

The Philosophy of Islamic Education in Strengthening Character Education in the Digital Era: A Case Study of MA Al Umm Malang.

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine how Islamic educational philosophy is constructed and implemented in strengthening students' character education in the digital era, as well as to formulate a conceptual model of character development grounded in Islamic values through a case study at MA Al Umm Malang. Addressing contemporary challenges such as ethical disorientation, value fragmentation, and declining self-regulation due to rapid digitalisation, this research employs a qualitative approach with an interpretive case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, and analysed thematically within the framework of Islamic educational philosophy. The findings indicate that character education at MA Al Umm Malang is rooted in a *tauhidic*, holistic, and *adab*-oriented philosophy, in which sound Islamic creed, noble character, and moral exemplarity serve as foundational elements. These values are operationalised through an integrated educational system, continuous mentoring, and value internalisation embedded in the 24-hour pesantren environment. Furthermore, this study formulates a conceptual model consisting of five interrelated components: a *tauhidic* value foundation, a holistic educational system, role modelling, sustained mentoring and evaluation, and epistemic reinforcement

as a filter for digital ethics. The study concludes that effective character education in the digital era requires a strong Islamic philosophical foundation and coherent institutional implementation.

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INTRODUCTION

Character education has become a central issue in contemporary educational discourse, particularly in response to the accelerating pace of digital transformation that affects nearly all dimensions of young people's lives. The digital era, characterised by the pervasive penetration of social media, artificial intelligence, and technology-based learning systems, not only presents pedagogical opportunities but also brings serious implications for the formation of students' values, ethics, and personal character (Anjarwati et al., 2022; Triyanto, 2020). Massive, instant, and not always verified access to information has the potential to weaken value authority, reduce the depth of moral reflection, and trigger ethical disorientation among learners. In this context, character education can no longer be understood merely as the reinforcement of behavioural norms; rather, it must be conceptualised as a continuous process of moral and spiritual consciousness formation (Al-Chudri & Najib, 2025; Maslani, 2025; Sukarno & Riyadini, 2024).

For Islamic educational institutions, particularly pesantren, the challenges of the digital era are more complex in nature. Historically, pesantren have been recognised as educational institutions that place morality (*akhlak*), proper conduct (*adab*), and spiritual formation at the core of the educational process. The system of collective life, the exemplary role of the *kiai*, and the integration of instruction and nurturing make pesantren a strategic space for character formation (Abdinigrum & Supriyadi, 2023; Maulana et al., 2025). However, digital realities have transformed patterns of student interaction, expanded sources of knowledge authority beyond the pesantren, and introduced new values that are not always aligned with the ethos of Islamic education.

These conditions demand profound philosophical reflection on how pesantren can preserve the substantive values of *tauhid* and morality while simultaneously engaging critically with digital dynamics (Andrian Al Firdaus et al., 2025; Khoiriyah, 2024; Marzuki et al., 2020).

Within this framework, Islamic educational philosophy provides a comprehensive conceptual foundation for understanding the holistic objectives of education. Education in Islam is not perceived merely as a process of knowledge transmission or the development of instrumental skills, but rather as a conscious endeavour to shape the whole human being one who is faithful, rational, and ethical (Aceng et al., 2024; Hasanah & Sukri, 2023). The intellectual tradition of Islamic education emphasises that the essence of education lies in the cultivation of *adab* and the internalisation of *tauhidic* values, which serve as the primary source of moral and spiritual orientation in both individual and social life. Accordingly, Islamic educational philosophy holds strong relevance as an analytical framework for examining the strengthening of character education amid the challenges of the digital era (Dewi et al., 2021; Kholifah, 2022).

Nevertheless, empirical studies that specifically examine the implementation of Islamic educational philosophy in character education practices within pesantren in the digital era remain relatively limited. Existing research tends to be conceptual in nature or based on literature reviews, while in-depth case studies exploring the internal dynamics of pesantren are still scarce. This is despite the fact that pesantren possess distinctive educational systems that cannot be simplistically analysed through the lens of formal schooling. The gap between the philosophical ideals of Islamic education and their actual implementation in traditional Islamic educational institutions thus indicates a significant research gap.

In the global context, this study also holds strategic relevance. Character education has become a major agenda in 21st-century education, particularly in relation to digital ethics, social responsibility, and the formation of morally grounded global citizens. Religious education, including Islamic education, is viewed as having the potential to function as a moral filtration mechanism in response to value-neutral digital information flows. However, this potential can only be realised if the values of Islamic educational philosophy are operationalised contextually in educational practice. Therefore, empirical studies are needed that not only articulate what ought to be (normative ideals) but also explain how these values are manifested in everyday educational realities (Arar et al., 2022; Fahrurrosi et al., 2025).

Based on this urgency, the present study focuses on MA Al Umm Malang as a case study of a pesantren-based institution that consciously integrates character education grounded in Islamic values within the context of the digital era. This research aims not only to describe existing educational practices but also to critically interpret the philosophical constructions that underpin them. Accordingly, the main research problems are formulated into two central questions: (1) how Islamic educational philosophy is constructed and implemented in strengthening students' character education in the digital era at MA Al Umm Malang, and (2) how a conceptual model of character education strengthening based on Islamic educational philosophy can be

formulated from the educational practices of the pesantren. Through these questions, the study is expected to contribute both theoretically and empirically to the development of Islamic education that is adaptive to digitalisation while remaining firmly rooted in Islamic epistemology and values.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach with an interpretative case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of how Islamic educational philosophy is constructed and implemented in strengthening character education in the digital era. The qualitative approach is chosen because the focus of the research is not directed towards testing causal relationships or measuring variables, but rather towards interpreting meanings, values, and educational practices embedded within the socio-cultural context of the pesantren. Within the tradition of Islamic educational research, this approach is particularly relevant for exploring the ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions of education that cannot be reduced to numerical data, especially when education is understood as a process of moral and spiritual consciousness formation.

The case study design is considered appropriate as this research focuses on a specific and contextual unit of analysis, namely MA Al Umm Malang, as part of a pesantren ecosystem that consciously integrates character education based on Islamic values in response to digital challenges. A case study enables the researcher to explore educational phenomena holistically and in depth, capturing the complexity of relationships between philosophical foundations, institutional structures, and pedagogical practices in real-life settings. This approach is consistent with John W. Creswell's view that case studies are effective for understanding social phenomena through "how" and "why" questions within natural contexts.

Paradigmatically, this study is grounded in an interpretative-constructivist paradigm, which views educational reality as a construction of meaning developed by educational actors through social interaction and value-oriented praxis. This paradigm aligns with Islamic educational philosophy, which conceptualises education as a process of cultivating adab and life orientation, rather than merely transmitting knowledge. The philosophical foundation of this research draws upon the classical tradition of Islamic education, particularly Imam al-Ghazali's conception of education as a process of tazkiyat al-nafs that integrates knowledge and morality, as well as Ibn Khaldun's perspective on education as a process of social habituation that shapes character through environment and exemplarity. This philosophical framework functions as an interpretative lens for reading and analysing the empirical data.

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis to obtain a comprehensive understanding of character education practices within the pesantren. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore the perspectives, experiences, and reflections of key educational actors, including pesantren caregivers, academic leaders, educators, and musyrif, thereby enabling the researcher to gather rich and contextually grounded data. Participant observation was carried out to directly examine how character values are internalised in

the daily lives of students, including interaction patterns, role modelling, mentoring practices, and the management of digital technology use. Meanwhile, document analysis focused on curricula, caregiving guidelines, and internal pesantren policies that reflect the integration of Islamic educational philosophy into the character education system.

Data analysis was conducted using a thematic-interpretative approach through processes of data reduction, data display, and reflective conclusion drawing. The collected data were coded and categorised according to key themes relevant to the research questions, such as philosophical constructions of education, strategies for implementing character education, educator exemplarity, and challenges and responses to the digital era. The analytical process was iterative, with the researcher continuously relating field findings to the framework of Islamic educational philosophy in order to produce a coherent and in-depth understanding. Through this approach, the study not only describes existing educational practices but also constructs a conceptual model for strengthening character education based on Islamic educational philosophy as a theoretical contribution of the research.

The validity and credibility of the data were ensured through the application of source and methodological triangulation, thereby enhancing the trustworthiness of the research findings. Interview data were verified through observation and document analysis, while researcher reflexivity was applied to recognise and minimise potential subjective bias in the interpretative process. With this methodological design, the study is expected to generate a contextual, in-depth, and meaningful understanding of the implementation of Islamic educational philosophy in strengthening character education in the digital era, while also making a significant contribution to the development of contemporary Islamic educational theory and practice.

RESULTS VS DISCUSSION

1. The Construction and Implementation of Islamic Educational Philosophy in Strengthening Character Education in the Digital Era

The research findings indicate that the Islamic educational philosophy at MA Al Umm Malang is firmly constructed upon a *tauhidic* paradigm that positions *aqidah* (creed) and *akhlaq* (moral character) as the primary foundations of human success in life. The pesantren leader, AHB, emphasised that education at MAA is grounded in the conviction that “the most decisive key to success in life is *aqidah* and noble character (*adab*),” which are derived directly from the Qur’an, the Sunnah, and the methodology (*manhaj*) of the *Salaf Shalih*. Within this philosophical construction, education is not understood as an instrumental process aimed solely at achieving academic attainment, but rather as a conscious endeavour to shape a life orientation based on faith (*iman*), righteous deeds (*amal shalih*), da’wah, and perseverance (*sabr*). AHB referred to the Qur’anic principle of four pillars of success faith, righteous action, enjoining truth (*tawāṣī bil-ḥaqq*), and enjoining patience (*tawāṣī biṣ-ṣabr*) as well as the hadith on *an-naṣiḥah* as the essence of ethical relationships between humans and Allah, His Messenger, leaders, and the wider

community. These findings demonstrate that the Islamic educational philosophy at MAA is both normative-transcendental and practical, in which character is not positioned as an auxiliary aspect but as the very essence of intelligence and life success.

This philosophical construction is further reinforced through references to the *Salaf Shalih* tradition, which places *adab* at the core of human intelligence. AHB interpreted the historical experiences of prominent Islamic figures as evidence that true intelligence is not dominated by intellectual capacity alone, but by moral maturity. The concept of *taghāful* magnanimity, emotional breadth, and a focus on substantive matters emerges as a key value emphasised in the character formation of students. Citing a statement attributed to the Companion Mu'awiyah, AHB conveyed that "reason is a measuring vessel; one-third consists of intellectuality, while two-thirds consist of *taghāful*." This interpretation indicates that within MAA's educational philosophy, character is not merely behavioural control but an ethical capacity to manage the self, navigate conflict, and prioritise life values. In the digital era, which is characterised by distraction, impulsivity, and symbolic conflict, the value of *taghāful* becomes a relevant characterological strategy for building students' moral resilience.

The implementation of this Islamic educational philosophy is concretely reflected in an educational design that is *shāmil* (comprehensive) and *mutakāmil* (integrated). According to MSF, education at MAA operates within an integrated 24-hour system, in which all student activities from waking up to returning to sleep are conditioned as part of the educational process. Education is not confined to classroom settings but encompasses the teaching of knowledge, the cultivation of *aqidah*, religious worship, and *adab* in social interactions. All of these processes are carried out under a single overarching orientation, namely '*ubūdiyyah* (servitude) to Allah, under the guidance of the central figure of the *kiai*. These findings indicate that the implementation of Islamic educational philosophy at MAA rejects the dichotomy between formal education and everyday life. Character is formed through the continuity of structured life experiences, rather than through partial or sporadic pedagogical interventions.

The primary foundation of the educational process at MAA is the inculcation of *aqidah shahihah* and *akhlaq al-karimah*, as emphasised by MSF. He positions the Meccan phase of the Prophet Muhammad's da'wah as a normative model, in which the formation of faith and morality preceded social and political expansion. According to him, the outcome of this approach was the emergence of a generation of Companions with "steel-like faith," capable of bearing the risks of da'wah. In the context of MAA, the inculcation of *Ahl al-Sunnah Ashhab al-Hadith* creed is directed towards enabling students to know, love, and draw closer to Allah, while simultaneously developing moral readiness for da'wah and service within society. Thus, character education at MAA is not defensive in nature, but proactive, shaping students as moral subjects prepared to engage with social realities, including digital realities.

In the instructional dimension, the implementation of Islamic educational philosophy is manifested through prioritising mastery of the foundational Islamic sciences. MSF explained that limited formal instructional time encourages MAA to adopt an essentialist approach, emphasising core disciplines such as *manhaj al-'aqidah*, *manhaj*

ad-da'wah, Arabic language, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, *uṣūl al-ḥadīth*, and the foundations of Islamic thought. This strategy reflects an epistemological awareness that character strengthening requires a systematic and profound cognitive framework. In the digital era, marked by information overload and fragmented knowledge, this epistemic grounding functions as a foundation for students' intellectual and moral resilience, preventing them from being easily swayed by digital narratives that contradict Islamic values.

The caregiving (*pengasuhan*) dimension constitutes a key instrument in the implementation of Islamic educational philosophy at MAA. Students are supervised by mentors with substantive competence and experience in their respective fields, ranging from *da'wah* and Qur'anic studies to *tauhid* and *ruqyah*. These findings indicate that role modelling is not positioned as a normative symbol, but as a lived practice that can be directly observed and emulated. This perspective is reinforced by UB, who emphasised that students are accompanied for 24 hours by *musyrif* as a deliberate effort to shape character through concrete examples. According to UB, intensive mentoring allows students to "gain direct illustrations and examples of good character in practice," ensuring that values do not remain at a purely cognitive level.

Furthermore, the implementation of character education at MAA is complemented by regular evaluation mechanisms and an improvement approach based on internal awareness. UB explained that weekly evaluations are conducted to monitor students' character development, and any deviations are promptly addressed to prevent prolonged issues. However, corrective measures are not applied repressively; instead, they emphasise the cultivation of awareness so that behavioural change emerges from within the students themselves. These findings indicate that MAA adopts a transformative approach to character education, which aligns with Islamic educational philosophy that emphasises intention (*niyyah*) and moral consciousness as the foundation of action.

In the context of the digital era, the study also identified serious challenges affecting the implementation of character education. UB revealed that the limited number of *musyrif* and students' addiction to mobile phones constitute major obstacles in student supervision. The phenomenon of students secretly using mobile phones negatively impacts learning focus and gives rise to dishonest behaviour. These findings indicate that digitalisation poses not only technical challenges but also ethical problems that test the consistency of character values. Nevertheless, the presence of these challenges further underscores the relevance of the character education model based on Islamic educational philosophy implemented at MAA, as it provides a relatively strong value framework and caregiving system for responding to digital disruption.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the Islamic educational philosophy at MA Al Umm Malang is integrally constructed from normative Islamic sources and the *Salaf Shalih* tradition, and is implemented through a holistic educational system grounded in role modelling and oriented towards the formation of moral consciousness. While this implementation is not free from the challenges of the digital era, it clearly illustrates how Islamic educational philosophy functions as an ethical and pedagogical framework that is both adaptive and firmly rooted in *tauhidic* and moral values.

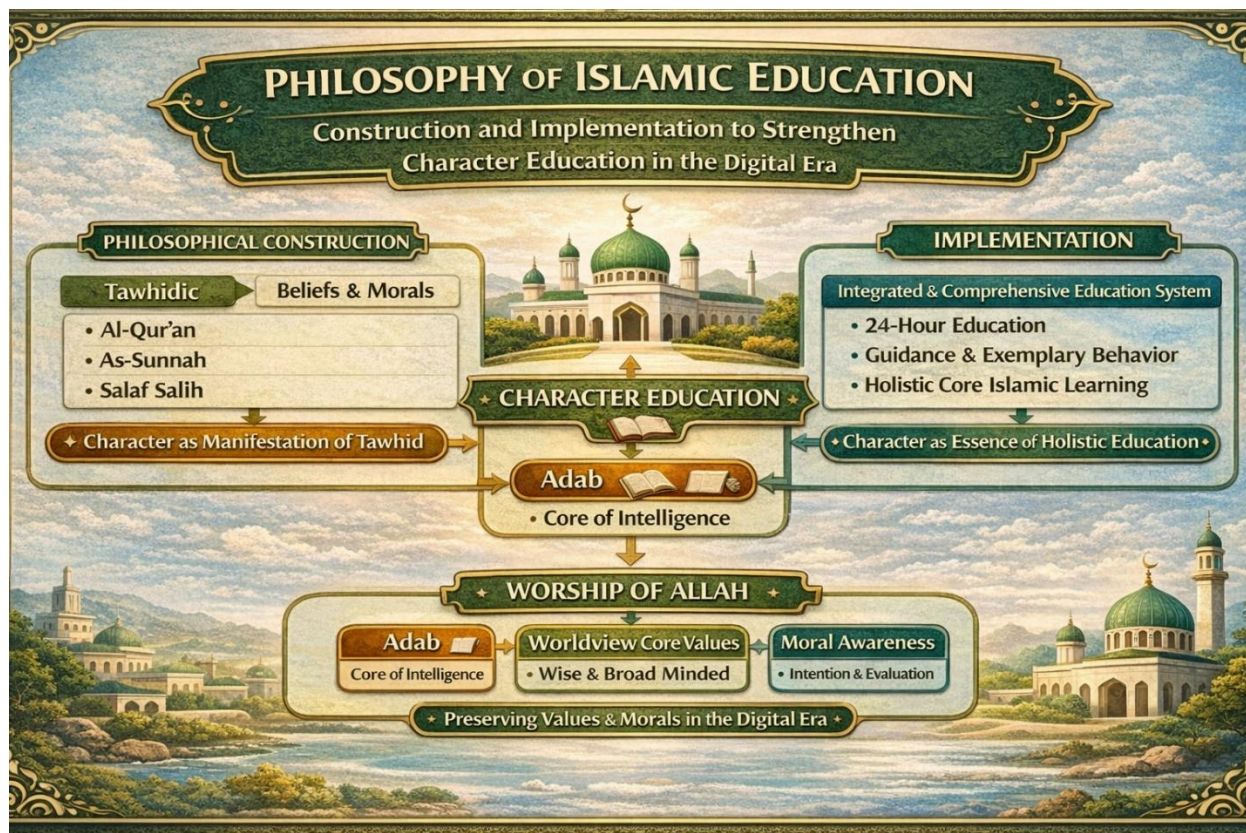


Figure 1. Construction and Implementation of Islamic Educational Philosophy for Strengthening Character Education in the Digital Era

2. A Conceptual Model for Strengthening Character Education Based on Islamic Educational Philosophy

Based on the thematic analysis of interview, observation, and documentary data, this study formulates a conceptual model for strengthening character education grounded in Islamic educational philosophy, derived from educational practices at MA Al Umm Malang. This model is not designed as a normative-abstract framework, but rather as an empirical synthesis of the relationships between philosophical foundations, institutional structures, and pesantren pedagogical praxis in responding to the challenges of the digital era. The findings indicate that character strengthening at MAA operates through the integration of transcendental values, a holistic educational structure, and continuous internalisation mechanisms, thereby forming a relatively coherent and adaptive character education ecosystem.

Conceptually, the proposed model is grounded in a tauhidic foundation as the ontological basis of character education. Aqidah shahihah is positioned as the primary source of students' value orientation and life meaning, from which conceptions of akhlaq and adab emerge as practical expressions of faith. Within this model, character is not understood as a collection of moral behaviours detached from belief, but rather as the manifestation of tauhidic consciousness across all dimensions of life. These findings affirm that Islamic educational philosophy at MAA constructs character as an integrated

spiritual-moral entity, thereby providing students with value resilience in the face of ethical disruption in the digital era.

This tauhidic foundation is operationalised through the principles of *shāmil* (comprehensive) and *mutakāmil* (integrated) education, which serve as the structural pillars of the conceptual model. Character education is not separated from intellectual development, religious worship, or social life; instead, it is implemented simultaneously within a unified *pesantren* life system. The model demonstrates that character strengthening at MAA does not rely on a standalone character curriculum, but is embedded within all educational activities that occur throughout a 24-hour cycle. Consequently, character is shaped through consistent value habituation rather than through temporary or fragmented pedagogical interventions. In the digital era, this approach is particularly significant, as it creates a controlled environment that minimises value fragmentation resulting from technological exposure.

Another key component of the conceptual model is role modelling as the primary mechanism of internalisation. The research findings reveal that the *kiai*, *ustadz*, and *musyrif* function as a living curriculum that represents the values of Islamic educational philosophy in concrete practice. Role modelling is not positioned merely as a symbol of moral authority, but as a pedagogical medium through which students observe, emulate, and reflect upon values in their daily lives. Within this model, exemplarity serves as a bridge between normative values and students' existential experiences. This reinforces the view that Islamic-based character education is ineffective if delivered solely through discursive instruction, but must be embodied within authentic social relationships.

The conceptual model also positions intensive mentoring and continuous caregiving as key elements in character strengthening. The presence of *musyrif* who accompany students for 24 hours enables direct and contextual supervision, guidance, and value correction. This mentoring is not repressive in nature; rather, it is oriented towards cultivating internal awareness so that behavioural change emerges from students' self-reflection. From the perspective of the model, this approach functions as a form of self-regulation training, which is highly relevant in addressing the challenges of the digital era, where external control mechanisms are often ineffective without internal moral consciousness.

The epistemological dimension of the conceptual model is manifested through prioritising mastery of foundational Islamic sciences as a cognitive and ethical framework. Disciplines such as *aqidah*, *manhaj ad-da'wah*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, and Islamic thought serve as epistemic-ethical instruments that equip students to critically evaluate digital information, discourse, and practices. Within this model, character strengthening is inseparable from the development of modes of thinking, as robust character requires a systematic epistemic foundation. These findings demonstrate that character education at MAA is epistemic-moral in nature, rather than merely moralistic.

In the context of the digital era, the conceptual model also incorporates adaptive response mechanisms to technological challenges, particularly with regard to the use of mobile devices and digital media. The findings indicate that technological restrictions are balanced with value mentoring and regular evaluation, such that technology is not

treated as an adversary but as a reality that must be ethically managed. Weekly evaluations and prompt responses to character violations function as a feedback loop within the model, ensuring value consistency and preventing prolonged deviation. This approach illustrates that the character strengthening model at MAA is dynamic and reflective rather than static.

In synthesis, the conceptual model for strengthening character education based on Islamic educational philosophy derived from this case study consists of five interrelated components: (1) a tauhidic foundation as the value base, (2) a shāmil-mutakāmil educational system as the structural framework, (3) role modelling as the internalisation mechanism, (4) mentoring and evaluation as moral control processes, and (5) epistemic strengthening as a filter for digital ethics. These five components operate simultaneously within a single pesantren ecosystem, shaping students' character not only in terms of normative compliance but also in terms of moral consciousness and value resilience amid digital currents.

Accordingly, this study offers a theoretical contribution in the form of a conceptual model demonstrating that strengthening character education in the digital era cannot be achieved merely through technological integration or the addition of character-focused curriculum content. Rather, it requires a strong foundation in Islamic educational philosophy and its systematic implementation within educational life. While the model is grounded in the context of MA Al Umm Malang, it also possesses conceptual transferability for the development of character education in other pesantren and Islamic educational institutions facing similar challenges.

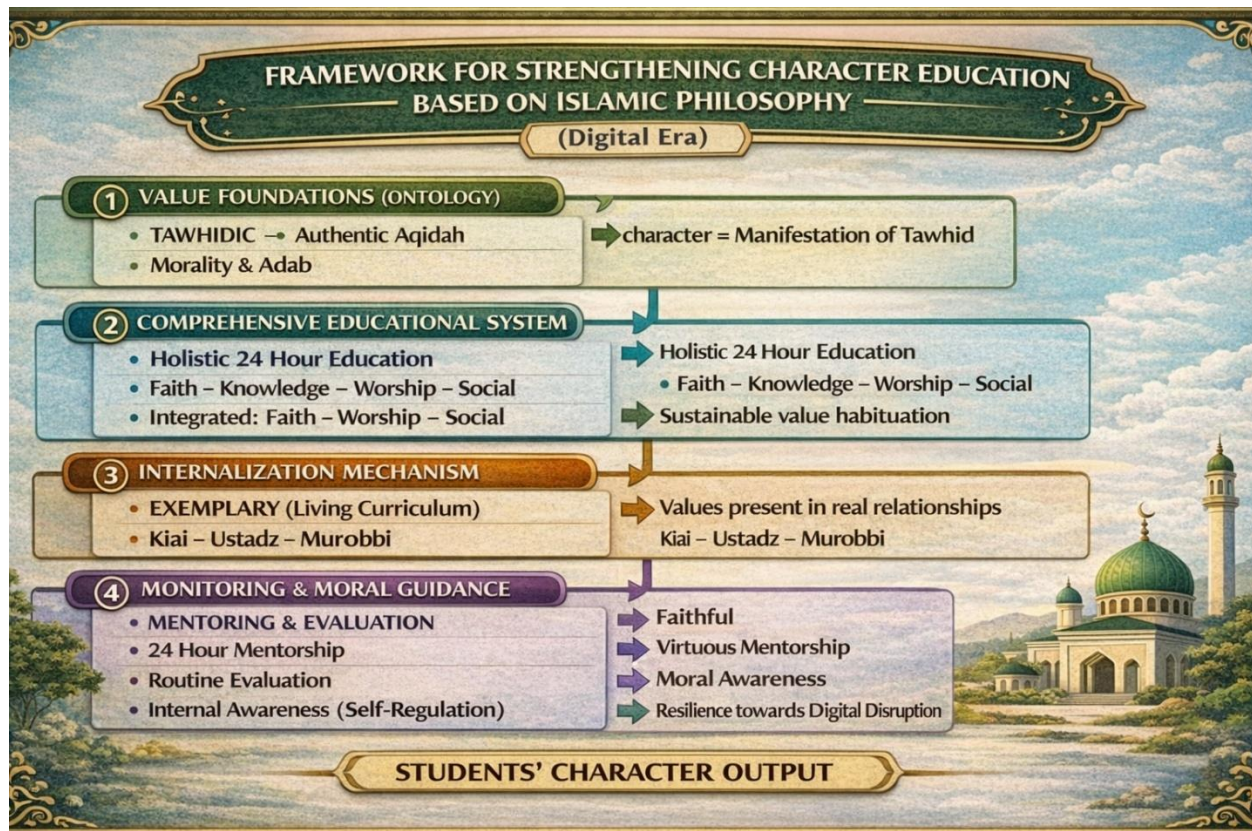


Figure 2. Conceptual Model of Character Education Strengthening Based on Islamic Educational Philosophy at MA Al Umm Malang

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the strengthening of character education at MA Al Umm Malang cannot be understood merely as a pedagogical practice, but rather as a concrete expression of Islamic educational philosophy oriented towards the formation of a morally refined human being (*insān adabī*). The construction and implementation of character education grounded in *aqidah*, *akhlaq*, and *adab* indicate that this pesantren conceptualises education as a process of existential transformation, rather than merely as the transmission of knowledge (Aceng et al., 2024; Hasanah & Sukri, 2023). This perspective is consistent with Imam al-Ghazali's view, which positions the ultimate aim of education as *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul) through the integration of knowledge and action. Within al-Ghazali's framework, knowledge that does not produce moral character is not only devoid of value but may also be misleading. The empirical findings at MAA confirm this thesis, as character strengthening is inseparable from the cultivation of faith and religious practice as the foundation of moral consciousness (Akbar et al., 2025; Nizarani et al., 2020; Sembiring et al., 2025).

Furthermore, MAA's emphasis on *adab* as the essence of intelligence demonstrates strong coherence with the educational philosophy of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas. Al-Attas argues that the primary crisis of modern education is the loss of *adab*, namely

the inability of human beings to recognise and place things in their proper positions within the order of existence. In this context, character education at MAA can be interpreted as a systematic effort to restore adab through the internalisation of tauhidic values and lived exemplarity. The concept of taghāful highlighted in the findings as magnanimity, moral maturity, and the capacity to prioritise values represents adab in al-Attas's sense: an ethical consciousness arising from an ontological understanding of the self, God, and society (Hasim et al., 2025; Khoiriyah, 2023; Puspitasari & Yuliana, 2022).

The dialogue between the empirical findings and the thoughts of al-Ghazali and al-Attas further reveals that character education at MAA operates simultaneously at ontological, epistemological, and axiological levels. Ontologically, character is understood as a manifestation of faith; epistemologically, mastery of the Islamic sciences functions as a framework for reasoning and moral judgement; and axiologically, all educational activities are oriented towards servitude to Allah ('ubūdiyyah) (Aly & Thoyibi, 2020; Fadliah, 2022). The integration of these three levels indicates that character education at MAA is neither moralistic nor behaviouristic, but rather rooted in an Islamic worldview. These findings reinforce critiques of contemporary character education approaches that tend to be reductive and detached from metaphysical foundations (Harahap et al., 2023; Soleh et al., 2023).

In the context of the digital era, the findings make an important contribution to contemporary character education discourse. The literature on digital education suggests that the primary challenges of the technological age lie not merely in information access, but in weakened self-control, fragmented attention, and crises of digital ethics. The phenomena of mobile phone addiction, declining honesty, and weakened learning discipline observed at MAA reflect global challenges in digital education (Mulyono et al., 2025; Wang, 2022). Notably, however, the pesantren responds to these challenges not through technocratic measures, but through the strengthening of internal moral consciousness and a system of continuous caregiving. This approach aligns with the view that effective digital character education must prioritise self-regulation and moral agency, rather than focusing solely on technological literacy (Hamid & Majid, 2023; Omercić, 2022).

The conceptual model derived from the findings also enriches the character education literature by demonstrating that technology cannot be separated from the value ecosystem. In contrast to digital education approaches that emphasise the integration of technology into learning processes, MAA prioritises the integration of values into the management of technology (Aulia et al., 2023; Mujiburrohmah & Isrofuzain, 2025). This reflects a paradigm shift from technology-centred education to value-centred education. From al-Attas's perspective, this approach can be understood as an effort to subordinate technology to the order of adab, ensuring that technology functions as a tool rather than a determinant of educational direction. Accordingly, character education grounded in Islamic educational philosophy offers a conceptual

alternative to the dominance of value-neutral digital education paradigms (Andrian Al Firdaus et al., 2025; Grieshaber et al., 2021).

Theoretically, the findings affirm that Islamic educational philosophy remains relevant and is increasingly urgent in responding to the challenges of the digital era. The integration of al-Ghazali's classical insights on moral formation, al-Attas's ideas on adab and worldview, and pesantren educational practices demonstrates that Islamic education possesses rich conceptual resources to address contemporary character crises. The study also shows that effective character education cannot be separated from holistic institutional design, moral exemplarity, and consistent caregiving systems (Anwar, 2022; Fatmawati et al., 2023; Putra et al., 2025).

Thus, this discussion positions the research findings not merely as a description of a local case, but as a conceptual contribution to the development of Islamic educational philosophy and character education theory in the digital era. The model formulated from the MA Al Umm Malang case study demonstrates that character strengthening requires the integration of transcendental values, pedagogical praxis, and the systemic management of educational life. These findings expand the discourse on character education by offering an Islamic perspective that is not reactive to technology, but critical, reflective, and firmly rooted in Islamic epistemology.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study concludes that the strengthening of character education in the digital era at MA Al Umm Malang is rooted in a construction of Islamic educational philosophy that is tauhidic, holistic, and oriented towards the formation of adab. At this institution, Islamic educational philosophy is not understood merely in abstract or normative terms, but is systematically operationalised through the integration of aqidah shahihah, akhlaq al-karimah, and moral exemplarity across all dimensions of educational life. Character education is constructed as a process of shaping students' life orientation, positioning faith, morality, and servitude to Allah as the core of intelligence and life success, rather than limiting education to cognitive achievement or technical competence.

The implementation of this Islamic educational philosophy is realised through a *shāmil* (comprehensive) and *mutakāmil* (integrated) educational system in which learning, caregiving, worship, and social interaction are unified within a continuous value-based ecosystem. The exemplarity of the *kiai*, *ustadz*, and *musyrif* functions as the most effective medium for value internalisation, while intensive mentoring and regular evaluation serve as mechanisms for strengthening students' moral awareness. In the context of the digital era, this approach has proven relevant in fostering value resilience and self-regulation among students amid challenges related to mobile device use, information distraction, and digital ethical crises.

Furthermore, this study formulates a conceptual model for strengthening character education based on Islamic educational philosophy, consisting of five integrated

components: a tauhidic foundation as the value base, a holistic educational system as the structural framework, role modelling as the internalisation mechanism, mentoring and evaluation as moral control processes, and epistemic strengthening as a filter for digital ethics. This model demonstrates that effective character education in the digital era cannot be reduced to technological integration or the addition of character-related curriculum content, but requires a strong philosophical foundation and consistent institutional implementation.

Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, this study reinforces the relevance of classical Islamic educational philosophy in addressing contemporary challenges in character education. The findings confirm Imam al-Ghazali's conception of education as a process of tazkiyat al-nafs, in which knowledge, faith, and morality constitute an inseparable unity. In addition, the study extends Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas's notion of adab by demonstrating how this concept can be empirically operationalised within a pesantren educational system in the digital era. Accordingly, this research contributes a conceptual model of Islamic character education that is epistemic-moral in nature and adaptive to technological development.

Practical Implications

Practically, the findings provide concrete guidance for pesantren administrators and Islamic educational institutions in designing character education strengthening in the digital era. Character education should be understood as an integrated educational life system rather than as an additional programme or a standalone subject. Educators' exemplarity, continuous mentoring, and the strengthening of foundational Islamic sciences are key elements in developing students' character resilience against negative digital influences. Moreover, technology management within Islamic educational environments should be directed towards value-based and internal awareness approaches, rather than relying solely on technical restrictions.

Policy Implications

From a policy perspective, this study recommends that character education strengthening within Islamic education policies should not be formulated solely in terms of curricular regulation, but should also support institutional designs that enable intensive mentoring, educator exemplarity, and the integration of values into everyday educational life. Educational management policies in the digital era need to provide space for value-based approaches grounded in Islamic educational philosophy, ensuring that technology is positioned as a means subordinate to the ethical aims of education. The conceptual model formulated in this study may serve as a reference for the development of character education policies in pesantren and madrasah contexts oriented towards the cultivation of morally refined human beings amid the currents of digitalisation.

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