education.

Simple social projects are one of the most promising creative methods for developing children's character.⁵ Through activities such as visiting orphanages, cleaning up the school grounds, or collecting relief supplies for disaster victims, children learn to understand social responsibility and develop a sense of compassion for others. Such activities are extremely important, because, at its core, the goal of education is to change a person's behavior so that they pay more attention to their surroundings.⁶

Hands-on experiences such as these cannot be replaced by theoretical explanations given in the classroom. Children can experience first-hand what it feels like to help others, listen to real-life stories from those in need, and feel the joy of being able to lighten someone else's burden. The positive feelings arising from these experiences will reinforce the kind and caring behaviour that children will display in the future.⁷

Education through social activities plays a major role in broadening children's horizons regarding the world beyond their immediate environment.⁸ Creative teachers can design social projects tailored to children's ages and abilities, such as saving money to buy books for less privileged friends or planting trees on the school grounds. Active involvement in such activities will shape children's character in a natural and fundamental way.

Technology-based interactive media also opens up new opportunities for innovation in Islamic education.⁹ Learning apps, animated videos and educational games can be engaging tools for children of the digital generation. In today's world, social media and digital technology do indeed play a vital role in disseminating educational information.¹⁰ However, the use of these media must be carefully designed so as not to distract from the core values that are to be instilled. Animations about the stories of the prophets, presented with appealing visuals and an easy-to-follow storyline, can increase children's interest in the subject matter. Interactive games on how to perform wudu or salat, complete with simulation features, can help children practise their religious duties in a fun way. Apps designed to help learners recognise the Hijaiyah alphabet, featuring audio and engaging visuals, can accelerate the process of learning to read the Qur'an. Teachers should not hesitate to make use of technology, provided its use is purposeful and its benefits can be measured. The most important thing is that technology serves as a tool, not a substitute for direct interaction between teachers and pupils. A balance must be maintained between activities that utilise technology and those that do not.

⁵ Torres-Harding, S., Baber, A., Hilvers, J., Hobbs, N., & Maly, M. T. (2018). Children as agents of social and community change: Enhancing youth empowerment through participation in a school-based social activism project: *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 13(1), 3–18.

⁶ Gautama, E. C., & Mardikaningsih, R. (2022). Driving Sustainable Behavior Change Through Education and Public Awareness. *Journal of Social Science Studies*, 2(1), 259-264.

⁷ Proulx, J. D. E., Vondervoort, J. W. V. de, Hamlin, J. K., Helliwell, J. F., & Aknin, L. B. (2023). Are Real-World Prosociality Programs Associated with Greater Psychological Well-Being in Primary School-Aged Children? *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(5), 4403–4403.

⁸ Hariani, M., & Mardikaningsih, R. (2022). The Social Education Role in Shaping Students' Global Awareness in Higher Education. *Journal of Social Science Studies*, 2(1), 55-60

⁹ Ubaedullah, D., Rokimin, Suryono, F., Ubaedullah, D., Rokimin, & Suryono, F. (2025). Technology in Islamic Education Curriculum: Challenges and Opportunities. *Jurnal Al Burhan*, 5(2), 369–391.

¹⁰ Darmawan, D. & Fajar, A.S. M. (2024). The Role of Social Media in the Distribution and Dissemination of Education Publications in the Digital Age. *Studi Ilmu Sosial Indonesia*, 4(2), 41-58.

Character development through creative methods cannot be separated from the role of the teacher as both a facilitator and a role model.¹¹ Creative teachers not only master a variety of teaching methods, but are also able to create a classroom atmosphere that supports exploration and experimentation. Furthermore, good school management also has a significant impact on the quality of children's education.¹² Children need to feel safe to ask questions, try new things, and even dare to make mistakes without fear of being punished. This positive psychological environment is vital for creative methods to be effective. Teachers must also set a good example in terms of character in their daily lives. The role of teachers in providing consistent guidance and support is vital in helping children develop their personalities.¹³ A teacher who teaches honesty but is caught lying will lose the trust of their pupils. Conversely, a teacher who demonstrates discipline, responsibility and empathy in their day-to-day interactions will inspire pupils to emulate that behaviour. A teacher's example is a form of implicit learning whose influence is far stronger than that of all formal lesson content combined. Therefore, the professional development of teachers of Islamic religious education must encompass personal character development, and not be limited solely to improving technical teaching skills.

The main problem faced in the teaching of Islam at primary level is the predominance of a cognitive approach that neglects the affective and psychomotor aspects. Some teachers still measure the success of learning based on pupils' ability to answer questions about the pillars of faith or the pillars of Islam through rote learning alone. In fact, true character is not measured by what a child knows, but by what they do in their daily life. This issue is closely linked to a child's emotional and social development within their social circle.¹⁴ A child may well know that lying is a sin, yet still tell a lie when afraid of being told off by their parents. This gap between knowledge and behaviour indicates that the learning process has not yet addressed the aspects of internalising and deeply embracing values.¹⁵ Furthermore, creative learning experiences and adequate facilities at home also play a key role in shaping a child's academic achievement and character development.¹⁶ Lectures and rote learning are certainly efficient ways of conveying information, but they are not very effective at changing behaviour. An approach is needed that incorporates emotional engagement, direct experience and the repetition of practical actions, so that Islamic values can become ingrained as habits that children practise automatically, without the need for lengthy deliberation.

Another issue is the limited knowledge and skills of teachers in designing and implementing creative teaching methods. Some teachers of Islamic Religious Education have a background in religious education that places greater emphasis on mastery of the subject matter than on creative teaching skills.¹⁷ They know what material needs to be taught, but do not yet understand how to present it in a way that engages their pupils. Another

¹¹ Rao, N., Rehman, Ch. A., Bajwa, S. U., & Nasir, N. (2024). Role of Teachers in the Character Development of Students Findings from a Systematic Review. *Academy of Education and Social Sciences Review*, 4(4), 575–594.

¹² Seran, G., & binti Ismail, A. (2025). Family Social Capital and Quality Management in Primary and Secondary Education. *Bulletin of Science, Technology and Society*, 4(3), 91–102.

¹³ Rojak, J. A., Fajar, A. S. M., & Darmawan, D. (2024). A Comprehensive Review of Counseling's Contribution to Student Character Development in University Education. *International Journal of Service Science, Management, Engineering, and Technology*, 6(1), 13–18.

¹⁴ Gani, A. (2025). Character Education and Children's Socio-Emotional Development in the Social Interaction Environment. *Studi Ilmu Sosial Indonesia*, 5(1), 103–116.

¹⁵ Mahfud, Moh., Zahriyah, S., Mahfud, Moh., & Zahriyah, S. (2025). Internalizing Islamic Values in Students: The Role of Character Education in Building Morals and Ethics. *Ma'alim*, 6(1), 93–105.

¹⁶ Darmawan, D., & Safiani, A. M. (2026). Pengalaman Subjektif Siswa MI: Suasana Rumah, Sarana Belajar, dan Proses Kreatif dalam Meraih Prestasi Akademik. *Jurnal Tunas Pendidikan*, 8(2), 510–539.

¹⁷ Adel, M. (2025). *The level of employment of Islamic education teachers for constructive learning*.

challenge is the continuing disparity in access to education across different regions.¹⁸ The training provided to teachers to date has tended to be theoretical in nature and has not offered hands-on experience in designing educational games, interactive stories or social-learning projects. Consequently, upon returning to the classroom, teachers tend to revert to the method they are most familiar with, namely the lecture method. Developing creativity requires the space to try new things and the courage to step outside one's comfort zone. Indeed, a quality education is the key for children from all backgrounds to improve their future prospects.¹⁹ Without comprehensive support that provides time, facilities and infrastructure, as well as recognition of innovative teaching methods, teachers will remain trapped in tedious teaching patterns. Therefore, improving teachers' competence is key to the success of character education.

The rise in bullying, dishonesty, a decline in empathy and physical altercations amongst pupils has become a serious problem. Religious education, which should serve as a moral bulwark, often fails to prevent this moral decline, as its teaching approach is perceived as rigid and irrelevant to the children's world. Furthermore, negative perceptions or preconceived notions within society often influence the opportunities children have to learn.²⁰ Unless fundamental changes are made without delay, future generations will possess a sound theoretical understanding of religion, yet lack the ability to put its values into practice. They will be people who are adept at discussing moral teachings, but inconsistent in their actions. Research into creative teaching methods is vital to provide a more effective approach for teachers and schools. The findings of this research can serve as a basis for developing the curriculum, training teaching staff, and designing learning materials that are better suited to the nature and development of primary school-aged children. Without in-depth research, efforts to improve the quality of character education will not make significant progress.

The aim of this paper is to develop a theoretical understanding of how creative learning methods work in Islamic religious education for character building among primary school-aged children. This paper provides a conceptual framework explaining how activities such as play, storytelling, artistic creation, community projects and the use of interactive media, in particular, play a role in shaping attitudes of honesty, discipline, responsibility and empathy, as well as fostering an understanding of and practising religious teachings. In practical terms, the findings of this study can serve as a guide for teachers of Islamic religious education in designing creative and enjoyable learning experiences.

B. Literature Review

1. Islamic Education in Primary Education

Islamic education is an educational process aimed at instilling Islamic values so that pupils not only understand the teachings of Islam intellectually, but are also able to put them into practice in their daily lives.²¹ At primary level, Islamic education plays a vital

¹⁸ Rojak, J. A., & Khayru, R. K. (2022). Disparities in Access to Education in Developing Countries: Determinants, Impacts, and Solution Strategies. *Journal of Social Science Studies*, 2(1), 31-38.

¹⁹ Hartono, R., & Sulisty, B. (2022). The Role of Education in the Social Mobility of Poor Children in Urban Settings. *Studi Ilmu Sosial Indonesia*, 2(1), 109-126.

²⁰ Sajjapong, T., Darmawan, D., & Marsal, A. P. (2022). The Role of Social Stereotypes in Shaping Opportunities and Inequalities in Society: Their Impact on Education, Employment, and Intergroup Interactions. *Bulletin of Science, Technology and Society*, 1(1), 44-49.

²¹ Hidayah, T. N., Kosasih, A., Hidayah, T. N., & Kosasih, A. (2025). The Transformation of Islamic Education to Strengthen the Morals and Ethics of 21st Century Students. *Jurnal Pendidikan Nusantara*, 4(2), 102-112.

role in shaping pupils' morals, personality and character from an early age.²² A school environment with a religious ethos also makes a significant contribution to the character development of pupils, as religious values are taught not only through the curriculum but also through the school culture practised on a daily basis.²³ Therefore, the teaching of Islam in primary schools must not merely focus on the mastery of subject matter, but must also be capable of shaping pupils' behaviour in accordance with the values of Islamic teachings.

2. Creative Methods in Islamic Education

Creative teaching methods are an approach to learning that utilises a variety of strategies, media and activities to create an active, engaging and meaningful learning experience for learners.²⁴ In Islamic Religious Education, creative methods are one of the most suitable approaches for primary school-aged children, as children's lives are characterised by play, imagination, exploration and learning through direct experience.²⁵ Creative learning not only enhances pupils' understanding of religious subjects, but also helps to develop their affective and psychomotor skills, thereby enabling Islamic values to be internalised in their daily lives. As technology advances and the characteristics of learners change, innovation in Islamic Religious Education is essential to ensure that the learning process remains relevant, engaging and effective.²⁶

3. Character Development in Primary Education

Character development is the process of shaping pupils' attitudes, behaviour and habits in line with moral values and religious teachings.²⁷ At primary school age, pupils are at a stage of development where they are highly susceptible to environmental influences; therefore, the process of character-building needs to be carried out on an ongoing basis through learning, the cultivation of good habits, and setting a good example.²⁸ From the perspective of Islamic education, the character traits fostered include honesty, discipline, responsibility, empathy, social awareness and religious devotion.²⁹ The success of character development is influenced by various factors, including school culture.³⁰ Teachers' competence and parental involvement, as well as a learning environment that supports pupils' development.

4. The Implementation of Creative Methods in Character Development

²² Nuraini, R., Halizah, S. N., Sinambela, E. A., Mujiulistyo, Y. F., Darmawan, D., Arrozi, F., & Arifin, S. (2024). Upaya membentuk kepribadian unggul peserta didik melalui pendidikan Al-Qur'an. *Jurnal Pendidikan, Penelitian, dan Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 4(1), 57-64.

²³ Darmawan, D., & Mahbubah, S. M. (2026). Iklim Religius Madrasah dan Pembentukan Karakter Siswa MI (Madrasah Religious Climate and Character Formation of MI Students). *Jurnal Ilmiah Wahana Pendidikan*, 12(3. C), 245-270.

²⁴ Crowther, D., & Lancaster, G. (2012). *Research methods*. Routledge.

²⁵ Vasilevna, Y. E. (2024). Using Multimedia Resources as A Means To Enhance The Creative Potential Of Primary School Students. *Emergent*, 3(4).

²⁶ Fajar, A. S. M., Fauzi, A., Darmawan, D., Putra, A. R., & Arifin, S. (2025). Transformation of Islamic Religious Education in the Digital Landscape and its Implications for Pedagogical Innovation. *International Journal of Service Science, Management, Engineering, and Technology*, 8(1), 15-20.

²⁷ Rao, N., Rehman, Ch. A., Bajwa, S. U., & Nasir, N. (2024). Role of Teachers in the Character Development of Students Findings from a Systematic Review. *Academy of Education and Social Sciences Review*, 4(4), 575-594.

²⁸ Gani, A. (2025). Character Education and Children's Socio-Emotional Development in the Social Interaction Environment. *Studi Ilmu Sosial Indonesia*, 5(1), 103-116.

²⁹ Mahfud, Moh., Zahriyah, S., Mahfud, Moh., & Zahriyah, S. (2025). Internalizing Islamic Values in Students: The Role of Character Education in Building Morals and Ethics. *Ma'alim*, 6(1), 93-105.

³⁰ Dena, S. & D. Darmawan. (2024). Character Development of Students in Public High School 4 Surabaya Through the Role of School Culture and Parenting Style. *EduInovasi: Journal of Basic Educational Studies*, 4(1), 417-428.

Creative methods can be applied in Islamic education through a variety of activities tailored to the developmental characteristics of the pupils. Play-based learning provides pupils with first-hand experience of learning about honesty, discipline, responsibility and cooperation through the rules of the game that are agreed upon together.³¹ The storytelling method fosters emotional engagement among learners, making it easier for them to understand and internalise Islamic values through the stories of the prophets, messengers and exemplary figures in Islam.³² Artistic activities such as drawing, calligraphy and creating works of art serve as a means of expressing an understanding of Islamic values, whilst also fostering attention to detail, patience and a sense of responsibility.³³ Social projects provide pupils with real-life experience of putting the values of compassion, empathy and responsibility into practice through activities such as sharing, helping others and looking after the environment.³⁴ Furthermore, technological advances enable teachers to make use of interactive media, such as animated videos, learning apps and educational games, to help pupils understand abstract religious concepts in a more engaging way.³⁵ Therefore, the integration of various creative methods into the teaching of Islam is believed to be capable of optimising the process of character development among pupils in primary education.

C. Method

This research method employs a qualitative literature review approach to examine the effectiveness of creative methods in Islamic education for the development of moral character in primary school-aged children. This approach was chosen because the research aims to understand the processes and mechanisms involved in instilling values, rather than to measure statistical relationships between variables. According to Crowther and Lancaster, a literature review enables researchers to identify theoretical patterns from various written sources and to construct a coherent conceptual argument regarding the relationship between learning methods and the outcomes of character development.

The steps undertaken included a search of scientific databases using keywords relating to creative learning methods, Islamic religious education and moral education at primary school level. The selection of documents was based on topic relevance, the credibility of the sources, and the focus of the studies on children aged between six and twelve years. The author also carried out a critical assessment of the learning assumptions underpinning each study used as a reference.

The sources used were drawn from journals in the fields of Islamic education, developmental psychology, creative learning, and educational media studies. Data analysis was carried out using the narrative synthesis method, which focuses on integrating findings from various studies into a single, coherent explanatory framework. The author summarises the results of previous research, explores the connections between findings, identifies differences in perspective, and proposes theoretical solutions. The analysis process involved grouping key ideas thematically regarding the ways in which play, storytelling, the arts, social

³¹ Qolbi, L. F. A., & Sajidin, Z. N. (2025). *Effectiveness of Play-Based Learning Approach in Teaching Islamic Values to Early Childhood Children*. 2(1), 50–64.

³² Ervina, E., Nurofikoh, A., Afriani, L., & Asroni, M. (2025). The use of islamic stories as an effort to improve students' religious character in islamic religious education learning. *Multidisciplinary Indonesian Center Journal*, 2(3), 2677–2684.

³³ Hafizhah, M., & Ichsan, S. M. (2024). The urgency of calligraphy in islamic education. *Eduslamic*, 2(1), 26–36.

³⁴ Torres-Harding, S., Baber, A., Hilvers, J., Hobbs, N., & Maly, M. T. (2018). Children as agents of social and community change: Enhancing youth empowerment through participation in a school-based social activism project: *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 13(1), 3–18.

³⁵ Mališů, P., & Šaloun, P. (2020). *Multimedia and interactivity in educational materials*. 13, 47–50.

activities and interactive media play a role in shaping certain moral characteristics. The main categories that emerged such as the mechanisms for instilling values, the role of emotional aspects, and the reinforcement of behaviour were gradually derived from the available data. The author recognises that the interpretation of written sources may be influenced by the theoretical perspective adopted, but the clarity of the procedure is maintained by recording every step taken. The use of various sources from different academic disciplines strengthens the validity of the argument presented by Mark et al. (2017). The final outcome of this study is a comprehensive understanding of how creative methods can optimize Islamic education for the development of moral character in elementary school-aged children.

D. Result and Discussion

Islamic education for elementary school-aged children is aimed at imparting knowledge while fostering strong moral character in accordance with Islamic values. Creative methods are an effective approach to making the learning process more engaging, as they integrate cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects in a balanced way. The application of effective teaching skills is essential for improving the quality of religious education.³⁶ Creativity in Islamic education enables children to understand religious values not only in theory but also as a joyful, meaningful life experience that can be easily instilled in them from an early age.

The development of character in children through Islamic education using creative methods emphasizes the process of shaping attitudes, behaviors, and habits that are in accordance with Islamic teachings. Elementary school-aged children are in a developmental stage where they are highly sensitive to environmental stimuli; therefore, creative methods can be an effective means of instilling values such as honesty, responsibility, compassion, and discipline. Students' moral character is also greatly influenced by the school environment and parenting styles at home.³⁷ Creative methods in the process of teaching Islam to elementary school-aged children can be understood as an approach that prioritizes a variety of strategies, media, and activities capable of fostering interest and encouraging children's active engagement. Through this method, learning is not a one-sided process, but rather creates space for children to explore, imagine, and connect Islamic values with their daily experiences. It is important to understand that teachers' competence and parental involvement are key factors in the successful development of moral character.³⁸ For example, the use of educational games, picture books, simple performances, or group activities can be effective tools for instilling the concept of noble character. Thus, creative methods serve as a bridge between normative teaching materials and the children's world of curiosity, allowing the development of Islamic character to take place naturally, enjoyably, and sustainably.

The play-based approach to Islamic education has its own advantages because it aligns with the natural world of elementary school-aged children.³⁹ A child's world is one filled with activities, exploration, and imagination. Compared to conventional lecture-based methods,

³⁶ Yulianto, A., & Darmawan, D. (2024). Effective implementation of teaching skills and religious activities to enhance the quality of learning in Islamic religious education at MTsN 2 Surabaya. *Educan: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 8(1), 68-85.

³⁷ Dena, S. & D. Darmawan. (2024). Character Development of Students in Public High School 4 Surabaya Through the Role of School Culture and Parenting Style. *EduInovasi: Journal of Basic Educational Studies*, 4(1), 417-428.

³⁸ Firmansyah, B. & D. Darmawan. (2023). The Importance of Islamic Education Teacher Competence and Parental Attention in Enhancing Students' Character Formation at Nur Al-Jadid Excellent Islamic High School. *Jurnal Cahaya Mandalika*, 4(2), 1353-1363.

³⁹ Qolbi, L. F. A., & Sajidin, Z. N. (2025). Effectiveness of Play-Based Learning Approach in Teaching Islamic Values to Early Childhood Children. 2(1), 50-64.

simulation or hands-on learning has been shown to yield better learning outcomes for students.⁴⁰ When values such as honesty and empathy are taught through role-playing activities, children do not feel as though they are being lectured or given advice. Instead, they directly experience situations where honesty is required or where empathy can help others. For example, playing store with toy money can be used as a way to teach honesty. After the game ends, teachers can lead a discussion about what it feels like to be the victim of a scam and what it feels like to be treated honestly. This emotionally resonant experience has a much stronger impact than simply listening to an explanation about the sin of lying.

Storytelling is a highly effective method for conveying Islamic values, as this activity engages nearly all parts of the brain simultaneously.⁴¹ A child who listens to the story of Prophet Joseph known for his honesty and patience does not merely receive information verbally, but also visualizes the events and empathizes with the emotions experienced by the characters in the story. In addition to the story itself, discipline during the learning process also significantly influences students' learning outcomes in religious education classes.⁴² A well-told story can create an emotional bond between the listener and the characters in the story. For example, after hearing the story of the Prophet Muhammad, who was known as Al-Amin, children have a real role model to emulate. A variety of follow-up activities after listening to the story also help to deepen their understanding and strengthen their long-term memory.

Art in Islamic education opens up channels of expression that cannot be accessed through verbal methods alone.⁴³ Children who may find it difficult to express their understanding in words can do so through drawing or craft activities. Through creative education, communities are helped to develop and become more inclusive in the future.⁴⁴ For example, after learning about the importance of hygiene, children can be asked to make a poster. The creative process involved in making a poster encourages children to reflect on what they have learnt. Art also teaches patience and attention to detail, which are in line with the discipline and sense of responsibility that educators wish to instil.

Social service activities provide the most authentic learning experience, as children are directly involved in practical actions that benefit others.⁴⁵ Children play an active part in helping to clean the mosque or collect donations. Community-based activities such as these also help to foster legal and social awareness from an early age.⁴⁶ Hands-on experiences of this kind leave a lasting impression because they engage all the senses and emotions. A sense of ownership of these activities encourages children to take their tasks more seriously. Educators need to design community service activities appropriate to the children's age so that the learning process remains meaningful.

⁴⁰ Saroinsong, B., & Sinambela, E. A. (2014). Uji Beda Hasil Belajar Siswa melalui Metode Pembelajaran Ceramah dan Metode Pembelajaran Simulasi. *Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen Pendidikan Indonesia*, 1(1), 33-42.

⁴¹ Eryina, E., Nurofikoh, A., Afriani, L., & Asroni, M. (2025). The use of islamic stories as an effort to improve students' religious character in islamic religious education learning. *Multidisciplinary Indonesian Center Journal*, 2(3), 2677-2684.

⁴² Rofiuddin, A. N., & Darmawan, D. (2024). Pengaruh Disiplin Belajar terhadap Hasil Belajar pada Mata Pelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam Siswa Sekolah Menengah Atas Setingkat. *Journal Of Early Childhood And Islamic Education*, 3(1), 110-127.

⁴³ Hafizhah, M., & Ichsan, S. M. (2024). The urgency of calligraphy in islamic education. *Eduslamic*, 2(1), 26-36.

⁴⁴ Warin, A. K. (2022). Reconstructing Community Futures Through Non-Formal Education for Participatory and Inclusive Social Advancement. *Journal of Social Science Studies*, 2(1), 183-188.

⁴⁵ Buchbinder, D. (2022). Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals Through the Power of Play. *Childhood Education*, 98(2), 16-23.

⁴⁶ Rojak, J. A. (2021). The Importance of Civic Education to Increase Community Legal Awareness. *Journal of Social Science Studies*, 1(1), 44-50.

Technology-based interactive media offer new possibilities that traditional learning methods do not have.⁴⁷ Animation techniques can simplify abstract concepts into visual forms that are easier for children to understand. However, it is also important to consider the impact of social media and technology on pupils' moral character.⁴⁸ Interactive games can provide immediate feedback, allowing children to know straight away whether the choices they have made align with moral values. This instant feedback speeds up the learning process, as children do not need to wait for explanations or corrections from their teacher. A sensible balance between the use of technology and activities away from digital devices will yield the best results in shaping children's moral character.

The value of honesty can be fostered through a creative approach by creating situations in which honesty has a positive impact.⁴⁹ In play situations, explaining the logical consequences of an action is far more effective than imposing unrelated punishments, as children can immediately grasp the cause-and-effect relationship. This approach teaches them that being honest is a choice that pays off in the long run. Educators also need to create an environment in which children do not feel afraid to admit their mistakes. A supportive environment will help children grow into honest individuals who take responsibility for their actions.⁵⁰ A psychologically safe environment is a key prerequisite for fostering honesty, and a creative approach is very helpful in creating such conditions. Islamic education for primary school-aged children is aimed both at imparting knowledge and fostering strong moral character in accordance with the values of Islamic teachings. Creative teaching methods are an appropriate approach to enlivening the learning environment, as they are able to integrate knowledge, emotions and skills in a balanced manner. The application of effective teaching skills is essential for improving the quality of religious education.⁵¹ Creativity in Islamic education enables children to understand religious values not only in theory, but also as an enjoyable, meaningful life experience that is easily instilled in them from an early age.

The development of moral character in children through Islamic education using creative methods emphasises the process of shaping attitudes, behaviour and habits that are in line with Islamic teachings. Primary school-aged children are at a stage of development where they are highly receptive to environmental stimuli; therefore, creative methods can serve as an effective means of instilling values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy and discipline. Pupils' moral character is also greatly influenced by the school culture and parenting styles within the family environment.⁵² Creative methods in the teaching of Islam to primary school-aged children can be understood as an approach that prioritises a variety of strategies, resources and activities capable of stimulating children's interest and encouraging their active participation. Through this method, learning is not a one-way process, but rather creates space for children to explore, imagine and connect Islamic values

⁴⁷ Mališů, P., & Šaloun, P. (2020). *Multimedia and interactivity in educational materials*. 13, 47–50.

⁴⁸ Al Mursyidi, B. M. & D. Darmawan. (2023). The Influence of Academic Success of Islamic Religious Education and Social Media Involvement on Student Morality. *Al-Fikru: Jurnal Ilmiah*, 17(2), 321-331.

⁴⁹ Tabroni, I., & Nasihah, F. (2023). *Training the Honest Character of the Child at Home*. 2(1), 147–156.

⁵⁰ Dena, S. & D. Darmawan. (2024). Character Development of Students in Public High School 4 Surabaya Through the Role of School Culture and Parenting Style. *EduInovasi: Journal of Basic Educational Studies*, 4(1), 417–428 & Firmansyah, B. & D. Darmawan. (2023). The Importance of Islamic Education Teacher Competence and Parental Attention in Enhancing Students' Character Formation at Nur Al-Jadid Excellent Islamic High School. *Jurnal Cahaya Mandalika*, 4(2), 1353-1363.

⁵¹ Yulianto, A., & Darmawan, D. (2024). Effective implementation of teaching skills and religious activities to enhance the quality of learning in Islamic religious education at MTsN 2 Surabaya. *Educan: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 8(1), 68-85.

⁵² Dena, S. & D. Darmawan. (2024). Character Development of Students in Public High School 4 Surabaya Through the Role of School Culture and Parenting Style. *EduInovasi: Journal of Basic Educational Studies*, 4(1), 417–428.

with their everyday experiences. Teachers' competence and parental support are key factors in the successful development of moral character.⁵³ For example, the use of educational games, picture storybooks, simple plays or group activities can be effective means of instilling the concepts of noble moral character. In this way, creative methods act as a bridge between the prescribed teaching material and the children's curious world, so that the development of Islamic moral character can take place naturally, enjoyably and sustainably.

Teaching methods used in Islamic education have their own distinct advantages, as they are suited to the natural world of primary school-aged children.⁵⁴ A child's world is one full of activity, exploration and imagination. Compared with traditional lecture-based methods, simulation or hands-on learning has been shown to yield better learning outcomes for pupils.⁵⁵ When values such as honesty and empathy are taught through role-play, children do not feel as though they are being lectured. Instead, they directly experience for themselves situations that require them to be honest or where empathy can help others. For example, a game where children pretend to be shopkeepers and customers using play money can be used as a means of instilling honesty. The child playing the role of the shopkeeper must be honest when giving change. The child playing the role of the customer must also be honest if they receive too much change. The teacher can follow up the activity with a discussion once the game is over, for example by talking about how it feels to be cheated and how it feels to be treated honestly. This emotionally engaging experience has a far greater impact than simply listening to an explanation about the sin of lying. Play also teaches discipline, as every game has rules that must be followed. Children will come to understand that the joy of playing can only be experienced if all participants follow the rules. Breaking the rules will, in fact, spoil the game for everyone involved. This realisation fosters a sense of discipline rooted in care for one's surroundings, rather than merely a fear of punishment.

Storytelling is a highly effective way of conveying Islamic values, as this activity engages almost all parts of the brain simultaneously.⁵⁶ When children listen to the story of the Prophet Joseph, who is known as a figure of honesty and patience, they not only take in the information conveyed verbally, but also visualise the events in the story, empathise with what the characters are going through, and relate the narrative to their own life experiences. In addition to storytelling, discipline in the learning process also has a significant impact on pupils' learning outcomes in religious education.⁵⁷ A well-told story creates an emotional bond between the listener and the characters in the story. Children will feel sympathy for characters who suffer injustice and feel relieved when truth and justice are finally upheld. These feelings will then become associated with the noble values embodied by the characters in the story. To give an example, after hearing the story of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, who was known as Al-Amin or 'the Trustworthy' children have a real role model to emulate. Teachers can reinforce the impact of the story by asking thought-

⁵³ Firmansyah, B. & D. Darmawan. (2023). The Importance of Islamic Education Teacher Competence and Parental Attention in Enhancing Students' Character Formation at Nur Al-Jadid Excellent Islamic High School. *Jurnal Cahaya Mandalika*, 4(2), 1353-1363.

⁵⁴ Qolbi, L. F. A., & Sajidin, Z. N. (2025). Effectiveness of Play-Based Learning Approach in Teaching Islamic Values to Early Childhood Children. 2(1), 50-64.

⁵⁵ Saroinsong, B., & Sinambela, E. A. (2014). Uji Beda Hasil Belajar Siswa melalui Metode Pembelajaran Ceramah dan Metode Pembelajaran Simulasi. *Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen Pendidikan Indonesia*, 1(1), 33-42.

⁵⁶ Ervina, E., Nurofikoh, A., Afriani, L., & Asroni, M. (2025). The use of islamic stories as an effort to improve students' religious character in islamic religious education learning. *Multidisciplinary Indonesian Center Journal*, 2(3), 2677-2684.

⁵⁷ Rofiuddin, A. N., & Darmawan, D. (2024). Pengaruh Disiplin Belajar terhadap Hasil Belajar pada Mata Pelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam Siswa Sekolah Menengah Atas Setingkat. *Journal Of Early Childhood And Islamic Education*, 3(1), 110-127.

provoking questions, such as what the children would do if they were in the same situation. Children can also be encouraged to draw their favourite part of the story or act out key conversations from the narrative. A variety of activities following a story help to deepen understanding and strengthen long-term memory. The storytelling method is also highly flexible, as it can be adapted to suit children's age, background and interests. The same story can be told at different levels of complexity for both Year 1 and Year 5 pupils.

The role of art in Islamic education opens up avenues of expression that cannot be achieved through oral teaching methods.⁵⁸ Children who may find it difficult to express their understanding of Islamic values through words can convey it through activities such as drawing, painting, making collages or creating handicrafts. Through creative education, we are in fact helping society to develop and become more inclusive in the future.⁵⁹ For example, after learning that maintaining cleanliness is part of one's faith, children could be asked to create a poster setting out ways to keep the school environment clean. The creative process involved in making the poster encourages children to reflect on what they have learnt, select the most important key messages, and organise them into a visually appealing display. The resulting posters can then be displayed on the classroom walls as a reminder to the whole school community. Art also teaches patience and attention to detail. A good piece of art requires time, attention to detail, and a willingness to refine parts that are not yet perfect. These values are in line with the discipline and sense of responsibility that educators wish to instil. Arabic calligraphy can serve as a means of bringing children closer to the Qur'an. Colouring and writing the Hijaiyah letters beautifully fosters a sense of love and respect for the holy book. Children who have a positive emotional connection to the Qur'an will be more motivated to read and study it further.

Social projects provide the most authentic learning experience because children are directly involved in practical actions that benefit others.⁶⁰ There are no activities that are merely simulated or involve role-play. The children actually help to clean the mosque, collect clothes that are still in good condition for donation, or visit friends who are ill. Community-based activities such as these are also beneficial for fostering legal and social awareness from an early age.⁶¹ Such first-hand experiences will leave a lasting impression because they engage all the senses and emotions. Children can see for themselves the circumstances of people in need. They hear stories about the difficulties these people face. They also experience a sense of joy when their donations are gratefully received. The positive feelings that arise from the act of giving and helping will serve as a natural incentive, encouraging children to repeat this behaviour in the future.

Social projects also instil a sense of responsibility, as each child is given a clear task and role within the activity. For example, one child is tasked with bringing ten books to donate, whilst another is tasked with documenting the event through photographs. A sense of ownership of the project encourages the children to carry out their tasks with greater dedication. Teachers need to design social projects that are age-appropriate, safe to undertake, and have a clear link to the Islamic values being taught. Projects that are too large or demanding may actually make children feel overwhelmed and disappointed. The most important thing is the process itself, not the extent of the impact achieved.

⁵⁸ Hafizhah, M., & Ichsan, S. M. (2024). The urgency of calligraphy in islamic education. *Eduslamic*, 2(1), 26–36.

⁵⁹ Warin, A. K. (2022). Reconstructing Community Futures Through Non-Formal Education for Participatory and Inclusive Social Advancement. *Journal of Social Science Studies*, 2(1), 183-188.

⁶⁰ Buchbinder, D. (2022). Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals Through the Power of Play. *Childhood Education*, 98(2), 16–23.

⁶¹ Rojak, J. A. (2021). The Importance of Civic Education to Increase Community Legal Awareness. *Journal of Social Science Studies*, 1(1), 44-50.

Technology-based interactive media opens up new opportunities that are not available in traditional learning methods.⁶² Animation techniques can break down abstract concepts into visual representations that are easy for children to understand. For example, an animation depicting angels recording good and bad deeds can help children visualise the concept of divine oversight, which is, by its very nature, invisible to the naked eye. Nevertheless, attention must also be paid to the impact of social media and technology on pupils' moral character.⁶³

Interactive games can provide immediate feedback, so that children know straight away whether the choices they have made in simulated moral dilemmas are correct or not. This instant feedback speeds up the learning process, as children do not need to wait for explanations or corrections from their teacher. Educational apps can also be tailored to each child's learning pace, ensuring that no child is left behind or, conversely, becomes bored. However, the use of interactive media must still adhere to the principle of balance. Spending too much time staring at a screen can reduce social interaction and physical activity, both of which are also vital for children's growth and development. Teachers must also ensure that the material presented is in line with Islamic values and does not contain any elements of violence or other inappropriate content. Interactive media should be used to complement, rather than replace, conventional learning methods such as play, storytelling and social projects. A judicious combination of technology and non-digital activities will yield the best results.

Honesty can be fostered through creative means, namely by creating situations in which honest behaviour leads to positive outcomes, whilst dishonesty results in reasonable consequences.⁶⁴ In a game, a child caught cheating should simply be excluded from the game without being given an excessive punishment. Logical consequences such as this are far more effective than punishments that bear no relation to the offence, as the child can immediately understand the cause-and-effect relationship of their actions.

In storytelling, honest characters always have a happy ending, whilst dishonest characters face difficulties. This pattern teaches us that honesty is a choice that pays off in the long run. When carrying out a community project, a child who is honest about their limitations in helping out will receive support from their friends. Conversely, a child who pretends to be able to do it but ultimately fails will end up disappointing others. Teachers also need to create an environment where admitting mistakes does not instil fear. A child who has the courage to admit that they have broken a glass, for example, should first be praised for their honesty before being helped to clear up the shards. If, every time a child is honest about their mistakes, they are punished instead, they will come to see honesty as something dangerous. An environment in which children feel psychologically safe is essential for fostering honesty. Creative teaching methods can help to create such an atmosphere through enjoyable, non-judgemental activities.

Discipline can be instilled through creative methods, namely by treating rules as a mutual agreement rather than merely as orders from those in authority. In games, the rules are discussed and agreed upon together before play begins. Fundamentally, learning about discipline and self-control is crucial to a pupil's success.⁶⁵ Children who break the rules are not necessarily bad children; rather, they may simply have forgotten the rules or not yet fully understood them. Teachers can remind them in a friendly tone, rather than adopting a

⁶² Mališū, P., & Šaloun, P. (2020). *Multimedia and interactivity in educational materials*. 13, 47–50.

⁶³ Al Mursyidi, B. M. & D. Darmawan. (2023). The Influence of Academic Success of Islamic Religious Education and Social Media Involvement on Student Morality. *Al-Fikru: Jurnal Ilmiah*, 17(2), 321–331.

⁶⁴ Tabroni, I., & Nasihah, F. (2023). *Training the Honest Character of the Child at Home*. 2(1), 147–156.

⁶⁵ Maharani, L., & Darmawan, D. (2024). Factors Affecting Learning Achievement: Learning Discipline and Self-regulation at MTs Wachid Hasyim Surabaya. *TA'DIBUNA: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 7(1), 12–20.

judgemental attitude. Self-discipline has been shown to have a significant impact on learning outcomes.⁶⁶ When implementing social projects, the schedule of activities is drawn up collectively so that every child knows what they are expected to do and when. A sense of ownership of the schedule will increase their willingness to follow it. It is this combination of discipline and motivation that maximises pupils' learning outcomes at primary school level.⁶⁷ Through artistic activities, children learn discipline through the process itself. A work of art cannot be produced instantly. Children must be disciplined in following each stage, from preparing the materials to the final completion of the work. Patience and perseverance are forms of discipline that are no less important than adherence to rules. Creative methods also teach that discipline is a means to achieve enjoyable goals, not an end in itself. Children follow the rules of a game so that the activity remains enjoyable. Children complete community projects so that the help they provide can be of benefit to those receiving it. This understanding allows discipline to grow from within, rather than being driven solely by external pressure.⁶⁸ As children grow up, they will behave in a disciplined manner of their own accord, not out of fear of authority.

A sense of responsibility is fostered by giving children meaningful roles whose impact they can feel directly.⁶⁹ In a community project, a child who is given the task of bringing food to be distributed will feel a sense of responsibility, because if they forget to do so, the people receiving the aid will be disappointed. The fear of disappointing others is a stronger motivator for a sense of responsibility than the fear of punishment. Character education delivered in creative ways such as these is, in fact, a key factor in achieving better academic results.⁷⁰ In role-play, the child acting as group leader is responsible for organising and coordinating the other members. If they fail to do so, the group will not succeed. This shared responsibility teaches them that their behaviour affects not only themselves but also others. When creating art as a group, each child is responsible for a specific part of the overall work. If one part is not done properly, the whole project will be compromised. This experience teaches children about interdependence and the importance of being trustworthy. Furthermore, the role of the family and a culture of reading at home also plays a vital part in fostering a sense of responsibility in pupils.⁷¹ Teachers need to place their trust in children by giving them age-appropriate responsibilities. Do not immediately take over the task when a child appears to be struggling. Let them experience the consequences of their own mistakes, provided this remains within safe limits. Failure in small matters can actually serve as a valuable lesson. A child who has ever felt embarrassed for forgetting to bring a donation will be more likely to remember to act responsibly in the future than a child who is

⁶⁶ Wijayanti, E., & Darmawan, D. (2024). Pengaruh disiplin belajar terhadap hasil belajar siswa setingkat menengah atas. *Robbayana: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 2(2), 73-84.

⁶⁷ Darmawan, D., Maghfiroh, P. L., & Romadhoni, A. N. H. (2026). Pengaruh Disiplin Belajar dan Motivasi Belajar Terhadap Hasil Belajar Siswa Sekolah Dasar. *Didaktik: Jurnal Ilmiah PGSD STKIP Subang*, 12(01), 123-148.

⁶⁸ Chairilayah, D. (2019). *Educating children to be a discipline person*. 3(6), 1282–1288.

⁶⁹ Raquel, R. (2020). *The school and education for responsibility: how effective?* <https://doi.org/10.13140/rg.2.2.17621.24805>

⁷⁰ Sidqi, M. H., & Darmawan, D. (2025). The Role of Character Education, Creativity, Motivation, and Social Media Use as Predictors of Junior High School Academic Achievement. *Jurnal Pendidikan Progresif*, 15(2), 978-994.

⁷¹ Azizah, C., & Darmawan, D. (2025). The Influence of Literacy Culture, Family Roles, and Learning Discipline on Student Learning Achievement At MA Tanada Waru Sidoarjo. *Dirasah: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 6(2), 167-182.

constantly reminded by their parents. A positive learning environment and the habit of studying regularly also greatly help children grow into high-achieving individuals.⁷²

Empathy, as a personality trait, is developed through direct experience of feeling what others are feeling. Storytelling is a highly effective method for fostering empathy, as it draws children into the world of the characters in the story. They share in the sadness of a character who has suffered a loss, the joy of a character who has achieved something, and the fear of a character who is in danger. Follow-up activities after storytelling such as discussing the characters' feelings and the reasons behind their actions will deepen that emotional understanding. Social projects are the most tangible means of learning empathy. Through appropriate education, children's character can also be shaped so that they are able to value interfaith harmony in today's era of globalization.⁷³ Children who visit nursing homes and listen to the elderly talk about the loneliness they feel will develop a sense of empathy that cannot be gained simply by reading textbooks. Children who help classmates who are struggling to understand the material will come to understand that everyone has their own strengths and weaknesses. Cooperative games, in which children must work together to achieve a common goal, also help foster empathy. Children learn to observe their friends' facial expressions and body language. They get used to offering help before being asked, and realize that shared success is more valuable than personal victory. Teachers can reinforce this sense of empathy by regularly encouraging children to reflect on how their actions affect other people's feelings. These reflective activities should take place in a safe environment so that children do not feel afraid of being judged. Empathy is the foundation of nearly all morally good behavior, so efforts to foster it through creative methods are extremely beneficial.⁷⁴

The level of religiosity or religious awareness among elementary school-aged children cannot be imposed through indoctrination.⁷⁵ What can be done is to create positive experiences related to the practice of religious teachings. In the modern era, an understanding of technology or digital literacy grounded in religious values is also important for children's mental health.⁷⁶ An arts-based approach can create an enjoyable aesthetic experience in the practice of worship. A child who creates a neat and beautiful place to keep the Qur'an will feel proud and more motivated to read it. A child who decorates the classroom in preparation for Ramadan will feel joy in welcoming the holy month. Sharing inspiring stories about the prophets and the Companions sets examples that children admire. They not only learn that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was honest, but they also develop a sense of admiration that encourages them to emulate that trait.

A play-based approach can teach the proper way to worship without causing stress.⁷⁷ The application of the concept of human capital based on Islamic values can serve as a highly

⁷² Amrulloh, A., darajaatul Aliyah, N., & Darmawan, D. (2024). Pengaruh kebiasaan belajar, lingkungan belajar dan motivasi belajar terhadap prestasi belajar siswa MTS Darul Hikmah Langkap Burneh Bangkalan. *AL-MIKRAJ Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Humaniora (E-ISSN 2745-4584)*, 5(01), 188-200.

⁷³ Hariyadi, A., Jenuri, J., Darmawan, D., Suwarma, D. M., & Pramono, S. A. (2023). Building of the Pancasila character with religious harmony in the globalization era. *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 15(2), 2126-2133.

⁷⁴ Manda, D., Arifin, I., Manda, D., & Arifin, I. (2024). *Teacher's Strategy in Fostering Students Empathy through Thematic Learning Approach in Elementary School*. 2(2), 92–100.

⁷⁵ Arold, B. W., Woessmann, L., Zierow, L., Arold, B. W., Woessmann, L., & Zierow, L. (2025). Can Schools Change Religious Attitudes? *Journal of Human Resources*, 0723-13023R2.

⁷⁶ Khayru, R. K., Issalillah, F., Mardikaningsih, R., Putra, A. R., & Darmawan, D. (2025, October). The Impact of Islamic Digital Literacy on College Students Mental Health and Charity Behavior. In *Proceedings of International Conference on Educational Management* (Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 103-113).

⁷⁷ Afifah, N., Hernisawati, H., & Aisyah, N. (2025). Planting the Values of Islamic Religious Education in Elementary School Aged Children at the Baitul Makmur Islamic Boarding School, Metro Lampung. *Journal of Research in Islamic Education*, 7(2), 824–835.

effective framework in the field of education.⁷⁸ A simulation activity involving wudu using real water on the school grounds will be easier to remember than simply memorizing the pillars of wudu. Social activities rooted in the intention to please Allah SWT teach us that worship is not limited to a series of rituals alone. Helping others is a form of worship that is deeply beloved by Allah SWT. These positive experiences create positive emotional memories, enabling children to develop a healthy emotional connection to religious teachings. As they grow up, they will not view religion as a burden or merely a set of prohibitions, but rather as a source of meaning and happiness in life. This is the true essence of religious faith.⁷⁹

Combining various creative methods into a single set of learning materials will produce a synergistic effect that is greater than if only a single method were used.⁸⁰ For example, the topic of honesty can be introduced through the story of a prophet known for his honesty; explored further through role-playing exercises that depict situations involving both honest and dishonest behavior; expressed through art by creating posters about the importance of honesty; and put into practice through social activities, such as setting up an “honesty box” in the classroom where students can return found items belonging to others. This multi-method approach can accommodate the different learning styles of each child. The comprehensive application of various learning theories is essential in today’s educational landscape.⁸¹ No child is left behind because learning methods tailored to their abilities are available and implemented.

Teachers need to design a systematic learning sequence, starting from the presentation of concepts through to their application in real life. Do not treat creative methods merely as side activities unrelated to the primary learning objectives. Creative teaching methods must be at the core of the teaching process, not merely a superficial embellishment. This requires teachers to have a solid understanding of integrated instructional design, as well as the courage to move away from fragmented and disconnected teaching practices.⁸² Changes in the way religious education is delivered amid today’s digital world do indeed call for renewal and fresh innovations in teaching.⁸³ Support from school principals and education supervisors is essential so that teachers have sufficient room to develop these innovations.

⁷⁸ Darmawan, D. (2021). Islamic Human Capital Implementation as Effective Framework in Islamic Human Capital Management. *Journal of Social Science Studies*, 1(1), 239-244.

⁷⁹ Samiaji, M. H., Prawening, C., & Husnifah, H. (2025). Increasing Religious Awareness in Early Childhood Through Religious Literacy Programs at Lukman Hakim Purwokerto Kindergarten. *ASGHAR: Journal of Children Studies*.

⁸⁰ Kizi, U. M. A. (2025). Methods of Teaching with The Use of Modern Pedagogical and Information and Communication Technologies. *International Journal of Pedagogics*, 5(8), 29–31.

⁸¹ Kurniawan, Y., & Darmawan, D. (2024). Pendekatan multidimensional dalam penerapan teori behaviorisme, kognitivisme, konstruktivisme, dan humanisme di pendidikan modern. *Jurnal Pendidikan, Penelitian, Dan Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 4(1), 65-74.

⁸² Qolbi, L. F. A., & Sajidin, Z. N. (2025). Effectiveness of Play-Based Learning Approach in Teaching Islamic Values to Early Childhood Children. 2(1), 50–64.

⁸³ Fajar, A. S. M., Fauzi, A., Darmawan, D., Putra, A. R., & Arifin, S. (2025). Transformation of Islamic Religious Education in the Digital Landscape and its Implications for Pedagogical Innovation. *International Journal of Service Science, Management, Engineering, and Technology*, 8(1), 15-20.



Figure 1. Framework for Creative Islamic Education for Children

Assessing moral and character development through creative methods requires a different approach than that used in standard written tests.⁸⁴ A teacher cannot conclude that a child is honest simply because the child is able to correctly answer a question about the meaning of honesty. Character must be assessed based on the actual behavior the child demonstrates in various situations. An overall positive school culture will have a beneficial influence on the daily development of students' personalities.⁸⁵

During playtime, teachers can observe whether children play fairly or cheat. During social activities, teachers can see whether children take the initiative to help others or simply follow instructions. After listening to or reading a story, teachers can observe whether children show concern for the characters in the story. A collection of children's artwork can also illustrate the development of their understanding of noble values over time.

Teachers need to record these observations regularly and systematically, for example, in the form of a daily log or a behavior checklist. Reports provided to parents should also explain the child's personality development, rather than focusing solely on academic grades. Educational strategies like this can be applied to all children, including those with special needs.⁸⁶ Parental involvement is also crucial, as the character education provided at school must be continued at home. Creative methods can be designed to involve parents, such as through family activities or assignments in which children retell the positive stories they heard at school.

The various challenges in applying creative methods in the field are often related to limitations in resources, time, and available support.⁸⁷ Many schools have limited facilities,

⁸⁴ Mutmainnah, Najmudin, D., & Mutmainnah. (2025). *Evaluasi Non-Tes Sebagai Instrumen Pengembangan Karakter Dan Keterampilan Abad 21*. 3(1), 12–23.

⁸⁵ Wanti, M. W., & Darmawan, D. (2024). The influence of school culture on the character of junior high school students. *Journal of Islamic Elementary Education*, 2(2), 201-214.

⁸⁶ Magfud, C., Hariani, M., & Aliyah, N. D. (2023). Islamic Education for All: A Review of Strategies and Inclusion Frameworks for Students with Special Needs. *Journal of Social Science Studies*, 3(2), 353-364.

⁸⁷ Gunasena, P., Hapuarachchi, T., Ekanayake, U., Rajapaksha, S., Gunawardana, K., Aluthge, P., Jayawardana, A., & Gunathilake, S. (2024). *Navigating the Complexities of Data Collection: A Critical Analysis of Methods and Challenges*. <https://doi.org/10.13140/rg.2.2.23829.95206>

cramped classrooms, and large class sizes.⁸⁸ To address this issue, strong leadership from school principals and effective strategies are needed to improve the quality of education.⁸⁹

Creative teachers can overcome these limitations by repurposing used items that are still usable as teaching aids, utilizing the school grounds as a playground, and designing activities that do not require a large amount of space. Improving teacher performance through a strong work ethic and discipline is also a key factor in the success of education in schools.⁹⁰ What matters most is the intention and the process of carrying it out, not how big or lavish the event is.

Time constraints can also be addressed by integrating character education into every learning opportunity, not just during religion classes. Noble values are not taught in isolation but are practiced and internalized throughout all activities. Support from the principal and fellow teachers is essential for fostering a school culture that consistently nurtures students' character. A creative and enthusiastic teacher can inspire their colleagues, but without support from school administrators, the innovations they've initiated will quickly come to a halt and not continue.

The success of applying creative methods in character development depends heavily on consistency in their implementation and the example set by educators.⁹¹ The combination of strong teacher competence and student discipline in learning is the key to achieving outstanding results.⁹² Seorang guru yang menggunakan metode penyampaian kisah yang menarik namun bersikap kasar kepada siswa dalam interaksi sehari-hari akan kehilangan kepercayaan dan wibawanya. Anak-anak sangat peka terhadap ketidaksesuaian antara apa yang disampaikan guru dengan apa yang dilakukan oleh guru tersebut. Pesan yang disampaikan melalui kisah akan menjadi tidak bermakna karena bertentangan dengan contoh nyata yang dilihat anak. Teachers who wish to instill honesty in their students must first be honest themselves. In character education, leading by example is the most important teaching tool. Creative methods are not a quick fix that can replace the role of leading by example. Creative methods serve as an effective means of conveying a message, but that message must also be embodied in the attitudes and behavior of the person conveying it.

Updating creative teaching methods in Islamic education to shape the character of elementary school-aged children is an urgent need based on an understanding of how children learn and develop.⁹³ Elementary school-aged children are in the concrete operational stage of cognitive development, according to Piaget's theory of cognitive development. They learn best through real objects and direct experiences, rather than through abstract symbols. Methods such as play, storytelling, art projects, social activities, and the use of interactive learning media are all based on the principle of learning through real-life experiences. Through a creative approach, children not only master the theory but

⁸⁸ Mzimela, V. H., Makhonza, L. O., Buthelezi, N., Ajani, O. A., Mzimela, V. H., Makhonza, L. O., Buthelezi, N., & Ajani, O. A. (2025). Unearthing the effects of classroom overcrowding on the quality of education in public schools. *International Journal of Innovative Technologies in Economy*, 3(51).

⁸⁹ Ismaya, B., Sutrisno, S., Darmawan, D., Jahroni, J., & Kholis, N. (2023). Strategy for leadership: how principals of successful schools improve education quality. *Al-Tanzim: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 7(1), 247-259.

⁹⁰ Sulipah, S., & Mardikaningsih, R. (2023). Strategies to Improve Teacher Performance through Motivation and Work Discipline. *Bulletin of Science, Technology and Society*, 2(3), 37-43. & Saputra, R. T., & Darmawan, D. (2023). Improving teacher performance through effective leadership, work discipline, and work motivation. *Bulletin of Science, Technology and Society*, 2(2), 31-36.

⁹¹ Phillips, J. H. (2025). *Character-Building*: 202–206. <https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.35049939.38>

⁹² Bayhaqi, H. N., Rafsanjani, M. Z., & Darmawan, D. (2025). Pengaruh Kedisiplinan Belajar dan Kompetensi Guru terhadap Prestasi Belajar Siswa. *Fondatia*, 9(2), 393-408.

⁹³ Cholil, M. (2025). Child Character Formation Through Islamic Religious Education. *Deleted Journal*, 3(2), 01–08. <https://doi.org/10.59841/ihsanika.v3i2.2365>

also develop noble character in their daily lives.⁹⁴ These methods recognize the nature of children as active, curious, and imaginative individuals. Education that runs counter to children's natural disposition will ultimately fail or, at the very least, yield suboptimal results. Conversely, education that aligns with children's natural disposition will yield results that exceed expectations. Children not only master the subject matter, but also develop a love for lifelong learning. A love for religious teachings is the most important achievement. Children who love Islam will practice its teachings voluntarily, not because they are forced to. They will grow up to be Muslims who not only diligently practice their faith but also exhibit noble character in their daily interactions. This is the ultimate goal of Islamic education. Creative methods are one way to achieve this noble goal.

⁹⁴ Wanti, M. W., & Darmawan, D. (2024). The influence of school culture on the character of junior high school students. *Journal of Islamic Elementary Education*, 2(2), 201-214. & Sidqi, M. H., & Darmawan, D. (2025). The Role of Character Education, Creativity, Motivation, and Social Media Use as Predictors of Junior High School Academic Achievement. *Jurnal Pendidikan Progresif*, 15(2), 978-994.

Conclusion

Creative methods such as play, storytelling, art projects, social activities, and the use of interactive media are effective in shaping and developing good character in elementary school students. Play instills honesty through the logical consequences of actions and fosters discipline through mutually agreed-upon rules. Storytelling fosters empathy by engaging children's emotions toward the characters in a story, and cultivates religious awareness through role models that children admire. Art activities instill a sense of responsibility through a creative process that requires attention to detail, while also serving as a means to express the values of beauty found in Islamic teachings. Social activities provide real-world experience in caring for others and strengthen a sense of shared responsibility. Interactive media facilitates understanding of abstract concepts through visual displays and provides immediate feedback to accelerate the learning process.

Combining various methods into a unified learning approach will produce mutually reinforcing effects, thereby accommodating the different learning styles of each child. The success of implementing creative methods depends heavily on the perseverance and exemplary behavior demonstrated by teachers, as well as support from all members of the school community, which can create an environment that fosters the development of students' character. The findings of this study have implications for Islamic religious education teachers, including the need to move away from teaching practices that focus solely on oral instruction and memorization, and to shift toward an approach that focuses on students' needs by utilizing a variety of creative methods. Schools are advised to provide adequate space, time, and resources so that teachers can develop innovative teaching methods. Training for educators should place greater emphasis on the skills needed to design and implement creative lessons, rather than focusing solely on mastery of religious instruction content. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct a comparative study on the effectiveness of each creative method in instilling various aspects of moral values. Research comparing different cultural backgrounds is also needed to understand how values prevalent in local communities can influence the development of appropriate teaching methods. This study is still limited to a theoretical analysis; therefore, further empirical research could be conducted to test the ideas presented here. In addition, parents are encouraged to apply similar methods at home, so that character education does not take place only at school.

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