

STRATEGY FOR IMPROVING AKHLAKUL KARIMAH LEARNING THROUGH THE DISCOVERY LEARNING METHOD FOR EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS AT MTSN 5 BANTUL

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ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by the importance of developing effective and efficient learning models in shaping students' character based on Islamic values. The education of *akhlakul karimah* (noble character) is a fundamental aspect of the educational process; therefore, learning strategies that actively and meaningfully engage students are highly needed. The purpose of this study is to analyze the strategy of teaching *akhlakul karimah* through the implementation of the Discovery Learning method at MTsN 5 Bantul. This study employs a qualitative approach with data collection techniques including interviews, observations, and documentation to obtain comprehensive and in-depth data. The findings reveal that the implementation of the Discovery Learning method in teaching *akhlakul karimah* is effective in improving students' understanding of noble moral values. Through learning stages such as exploration, observation, discussion, and reflection, students are encouraged to think critically, actively, and independently in discovering and understanding moral concepts. In addition, this method creates an interactive and conducive learning environment and strengthens positive relationships between teachers and students. Therefore, the learning of *akhlakul karimah* becomes more meaningful and contributes optimally to students' character development.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental right and an essential need for every individual, and it is the responsibility of all parties involved to support its implementation. (Ayuningthyas & Imanullah, 2021) Educational programs need to be implemented consistently and continuously, both by individuals and by organizing institutions. (Silvia & Zahara, 2025) Untuk mencapai keberhasilan, pendidikan merupakan prosedur yang kompleks dan berkesinambungan yang

membutuhkan investasi, dedikasi, dan ketahanan yang signifikan. (Nurfarkhan & Farabi, 2024) This process is clearly a journey that requires perseverance and a strong commitment. (Sejati et al., n.d.) However, each individual or entity has a different perspective on education as a necessity that must be fulfilled by all parties. (Lailiyah & Maunah, 2023) Why does education play such a significant role? Education serves as a crucial foundation for individual success in various dimensions of life, particularly in helping students achieve their most complex learning goals. (Sahari, 2020) One of the important components of Islamic education is character education. (Nasta, 2024) A good Islamic education is believed to produce a generation that is not only intellectually strong but also possesses strong moral character and a deep sense of faith. (Herawati et al., 2025) In the context of Islamic education, *akhlakul karimah* (noble character) in performing prayer is one of the primary goals that must be achieved and taught to students from an early age. (Fitri et al., n.d.) In the learning process at school, moral education does not only focus on teaching religious values, but must also be integrated into daily learning activities so that students are able to apply these values in their everyday lives. (Nurfadila et al., 2024)

In reality, the implementation of *akhlakul karimah* learning in schools often faces various challenges. (Syapitri & Arifin, 2024) Moreover, the main issue lies in the lack of effective learning models to foster positive attitudes and behaviors among students. (Aisyah et al., 2025) Many students understand the concept of noble character in theory, yet they face difficulties in applying it in their daily lives. (Naldi et al., 2024) Conventional learning methods that focus solely on cognitive aspects are often not effective enough in shaping students' moral character. (Maulana et al., 2025) Therefore, more explicit, innovative, and effective approaches are needed to improve students' understanding and implementation of *akhlakul karimah*. (Warniati, 2025) One learning model that can be used to improve the teaching of *akhlakul karimah* is the Discovery Learning model. (Al et al., 2023) This method is a learning approach that emphasizes discovery through direct experience. (Ansori, 2024) In the context of moral education, this method is able to support students in better understanding and internalizing the values of *akhlakul karimah* through real experiences, discussions, and reflections that encourage critical thinking and connect lessons with their daily activities. (Fahmi et al., 2023) Through this method, students are not only taught moral values theoretically, but are also involved in the process of discovering, understanding, and applying good morals in their lives. (Sholihin, 2024) The teaching of *akhlakul karimah* at MTsN 5 Bantul faces challenges similar to those experienced by many other schools. Although moral values have been taught in various subjects, both through religious education and extracurricular activities, there is still a gap in the application of these values in students' daily lives. (Laily et al., 2025)

Many students understand the moral theories that are taught, but they are not always able to apply them in their daily behavior and lives. (Timoro et al., 2023) In view of this, the teaching methods used in moral education tend to be monotonous and less interactive, making students less interested and making it difficult for them to understand the lessons. (Siregar, 2024) This situation has become a major concern considering the importance of *akhlakul karimah* education in shaping students' character. (Winnuly et al., 2024) Education that focuses solely on cognitive and academic aspects is not sufficient to shape a generation with noble character. (Aldini et al., 2025) This is where the importance of implementing more effective methods in teaching *akhlakul karimah* becomes evident, as they do not rely solely on lectures or memorization, but also involve students in deep and meaningful learning experiences. The Discovery Learning method is considered appropriate to overcome this problem. (Wahyudi, 2025)

Through this approach, students are encouraged to actively seek and discover concepts of noble character on their own through various enjoyable and challenging activities. (Susanti et al., 2025) For example, students can be involved in group discussions, role-playing activities, or the analysis of real-life cases that contain the values of *akhlakul karimah*. Through these experiences, students are expected not only to understand the values of noble character, but also to apply them in their daily activities. (Winnuly et al., 2024) However, although the Discovery Learning method is widely recognized in the context of academic learning, its implementation in teaching *akhlakul karimah* at MTsN 5 Bantul is still limited. Therefore, further research is needed to examine how this method can be effectively implemented in *akhlakul karimah* learning, as well as its impact on changes in students' attitudes and behavior.

Although many studies have examined the implementation of the Discovery Learning method in various subjects, there is still a gap in its application to *akhlakul karimah* learning, especially among students at the junior secondary education level (MTs). Most studies on Discovery Learning focus more on cognitive subjects such as mathematics, science, or language, while moral education tends to rely on lectures or more passive discussions. Therefore, it is important to explore the potential of the Discovery Learning method in the context of moral education, as it encourages students to become active during the learning process and allows them to experience the discovery of noble moral values.

More in-depth research on how Discovery Learning can be applied to *akhlakul karimah* learning at MTsN 5 Bantul is still limited. Many previous studies have examined the application of this method in academic learning, but only a few have highlighted its implementation in the context of moral education. This study is designed to address this gap by analyzing how the Discovery Learning method can improve the understanding and application of *akhlakul karimah* among eighth-grade students at MTsN 5 Bantul. This study offers a new contribution to the field of education, namely the implementation of the Discovery Learning method to improve the teaching of *akhlakul karimah* at MTsN 5 Bantul. This approach does not only focus on teaching moral values or ethics theoretically, but also encourages students to experience an active and reflective learning process through direct experiences. By using this method, students are expected to better understand and internalize the principles of *akhlakul karimah* and be able to apply them in their daily lives. The novelty of this study lies in the effort to integrate the Discovery Learning approach into moral education, which is generally more rigid and theoretical. This research also highlights how the method can be practically implemented in eighth-grade classes at MTsN 5 Bantul, as well as its impact on changes in students' attitudes and behavior in applying noble morals.

Based on an interview conducted by the researcher on November 12, 2024, with Mrs. FJ, one of the Aqidah Akhlak teachers at MTsN 5 Bantul, it was found that the use of the Discovery Learning method greatly supports the learning process at school. By using Discovery Learning, students become more capable and independent. In this method, the role of students as active participants is strongly emphasized, allowing teachers to focus on answering questions related to the material being studied.

Rather than delivering material directly, students are assigned to discover, investigate, and draw conclusions based on the questions provided by the teacher. In this learning method, the teacher acts as a guide and facilitator who encourages students to develop creative thinking and independence. The Discovery Learning method is implemented to facilitate students' understanding of the material, making it easier for them to comprehend the lessons. In efforts to improve students' moral character, teachers have a significant responsibility in shaping students' personalities, as expressed by Zuhairin.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive analysis method to understand and explain the phenomena found in the field. (Saat & Mania, 2020) This approach was chosen to describe actual conditions based on facts and information obtained from various data sources. (Sugiono, 2013) The collected data were then analyzed by examining relevant variables in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding and formulate solutions to the problems being studied. (Zonyfar et al., 2022) The data sources in this study consist of primary data and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through field observations and in-depth interviews with informants who were directly related to the focus of the study. (Nasution, 2023) Interviews were conducted with an Islamic Religious Education teacher in the field of Aqidah Akhlak, identified by the initials PJ, as well as five students who participated in Aqidah Akhlak learning, identified by the initials SN, PT, MW, AL, and IK. Meanwhile, secondary data were collected from various scientific literature sources and other relevant supporting materials, including written documents and non-documentary information, in order to strengthen and enrich the research analysis. (Arianto & Rani, n.d.)

Results And Discussion

Definition of *Akhlakul Karimah*

Morality (*akhlak*) can be understood from two perspectives, namely the linguistic approach and the terminological approach. (Mustaqim & Bakar, 2025) Linguistically, the term *akhlak* is often associated with the Arabic language and is commonly considered to originate from the *isim masdar* form of the word *akhlaqa–yukhliq–ikhlaqan*, which follows the pattern of *tsulasi mazid af'ala–yuf'ilu–if'alan*. The meaning of the term encompasses various aspects, such as character, disposition, behavior, habits, the nobility of civilization, and religious values. (Judrah, 2016) However, the use of the term *akhlak* as a derivative of the word *akhlaqa* is considered less accurate, because grammatically *ikhlaq* is the *masdar* form of *akhlaqa*, not *akhlak*. (Amin, 2023) Therefore, there is an opinion stating that linguistically *akhlak* is classified as an *isim jamid* or *isim ghairu musytaq*, namely a word that does not originate from a particular *masdar* form, but rather stands independently as a fixed term. On the other hand, *akhlak* is also understood to derive from the word *khalaqa*, which means to create, to make, or to shape. (Institut, 2018) In etymological studies, *akhlak* is often referred to as customs, character, ways of acting, or a system of human behavior. (Firdaus, n.d.) This meaning shows that *akhlak* is closely related to patterns of behavior that are deeply ingrained in a person and are reflected in their everyday actions. (Syifa & Raihanuddin, 2025) Linguistically, the character of *akhlak* is strongly influenced by the fundamental values that are instilled and developed within an individual. (Pradana et al., 2021)

- a. According to Ibn Miskawayh, *akhlak* is an inner drive within an individual that encourages a person to perform various daily activities and actions spontaneously, without going through a long process of thinking or deliberation. (Yusuf, 2018)
- b. According to Al-Ghazali, *akhlak* is a trait or condition that is firmly established in the human soul, formed through habits and repeated actions. From this deeply rooted disposition, various behaviors emerge spontaneously and naturally, without requiring rational consideration or a lengthy thought process each time the action is performed. Thus, *akhlak* is not merely understood as outward actions, but as an inner character that becomes the primary source of human behavior in everyday life. (LESTARI, 2021)

Based on the analysis of the scholars, it can be concluded that moral development is directed toward improving and strengthening the quality of human character and ethical conduct. (Lutfiyah & Salamah, 2025) The main objective is to form individuals who possess noble and commendable character, as well as to be able to distance themselves from reprehensible behavior. (Normina, n.d.) Therefore, in the context of national and social life, especially within educational environments, continuous attention and guidance are needed so that every individual can act comprehensively, based on an awareness of the importance of social solidarity. (Nengah & Armini, 2024) Students are not only directed to observe moral values, but are also guided to be able to implement them comprehensively in their daily lives. This approach emphasizes that every individual and every family in society has a moral responsibility to instill ethics and noble character as a form of devotion and responsibility to Allah SWT. (Zainuri & Masruroh, n.d.)

The Legal Foundation of *Akhlakul Karimah*

Based on observations of human life, various forms of behavior can be found developing within society. (Ratulangi et al., 2023) The assessment of such behavior is strongly influenced by the norms and values that apply within society. (Redjeki et al., 2024) In the Islamic perspective, the standard for determining whether a person's character is good or bad is derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (Marzuki, n.d.) The moral values exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) are universal, timeless, and highly flexible to be applied in various contexts of life. (Wahyuni et al., 2025) Based on this, the discussion and construction of Islamic moral values rest on universal foundational principles, particularly *shidiq* (truthfulness), *amanah* (trustworthiness), *tabligh* (conveying the truth), and *fathonah* (wisdom). These four principles serve as the main foundation of Islamic ethics as a whole, as they uphold the value of absolute truth. (Khairunnisa & Ahmadiophet, 2025)

Islamic morals are essentially an ethical system based on Islamic teachings and norms characterized by Islamic values. (Syamhadi & Rokhmadi, 2025) The position of akhlak in human life has a very important role, both at the individual level and in broader social life within society. syarkawi, "Penerapan Pendidikan Akhlak Dalam Islam (Dosen Fakultas Syariah Dan Ekonomi Islam IAI Al-Aziziyah Samalanga)" 5 (2016). The discussion of Islamic morals does not only focus on relationships between human beings, but also includes human ethics toward Allah SWT as the Creator, as well as relationships with the natural environment. (Basori et al., 2025)

In this discussion, Islam guides its followers to fulfill individual rights and to be fair toward themselves. (Fachri, 2018) In the context of fulfilling individual rights, Islam emphasizes that every action must not harm others. Therefore, a Muslim is required to always respect the feelings of others and to avoid any form of discriminatory attitude toward anyone. (Harana et al., 2025) This principle shows that Islam places a balance between individual rights and the rights of others as an effort to prevent conflicts in social life. Thus, morals toward fellow individuals are reflected in a person's attitudes and behavior in social interactions that are based on the values of justice, respect, and empathy. (Takim & Syariah, 2024)

Definition of Discovery Learning

The Discovery Learning method was first developed by Jerome Bruner, a prominent , in 1961. Bruner argued that learning through the process of discovery is the most effective way to actively acquire knowledge. (Fauziati, 2021) Discovery learning is an approach in the learning process designed to encourage students to discover and construct new knowledge independently. (Nurlaela, 2023) Through this method, students are directly involved in interacting with their environment, such as exploring, manipulating objects, conducting experiments, and asking questions as part of the learning process. (Katili, 2022) In the discovery learning process, students are involved in various learning activities such as making observations, classifying, measuring, making predictions, establishing concepts, and drawing conclusions. (Adi, 2022) In general, it can be agreed that in delivering learning material, it is necessary to select a model or approach that is appropriate to the characteristics of the material, the conditions and needs of the students, the availability of learning facilities and infrastructure, as well as various other supporting factors. (Annisha et al., 2025)

According to Sund, as cited by Roestiyah, discovery is a mental process that enables students to integrate various concepts and principles in a systematic way. (Amiruddin, 2026) This cognitive process includes various intellectual activities such as observing, processing and understanding information, classifying data, making inferences, providing explanations, carrying out measurements, and drawing conclusions as a result of active thinking processes. Burden and Byrd stated that the most essential aspect of discovery learning lies in the active direct involvement of students in the process of finding answers. (Liharda, 2022) Discovery-based learning requires thorough preparation from educators in order to create a conducive learning environment, enabling students to engage in learning activities independently and effectively. (Rasul, 2026) In this process, the educator acts as a facilitator who encourages students to carry out experiments, so that they gain meaningful learning experiences and are able to independently discover relevant principles or knowledge. (Abdurahman, 2016) Another impact of using Discovery Learning is that students' character is well developed, such as independence, cooperation, curiosity, and problem-solving skills. (Tulhadiyah, 2022)

A study on the discovery learning method at MTsN 5 Bantul shows that students who are actively involved in the learning process tend to have a deeper understanding and are better able to implement values in their daily activities.

Advantages of the Discovery Learning Method

The Discovery Learning method has a number of strengths that make it one of the most widely appreciated learning approaches. (Afrizal., 2026) Through this method, students are actively involved in the learning process, while the topics being studied tend to enhance their intrinsic motivation. (Renoman, 2026) Aktivitas belajar dalam pembelajaran berbasis penemuan umumnya memiliki makna yang lebih mendalam dibandingkan dengan sekadar latihan di kelas atau pembelajaran yang berfokus pada buku teks. Hal ini karena peserta didik memperoleh

pengetahuan melalui proses menemukan sendiri, sehingga meningkatkan peluang untuk mengingat konsep, data, maupun informasi yang dipelajari. (Zulkifli, 2026)

In addition, the Discovery Learning method contributes to the development of effective group work, as it encourages interaction and collaboration among students. (Suari & Gede, 2021) This method also helps students develop investigative and reflective skills that can be adapted and applied in various other learning contexts. Students do not only learn the subject matter, but are also trained to master new skills and learning strategies. Furthermore, this approach is based on the prior knowledge and experiences that students already possess, thereby encouraging their independence and autonomy in the learning process. (Khasinah, 2021)

Considering the advantages of Discovery Learning, it can be concluded that this approach has the potential to support students in developing critical thinking skills and increasing their learning motivation. However, in this context, there are also several limitations or weaknesses in the implementation of the Discovery learning method. (Desa, 2026b) Based on the interview conducted by the researcher with one of the Akhlak subject teachers at MTsN 5 Bantul, it was found that the implementation of the Discovery Learning method greatly helps students understand the learning material. Through this method, students do not only act as passive recipients of information, but are actively involved in the entire learning process. Students are encouraged to have a high sense of curiosity and to discover the concepts of akhlak being taught on their own. (Muddin, 2026) For example, in learning about the value of honesty, the teacher invites students to discuss and analyze various situations that contain moral dilemmas. (Wardani, 2026)

In addition, the teacher also provides case studies that are relevant to students' daily lives, so that the moral values being learned can be applied in real-life contexts. This approach makes students more active, feel responsible for their learning process, and become emotionally and intellectually engaged in the learning. (Tarmizi, 2026) The Discovery Learning method is considered effective in instilling moral values because it provides students with opportunities to participate directly. (Desa, 2026a) For example, when discussing the trait of honesty, students are asked to share their personal experiences related to honesty. This activity not only increases student engagement but also deepens their understanding of the importance of moral values in everyday life. (Maisaroh, 2026) Selain itu, guru juga menerapkan permainan peran atau simulasi situasi nyata yang menuntut pengambilan keputusan moral, sehingga siswa dapat memahami konsekuensi dari setiap tindakan dan belajar menentukan pilihan yang sesuai dengan nilai-nilai yang diajarkan. (Khairani & Mastoah, 2025)

Based on the researcher's observations, the implementation of the Discovery Learning method provides significant benefits in shaping students' attitudes to become more critical and reflective toward their behavior. There is a visible positive change in students' attitudes, such as increased openness in discussions and greater confidence in sharing their views on moral values, making the learning process more meaningful and contextual.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and the discussion presented, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Discovery Learning method makes a significant contribution to the learning process of students. Through this method, students are actively involved in every stage of learning. The application of Discovery Learning encourages students to think more critically and innovatively, as it requires active engagement in discovering and understanding learning materials. Thus, the learning process of akhlak at MTsN 5 Bantul becomes more dynamic and participatory. The results of this study also show that moral development aims to improve, develop, and strengthen human character and ethical behavior in order to form individuals with noble and commendable morals, as well as to prevent them from engaging in reprehensible actions. Therefore, moral development needs to be carried out continuously in social and national life, especially within educational environments, so that students develop an awareness of the importance of social solidarity as part of their moral and spiritual responsibility to Allah SWT.

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