

THE ROLE OF ISLAMIC SCHOOLS IN DEVELOPING STUDENTS' SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND RELIGIOUS CHARACTER

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received : 19-07-2026

Revised : 20-08-2026

Accepted : 25-09-2026

KEYWORDS

*Character Education,
Islamic Schools,
Islamic Schools,
Religious Character,
Social Responsibility,
Systematic Literature
Review*

ABSTRACT

Previous studies have examined the role of Islamic education in developing students' religious character and social responsibility, but the relationship between these outcomes and the mechanisms underlying their development remains insufficiently synthesized. This study examines how Islamic schools contribute to students' religious character and social responsibility through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR). Following the PRISMA 2020 framework, 23 studies identified from Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar were analyzed thematically. The findings identify five related mechanisms: Islamic school culture, religious habituation, teacher role modelling, curriculum integration, and social engagement. These mechanisms perform complementary functions in character development. School culture and teacher modelling provide consistent behavioural examples, while religious learning and habituation support the practice of Islamic values. Social engagement enables students to apply these values through cooperation, empathy, helping others, and responsibility. The synthesis indicates that religious character and social responsibility are interconnected outcomes rather than separate dimensions. Islamic values such as amanah, ta'awun, ukhuwah, and ihsan provide a moral foundation for socially responsible behaviour. The findings suggest that integrated educational practices can strengthen the connection between religious values and students' everyday social behaviour.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of students' character has become an increasingly important concern in contemporary education, particularly as schools face rapid social, technological, and cultural changes. Education is no longer expected to focus exclusively on academic achievement but also to cultivate students who are morally responsible, socially aware, and capable of interacting constructively with others (Islamic et al., 2024; Masturin, 2022). The expansion of digital media, changing patterns of social interaction, and increasing exposure to diverse cultural influences have created new challenges for the formation of students' values and behaviour. In this context, social responsibility and religious character represent two interconnected dimensions of student development (Masturin, 2022; Rodiyah et al., 2023). Social responsibility concerns students' willingness to care for others, respect differences, fulfil obligations, and contribute positively to their communities,

whereas religious character involves the internalization of faith-based values into everyday attitudes and actions. These dimensions are particularly relevant within Islamic education, which views education as a process of developing not only intellectual competence but also akhlaq, moral consciousness, and responsibility toward God and other human beings. Recent studies have similarly emphasized that Islamic education can contribute to students' moral, social, and emotional development when religious knowledge is connected with concrete behavioural practices and a supportive educational environment (Idris et al., 2023; Luthfiah & Abdurohman, 2025).

Islamic schools have a distinctive position in addressing these challenges because religious values can be integrated into curriculum, school culture, learning activities, teacher–student interactions, and students' daily routines. Rather than treating religious education as a separate subject, Islamic schools have the potential to create an educational ecosystem in which religious principles become a foundation for students' behaviour and social relationships (Biantoro, 2019). Concepts such as amanah (trustworthiness), ukhuwwah (brotherhood), ta'awun (mutual assistance), 'adl (justice), ihsan (excellence and benevolence), and mas'uliyah (responsibility) provide an Islamic ethical foundation for developing socially responsible individuals. Consequently, students' religious character should not be assessed only through their participation in worship or their understanding of religious concepts, but also through how these values are manifested in their relationships with peers, teachers, families, and the wider community. Research in Islamic educational settings has demonstrated that habituation, teacher modelling, religious activities, and school culture can support the development of religious and social values among students. For example, studies of Islamic primary and secondary schools have identified daily religious practices, exemplary behaviour, and institutional norms as important mechanisms for character formation (Kholidah, 2022; Muliati, 2026).

Despite this potential, the development of social responsibility and religious character is not automatically achieved merely because an institution identifies itself as an Islamic school. A significant challenge concerns the gap between the formal inclusion of character values in educational documents and their actual internalization in students' everyday behaviour. Islamic values such as honesty, responsibility, respect, and discipline may already be stated in curricula and lesson plans, yet their implementation may remain limited when classroom practices emphasize knowledge transmission rather than experiential learning, habituation, reflection, and social engagement (Effendi & Yusuf, 2026; Nasution, 2025). Recent research on Islamic curriculum and pedagogy in Indonesia, for instance, indicates that character-related values are present in curricular documents but are not always translated into interactive instructional practices or systematic assessment. This condition suggests that the role of Islamic schools needs to be examined more comprehensively, not simply in terms of religious instruction but also through the ways in which school culture, teacher role modelling, student activities, and community-oriented practices collectively shape students' social responsibility and religious character (Bahrozi & Abd Aziz, 2025).

Previous empirical studies provide important evidence regarding the relationship between Islamic education and character development. Research by (Imron et al., 2025) demonstrated that Islamic Religious Education combined with social problem-based learning could strengthen students' social responsibility by connecting religious learning with real social issues. Similarly, research conducted in Islamic senior high schools found that teachers' and students' activities, together with an understanding of students' existing character conditions, contributed to the development of social care. Other studies have emphasized the contribution of Islamic religious education to social-emotional development, responsibility, empathy, discipline, and moral behaviour through religious learning, worship practices, teacher exemplification, and the broader educational environment (Khan et al., 2021; Pujiandi & Nugraha, 2024). More recent research has also shown that structured religious activities, including Qur'anic recitation, prayer, dhikr, memorization, and charitable activities, can simultaneously support religious character and social responsibility. These findings indicate that Islamic education possesses considerable potential to connect spiritual development with students' responsibilities toward other people and their environment.

Several limitations remain in the existing literature. First, a substantial proportion of previous studies has examined religious character, social care, moral development, or responsibility as separate outcomes, rather than conceptualizing religious character and social responsibility as mutually reinforcing dimensions of character formation. Second, some studies have concentrated on individual components, such as Islamic Religious Education teachers, religious activities, specific learning models, or particular habituation programmes, without examining the broader role of the Islamic school as an integrated educational environment. Third, existing research has often focused on describing successful practices without

sufficiently explaining how different school-based mechanisms work together to transform religious values into socially responsible behaviour. Recent studies have begun to address this limitation by examining school culture and strategic management; however, the literature still requires a more integrated understanding of how curriculum, habituation, teacher modelling, religious activities, peer interaction, and institutional culture collectively contribute to character development. Thus, there remains a research gap concerning the holistic role of Islamic schools in linking students' religious internalization with their practical responsibilities toward others.

However, existing reviews have not yet sufficiently integrated the religious and social dimensions of students' character development within the specific context of Islamic schools. Previous reviews have primarily focused on Islamic character education, religious instruction, or particular character-building practices, while social responsibility has often been examined as a separate educational outcome. This fragmentation leaves limited evidence on how Islamic school practices collectively connect religious internalization with students' socially responsible behaviour. Therefore, the present systematic literature review seeks to address this gap by synthesizing evidence on Islamic schools as integrated character-forming environments, with particular attention to the mechanisms through which curriculum, habituation, teacher modelling, religious activities, school culture, and social interaction contribute simultaneously to religious character and social responsibility. Based on this gap, the review addresses three research questions: (1) How do Islamic schools contribute to the development of students' religious character? (2) What school-based practices and mechanisms contribute to students' social responsibility? and (3) How are religious character and social responsibility interconnected within Islamic school practices?

Addressing this gap is important because religious character should not remain at the level of individual piety but should be reflected in students' social conduct and contribution to their communities. From an Islamic educational perspective, the formation of a good Muslim is closely associated with the development of *akhlaq* and responsible social behaviour. Therefore, an effective Islamic school should provide opportunities for students to translate religious principles into observable practices, such as helping others, respecting differences, maintaining discipline, fulfilling duties, participating in collective activities, protecting the environment, and demonstrating empathy. Recent studies reinforce this direction by showing that Islamic character education can encompass social and environmental responsibility rather than being restricted to ritual or personal morality. The novelty of the present study consequently lies in positioning the Islamic school itself as an integrated character-forming environment and examining its role in connecting religious character with social responsibility. Instead of viewing religious character and social responsibility as isolated educational outcomes, this study approaches them as interconnected dimensions that can be developed through the interaction of curriculum, school culture, teacher modelling, habituation, religious programmes, and students' social experiences.

Based on this background and research gap, this study aims to examine the role of Islamic schools in developing students' social responsibility and religious character. The study seeks to understand how Islamic educational values are translated into school practices, how teachers and school culture contribute to students' character formation, and how religious practices are connected with students' responsibilities toward peers, the school community, and society. By examining these dimensions together, the study is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of Islamic schooling as a character-building ecosystem rather than merely a setting for religious knowledge transmission. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically by strengthening the discussion on the integration of religious and social dimensions within Islamic character education and practically by identifying school-based strategies that can support the development of responsible, ethical, socially caring, and religiously grounded students. In this way, Islamic schools can be understood not only as institutions for transmitting religious knowledge but also as formative environments for preparing students to participate responsibly and ethically in an increasingly complex society.

METHOD

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to examine the role of Islamic schools in developing students' social responsibility and religious character. The review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 framework to ensure a systematic and transparent process of literature identification, screening, selection, and synthesis.

Relevant studies were identified through searches of Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. The search used combinations of the following keywords: “Islamic school,” “Islamic education,” “madrasah,” “religious character,” “Islamic character,” “social responsibility,” “social care,” and “student character.” Boolean operators (AND/OR) were applied to combine keywords and broaden the identification of relevant studies. The review focused on publications from 2016 to 2026 written in English or Indonesian.

Studies were included when they (1) examined Islamic schools, madrasahs, or Islamic education in school contexts; (2) discussed students’ religious character, social responsibility, moral character, or related outcomes; (3) were published in peer-reviewed journals; and (4) provided sufficient information regarding their research focus and findings. Studies were excluded when they focused on higher education or adult populations, were unrelated to character development, were non-academic publications, or were duplicate records.

The PRISMA-based study selection process consisted of two distinct stages: title and abstract screening and full-text eligibility assessment. The initial search identified 210 records from Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. After removing 32 duplicate records, 178 records remained and were screened based on their titles and abstracts. At this screening stage, 83 records were excluded because they were not sufficiently relevant to Islamic schools, students’ character development, or social responsibility. The remaining 95 articles proceeded to full-text eligibility assessment. At this stage, 72 full-text articles were excluded because they did not meet the predetermined inclusion criteria or did not sufficiently address the research objectives. Finally, 23 studies met all eligibility requirements and were included in the qualitative synthesis.

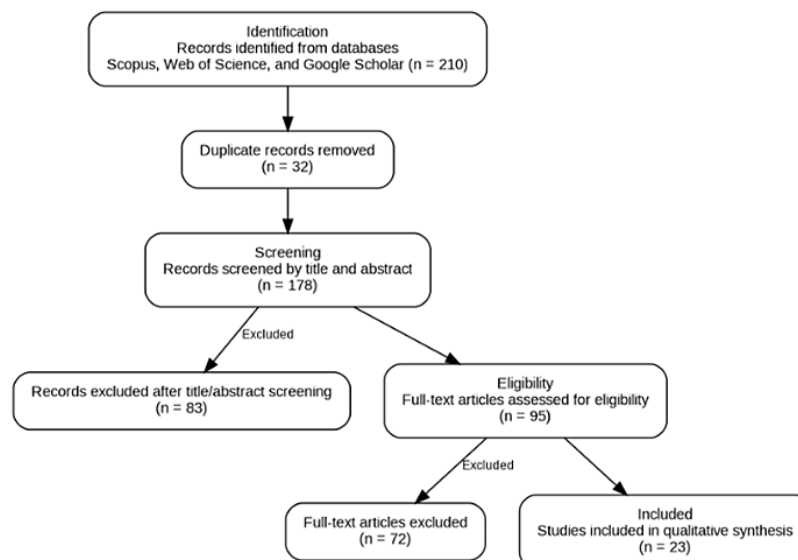


Figure 1. Prisma Flow Chart
Source: Adapted from Page et al. (2021).

Data from the 23 selected studies were extracted and analyzed using thematic synthesis. Information regarding authors, publication year, research context, methodology, educational practices, and principal findings was systematically recorded. The findings were then grouped into major themes related to Islamic school culture, religious habituation, curriculum integration, teacher role modelling, religious activities, and students’ social engagement. The synthesis was used to identify common patterns, differences, research gaps, and the mechanisms through which Islamic schools contribute to students’ religious character and social responsibility.

The quality of the selected studies was assessed based on the clarity of research objectives, appropriateness of methodology, description of the research context and participants, transparency of data collection and analysis, and consistency between the research objectives and reported findings. Only studies considered sufficiently relevant and methodologically credible were retained for the final synthesis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

Study Selection and Characteristics

The findings from the 23 reviewed studies show that Islamic schools develop students' religious character and social responsibility through several related mechanisms. These mechanisms include Islamic school culture, teacher role modelling, religious habituation, curriculum integration, and social activities. However, the studies show that each mechanism has a different function. School culture and teacher role modelling provide students with consistent examples of expected behaviour, while religious learning and habituation help students understand and practice Islamic values in their daily lives. Curriculum integration supports the process by incorporating these values into learning activities, whereas social activities give students opportunities to apply them through cooperation, empathy, helping others, and taking responsibility. The findings therefore indicate that character development is stronger when these mechanisms are implemented together rather than separately.

Table 1. Synthesis of Reviewed Studies on Islamic Education, Religious Character, and Social Responsibility

No.	Author(s) & Year	Main Focus	Islamic Educational Mechanism	Character Dimension	Main Contribution
1	Apriyadi & Amaliyah (2025)	Islamic Religious Education in contemporary schooling	Islamic education and character-oriented learning	Religious and moral character	Islamic Religious Education contributes to character formation by integrating Islamic values into contemporary educational practices.
2	Bahrozi & Abd Aziz (2025)	Responsibility through Islamic Religious Education	Religious learning and value internalization	Responsibility	Islamic Religious Education strengthens students' sense of responsibility through the internalization of Islamic values.
3	Biantoro (2019)	Islamic Religious Education teachers	Teacher guidance and role modelling	Moral and religious character	Teachers have an important role in guiding students and modelling values necessary for character formation.
4	Effendi & Yusuf (2026)	Islamic Religious Education and character building	Religious education in secondary schools	Religious and moral character	Empirical literature indicates that Islamic Religious Education is an important component of students' character development.
5	Ginanjari et al. (2025)	Islamic character and student development	Islamic Religious Education and student-oriented activities	Islamic character	Islamic education supports Islamic character while providing opportunities for students to develop their talents and interests.

No.	Author(s) & Year	Main Focus	Islamic Educational Mechanism	Character Dimension	Main Contribution
6	Hadi & Prayogi (2025)	Islamic school culture	School culture and institutional practices	Religious character	A well-managed Islamic school culture provides a supportive environment for developing students' religious character.
7	Idris et al. (2023)	Islamic education and national character	Islamic values and educational practices	Moral and social character	Islamic education contributes to broader character formation and the development of socially responsible individuals.
8	Imron et al. (2025)	Spiritual and social development	Islamic Religious Education	Spiritual and social character	Islamic education contributes to students' spiritual development while also supporting their social development.
9	Islamic et al. (2024)	Character education in Islamic boarding schools	Philosophical values and pesantren education	Moral and religious character	Traditional Islamic educational values provide a philosophical foundation for students' character formation.
10	Khan et al. (2021)	Islamic education and youth morality	Islamic moral and religious education	Moral character	Islamic education contributes to moral character development among young people through the internalization of Islamic principles.
11	Kholidah (2022)	Social responsibility through Islamic education	Social problem-based learning and Islamic Religious Education	Social responsibility	Combining Islamic education with social problem-based learning can strengthen students' awareness of and responsibility toward social issues.
12	Komalasari & Yakubu (2023)	Student character formation	Islamic Religious Education	Religious and moral character	Islamic Religious Education provides a structured approach to developing students' character through value-based educational practices.
13	Lestari & Hadi (2025)	Teachers as moral agents	Teacher modelling and Islamic Religious Education	Moral and religious character	Teachers function as moral agents whose behaviour and educational practices influence students' character formation.
14	Luthfiah & Abdurohman (2025)	Social values and responsibility among adolescents	Islamic Religious Education teachers	Social values and responsibility	Teachers play an important role in instilling social values and responsibility among adolescent students.

No.	Author(s) & Year	Main Focus	Islamic Educational Mechanism	Character Dimension	Main Contribution
15	Masturin (2022)	Religious moderation-based materials	Islamic Religious Education materials	Religious and social character	Religious moderation integrated into learning materials can support balanced religious attitudes and character development.
16	Muliati (2026)	Teachers' role in students' responsibility	Teacher roles and Islamic Religious Education	Responsibility	Islamic Religious Education teachers contribute significantly to the development of students' responsibility through guidance and educational interaction.
17	Mustain & Bakar (2025)	Islamic boarding school education	Boarding school culture and religious education	Religious character	Islamic boarding schools provide an intensive environment for developing students' religious character amid globalization.
18	Muzakki & Nurdin (2022)	Character formation in Islamic Religious Education	Religious learning and value formation	Religious and moral character	Islamic Religious Education provides mechanisms for integrating Islamic values into students' character development.
19	Nasution (2025)	Islamic Religious Education and character formation	Synthesis of Islamic education literature	Religious and moral character	The literature demonstrates the broad contribution of Islamic Religious Education to students' character formation.
20	Pujianti & Nugraha (2024)	Inclusive student character	Islamic Religious Education teachers	Inclusive and social character	Teachers can use Islamic educational values to develop students' inclusive attitudes and respect for others.
21	Rodiyah et al. (2023)	Islamic and moral education in primary schools	Religious and moral education	Religious and moral character	Islamic and moral education provides an important foundation for character development among primary school children.
22	Rohman et al. (2024)	Social values of Islamic education	Islamic social values and religious education	Religious and social character	Islamic social values contribute to the formation of adolescents' religious character through socially oriented values and practices.
23	Taufik (2020)	Islamic Religious Education and character education	Strategic integration of Islamic education	Religious and social character	Islamic Religious Education has a strategic role in strengthening character education in response to contemporary educational challenges.

Source: Synthesized from the Reviewed Literature (2019-2026)

The synthesis of the 23 reviewed studies indicates that Islamic education contributes to students' character development through several interconnected mechanisms, particularly Islamic school culture, teacher role modelling, religious learning and habituation, curriculum integration, and social engagement. The studies demonstrate that these mechanisms support not only religious and moral character but also responsibility, empathy, cooperation, inclusion, and other forms of socially responsible behaviour. Overall, the findings suggest that Islamic schools can function as integrated character-development environments in which religious values are consistently taught, modelled, practiced, and translated into students' social behaviour.

The Role of Islamic School Culture

Across the reviewed studies, Islamic school culture emerged as a broader institutional mechanism than classroom-based religious instruction alone. While religious learning primarily provides students with conceptual knowledge about Islamic values, school culture embeds those values in rules, routines, interpersonal relationships, and collective expectations. This distinction is important because several studies indicate that students encounter the same values repeatedly across different areas of school life rather than only during Islamic Religious Education lessons (Komalasari & Yakubu, 2023; Rohman et al., 2024).

A cross-study comparison also suggests that the contribution of school culture depends on the consistency of value implementation. Studies emphasizing institutional practices generally describe character development as stronger when teachers' behaviour, school regulations, peer interactions, and collective activities communicate compatible expectations. In contrast, value transmission becomes more limited when Islamic principles are treated primarily as instructional content without corresponding behavioural reinforcement. Thus, school culture appears to function less as a separate character-building programme and more as a contextual condition that reinforces other mechanisms, particularly teacher modelling and religious habituation.

The reviewed evidence further indicates that school culture has a broader behavioural reach than religious habituation alone. Habituation repeatedly exposes students to particular practices, whereas school culture determines the wider environment in which those practices acquire meaning. Consequently, discipline, honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and respect can be reinforced not only through religious activities but also through everyday interactions and institutional expectations. This pattern suggests that the effectiveness of Islamic character education is influenced by the coherence between what schools teach, what teacher's model, and what the institution consistently expects from students.

Religious Habituation and Character Formation

Religious habituation was consistently identified across the reviewed literature as a mechanism for converting Islamic values into repeated behavioural practices. However, the studies suggest that habituation does not operate in exactly the same way as school culture or teacher modelling. Whereas school culture establishes the broader institutional context, habituation provides repeated opportunities for students to practice specific religious behaviours. This makes habituation particularly relevant to the formation of discipline, responsibility, religious commitment, and behavioural consistency (Muzakki & Nurdin, 2022).

A comparison across the studies indicates that repetition alone does not necessarily produce broader social responsibility. The social effects of habituation become more apparent when religious practices are accompanied by explanations of their ethical meaning and opportunities to apply the underlying values in social contexts. For example, collective worship and charitable activities may reinforce discipline and religious commitment, but their contribution to empathy, generosity, and cooperation is more evident when students are encouraged to understand and enact the social principles underlying those practices (Mustain & Bakar, 2025).

This finding differentiates habituation from curriculum integration. Curriculum integration primarily facilitates students' understanding of Islamic values, whereas habituation provides repeated behavioural reinforcement. The evidence therefore suggests a complementary relationship: learning can establish value awareness, habituation can strengthen behavioural consistency, and social engagement can extend those values into interactions with others. Habituation appears most effective when these three processes are connected rather than implemented independently.

Teacher Role Modelling and Pedagogical Practices

Teacher role modelling emerged as a particularly important interpersonal mechanism across the reviewed studies. Compared with school culture, which operates at the institutional level, teacher modelling operates through direct and repeated interactions between teachers and students. Teachers' honesty, discipline, fairness, responsibility, communication, and treatment of students provide concrete behavioural references through which abstract Islamic values can become observable and imitable (Ginanjari et al., 2025).

The cross-study evidence also indicates that teacher modelling is more closely associated with behavioural credibility than with value transmission alone. Students may receive information about responsibility or honesty through formal instruction, but teachers' consistent demonstration of these behaviours provides a practical reference for interpreting what those values mean in everyday situations. This suggests that teacher modelling complements religious instruction rather than replacing it.

At the same time, the reviewed studies indicate that teacher modelling is not sufficient by itself. Its influence is strengthened when pedagogical practices provide students with opportunities to enact the behaviours being modelled. Cooperative learning, group discussion, peer assistance, problem solving, and reflective activities allow students to move from observing values to practicing them. Therefore, teacher modelling appears to have its strongest role when combined with participatory learning and an institutional environment that reinforces the same behavioural expectations.

Development of Social Responsibility

The reviewed studies reveal an important distinction between mechanisms that primarily develop religious understanding and those that provide direct opportunities for students to demonstrate social responsibility. Religious learning, habituation, and teacher modelling largely operate by establishing values and behavioural expectations, whereas social engagement provides a more direct context for translating those values into observable social behaviour.

Across the studies, social responsibility was expressed through cooperation, helping others, empathy, respect for differences, participation in collective activities, community service, charitable activities, and care for shared environments (Hadi & Prayogi, 2025). These outcomes indicate that social responsibility develops most clearly when students are not only taught about responsibility but are placed in situations that require them to exercise it. In this respect, social engagement represents an important complementary mechanism to religious instruction.

A further cross-study pattern is that the meaning of social responsibility in Islamic schools extends beyond general civic behaviour. Islamic concepts such as *ta'awun*, *ukhuwah*, *amanah*, and *ihsan* provide religious and ethical foundations for helping others, maintaining trust, cooperating with peers, and demonstrating benevolence. Thus, the reviewed literature suggests that Islamic schools do not merely add religious justification to existing social behaviours; they can frame social responsibility as part of students' broader religious and moral identity.

However, the evidence also indicates that opportunities for social participation vary across educational contexts. Studies emphasizing school culture and institutional programmes tend to provide broader opportunities for collective practice, whereas studies focused primarily on classroom-based religious learning offer fewer direct opportunities for students to enact social responsibility. This difference suggests that the development of social responsibility is more dependent on opportunities for behavioural application than on religious knowledge alone.

Interconnection Between Religious Character and Social Responsibility

The cross-study synthesis indicates that religious character and social responsibility are not separate outcomes but interconnected dimensions of students' development. However, the reviewed studies suggest that the relationship is not automatic. Religious values become socially meaningful when students have opportunities to interpret, observe, practice, and apply those values in interactions with others (Taufik, 2020).

Four interconnected stages can be identified from the reviewed evidence. First, religious learning and curriculum integration provide students with knowledge and normative understanding of Islamic values. Second, teacher modelling and school culture provide behavioural and institutional references that demonstrate how those values should be enacted. Third, religious habituation reinforces values through repeated practice. Fourth, social engagement provides contexts in which students apply the internalized values through cooperation, empathy, helping behaviour, responsibility, and participation in collective activities. These mechanisms therefore perform different but complementary functions rather than representing interchangeable approaches.

The comparison also reveals that the strongest pattern across the literature concerns consistency between these mechanisms. Studies focusing on only one mechanism generally describe specific character outcomes, whereas the broader synthesis indicates that character development becomes more comprehensive when institutional culture, teacher behaviour, repeated practice, and social participation reinforce one another. This finding suggests that Islamic schools function most effectively as character-development environments when religious values are not restricted to formal instruction but are embedded in everyday institutional practices and social experiences.

Overall, the evidence from the 23 studies supports an integrated model in which Islamic education moves from value transmission to behavioural internalization and finally to social application. Religious character can therefore be understood as the internal moral-religious foundation, while social responsibility represents one of its important behavioural expressions. The central finding of the synthesis is that Islamic schools contribute most meaningfully to both outcomes when religious values are consistently taught, modelled, practiced, and translated into students' participation in social life.

Discussion

The findings of this systematic literature review demonstrate that Islamic schools play a multidimensional role in developing students' social responsibility and religious character. Across the 23 reviewed studies, character formation was not primarily associated with religious instruction alone but with the interaction between school culture, religious habituation, teacher modelling, curriculum practices, and social engagement. This finding suggests that Islamic schools function as character-forming ecosystems in which values are repeatedly introduced, demonstrated, practiced, and reinforced. The result is consistent with the broader perspective of Islamic education, which positions education as a process of developing students' intellectual, spiritual, moral, and social dimensions simultaneously. Therefore, the effectiveness of Islamic schools in character development depends substantially on their ability to transform religious principles into everyday educational practices.

The prominent role of Islamic school culture identified in this review indicates that character development requires an environment that consistently reflects the values promoted through instruction. Students are more likely to internalize responsibility, discipline, respect, cooperation, and empathy when these values are embedded in school rules, relationships, routines, and institutional practices (Apriyadi & Amaliyah, 2025). This finding extends previous research that tends to examine character education through individual programmes by demonstrating that the institutional environment itself constitutes an important mechanism of character formation. In the Islamic educational context, school culture can translate concepts such as amanah, ukhuwah, ta'awun, and ihsan into observable forms of behaviour. Thus, Islamic school culture does not merely support religious identity but also provides a social context in which students learn how religious values should be applied in interactions with others.

Religious habituation and teacher role modelling were also identified as important mechanisms in the reviewed literature. Regular religious practices provide students with repeated opportunities to develop discipline and religious commitment, while teachers provide behavioural examples through their attitudes and interpersonal conduct. The combination of habituation and modelling is particularly significant because character cannot be effectively developed through cognitive understanding alone. Students need opportunities to observe, practice, and reflect upon values in real situations. When teachers consistently demonstrate honesty, fairness, responsibility, compassion, and respect, religious principles become more concrete and credible for students. This finding indicates that teachers in Islamic schools have a dual function: they are instructors of religious and academic knowledge as well as role models whose behaviour contributes directly to students' character formation.

An important interpretation emerging from the reviewed evidence is that these mechanisms should not be understood as independent factors, but as mutually reinforcing components of institutional consistency. School culture establishes the normative environment in which particular behaviours are expected, teacher modelling gives concrete examples of how those norms should be enacted, and religious habituation provides repeated opportunities for students to practice them. Curriculum integration then gives these practices cognitive and normative meaning, while social activities provide contexts in which students can apply religious values beyond formal learning situations. The effectiveness of one mechanism may therefore depend partly on its consistency with the others. For example, repeated teaching about honesty and responsibility is less likely to produce sustained behavioural change when students observe contradictory practices from teachers or experience

institutional rules that do not consistently reinforce these values. Conversely, when school policies, teacher behaviour, classroom instruction, religious routines, and student activities communicate compatible expectations, students encounter the same values across multiple social and educational contexts. This consistency can facilitate the internalization of religious values and their transfer into social responsibility. The findings therefore suggest a conceptual pathway in which Islamic school culture functions as the enabling environment, teacher modelling and habituation operate as reinforcing mechanisms, curriculum provides meaning and direction, and social engagement serves as an arena for behavioural expression. Through their interaction, these mechanisms may explain how religious character is transformed from knowledge and belief into sustained socially responsible behaviour.

Another important finding is the close relationship between religious character and social responsibility. The reviewed studies indicate that religious character becomes more meaningful when it is expressed through socially responsible behaviour. Values such as compassion, honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and respect simultaneously represent religious virtues and social competencies (Lestari & Hadi, 2025). This finding provides an important distinction from approaches that measure religious character primarily through ritual observance. From an Islamic educational perspective, religious commitment should have consequences for how individuals treat other people and contribute to society. Accordingly, activities such as charity, community service, peer assistance, environmental care, and cooperative learning can become important spaces for students to transform religious understanding into social action. Islamic schools therefore have the potential to integrate vertical religious development with horizontal social responsibility.

The findings contribute to the literature by proposing an integrated understanding of Islamic schools as environments where religious character and social responsibility develop reciprocally. Rather than treating the two outcomes as separate domains, the evidence suggests that religious values can provide the ethical foundation for responsible social behaviour, while social engagement provides students with practical contexts for expressing and strengthening those values. The novelty of this review therefore lies in highlighting the interconnected mechanisms through which school culture, habituation, teacher modelling, curriculum integration, and social participation jointly contribute to character development. Practically, Islamic schools should strengthen the alignment between what is taught, what teacher's model, what students practice, and what the institution rewards and reinforces. Such an integrated approach can enable Islamic schools to produce students who are not only religiously committed but also responsible, empathetic, cooperative, and actively engaged in their communities.

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review indicates that Islamic schools contribute to the development of students' religious character and social responsibility through an integrated educational environment. Based on the synthesis of 23 studies, the literature identifies several related mechanisms, including Islamic school culture, religious habituation, teacher role modelling, curriculum integration, and students' participation in social and community-oriented activities. The findings further indicate that religious character and social responsibility are closely related outcomes, as Islamic values such as amanah, ta'awun, ukhuwah, and ihsan can provide a moral foundation for responsible, caring, and cooperative social behaviour. However, these findings should be understood as patterns identified across the reviewed literature rather than as evidence of a direct causal effect.

The findings have practical implications for Islamic school practice. Rather than focusing primarily on the transmission of religious knowledge, Islamic schools can strengthen character development by creating environments in which Islamic values are consistently taught, demonstrated, and practiced. School leaders can integrate Islamic values into curriculum planning, school policies, teacher development, daily routines, extracurricular programmes, and community activities. Teachers can also serve as positive role models and facilitators by providing students with opportunities to practice responsibility, cooperation, empathy, and social care. Such an integrated approach may help Islamic schools translate religious values into students' everyday social behaviour.

This review has several limitations. First, the findings are limited by the databases included in the search process, namely Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, and therefore may not represent all relevant literature available in other databases. Second, the review was restricted to publications within the 2016–2026 period and may therefore have excluded relevant studies published outside this time range. Third, the review was limited by the language and publication

characteristics of the selected studies, which may have resulted in the exclusion of relevant evidence published in other languages or sources. Fourth, the synthesis was based on the quality and methodological characteristics of the primary studies included in the review. Differences in research designs, contexts, participants, and outcome measures may have influenced the comparability of the findings. Finally, only 23 studies met the eligibility criteria and were included in the qualitative synthesis, which limits the breadth of evidence available for drawing broader conclusions.

Future research should therefore examine the development of religious character and social responsibility using longitudinal, comparative, and mixed-method research designs. Future studies could compare different types of Islamic schools and examine how school culture, family involvement, digital environments, and community partnerships are associated with students' character development over time. Researchers should also develop more consistent indicators for assessing religious character and social responsibility to facilitate comparison across educational contexts. For Islamic school practitioners, the findings suggest the value of developing systematic character-development programmes that combine religious habituation, teacher modelling, collaborative learning, community engagement, and continuous assessment so that Islamic values can be consistently practiced and expressed through students' social behaviour.

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