Pertanika J. Soc. Sci. & Hum. 34 (5): 2899 - 2921 (2026)

PERTANIKA JOURNALS

SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES

Journal homepage: http://www.pertanika.upm.edu.my/

# Strengthening Religious Character Among Generation Alpha: Teachers' Perspectives on Curriculum Integration, Active Learning, and Digital Challenges

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## ABSTRACT

The rapid digitalisation and globalisation have made the question of how to keep religious character education alive in primary schools a major concern. Being raised in a technology-driven world, Generation Alpha is certainly not satisfied with the spiritual values being taught separately from 21st-century skills, as most of them consider traditional methods to be less relevant. This qualitative study explores teachers' perspectives on strengthening religious character among Generation Alpha in Islamic primary schools, with particular attention to curriculum integration, active and reflective pedagogy, school family community collaboration, and digital challenges. Through a qualitative corpus analysis design, the data of twelve seasoned Islamic primary school teachers from Central Java, Yogyakarta, and East Java were collected via semi-structured interviews and processed with Voyant Tools to recognise and illustrate the themes that appeared. The findings indicate that teachers perceived curriculum integration as supporting cognitive, affective, and practical dimensions of religious character education; active and

ARTICLE INFO

*Article history:*
Received: 18 November 2025
Accepted: 22 September 2026
Published: 30 October 2026

DOI: https://doi.org/10.47836/pjssh.34.5.24

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reflective learning as relevant approaches for engaging Generation Alpha learners; and school-family-community collaboration as important for reinforcing value internalisation. The continuation of religious character education needs the synergy of an ecosystem of schools, families, and communities, whose cooperation is further facilitated by the creative pedagogy and digital

*Keywords:* Active learning, comprehensive curriculum, digital challenges, generation alpha, parental involvement, religious character

## INTRODUCTION

Worldwide social changes resulting from digitalisation and globalisation have significantly influenced the educational process, especially in the aspect of religious character development in primary school children (Gharaibeh & Islam, 2024; Kayikçi & Demir, 2021). Generation Alpha is a group of children born after 2010 who are living in a digital world which is filled with technology, and they can have instant access to information (Yadav, 2025). This situation poses new challenges for education as traditional ways of teaching religion often turn out to be less effective for the needs and learning styles of this generation. Simultaneously, society still requires schools not only to make students academically competent but also to develop students' moral and spiritual characters (Akhtar, 2024; Ristiana et al., 2025). The social reality mentioned above points out the necessity for religious education to be a leader in contemporary dynamics through comprehensive, innovative, and sustainable strategies.

Several previous works of research have pointed out the necessity of incorporating religious education as a core part of the curriculum to deepen the basis of students' religious character (Isaac, 2025; Jasiah et al., 2024; Marshall, 2024). Moreover, student-centred learning approaches that are based on practice, reflection, and interaction have been proven to excite students' interest, particularly Generation Alpha, as they are more responsive to interactive and digital methods (Digout & Samra, 2023; Ragab et al., 2024; Selvakumar et al., 2025). The review of the literature also points to the fact that parental and community involvement is a very important element in the process of religious value internalisation, as character education cannot be separated from the students' social ecosystem (Hendrowibowo & Kristanto, 2024; Kobayashi & Ogawa, 2025; Mucinskas et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the majority of existing research works only partially address these aspects by focusing on the curriculum, learning methods, or community roles, thus leaving a gap for studies that consider these three dimensions as a unified analytical framework.

Through comprehensive analysis of religious education integration, active learning methods, and parental and community involvement for students' religious character development, this study intends to fill this gap. Such an approach is in line with the global Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), which point out the significance of quality education in raising a generation with good character and being a positive contributor to global peace (Carvalho et al., 2024; Sharifi et al., 2023). The results of this research are not only locally relevant to Indonesia but also globally for multicultural societies in which there is a need to develop value-based educational strategies suitable for the digital era (Vettriselvan, 2025). Therefore, this study may offer contextual insights for academic discussions on religious character education and may inform similar value-based educational practices in comparable multicultural and digital learning contexts.

In the digital and globalised era, religious character education faces challenges related to technological disruption, multicultural social contexts, and the need to maintain the relevance of religious values in contemporary learning environments. Previous studies have emphasised that religious education must respond to digital transformation, cultural plurality, and global social change while preserving its moral and spiritual foundations (Dzo'ul Milal et al., 2020; Genç & Uddin, 2023; Ismail et al., 2025; Kim, 2015). Based on this conceptual framework and the qualitative focus of the study, the research was guided by four research questions.

First, how do teachers perceive the integration of religious character education into the curriculum of Islamic primary schools? Second, how do teachers describe the use of active, reflective, and digitally supported learning practices in strengthening religious character among Generation Alpha? Third, how do teachers perceive the role of parents and communities in supporting religious character education beyond the classroom? Fourth, what digital challenges and teacher readiness issues are identified in maintaining the relevance and sustainability of religious character education?

These research questions are complemented by four study objectives. First, this study aims to explore teachers' perspectives on the integration of religious character education into the curriculum of Islamic primary schools. Second, it aims to examine how teachers describe active, reflective, and digitally supported learning practices for strengthening religious character among Generation Alpha. Third, it aims to investigate teachers' perceptions of parental and community support in religious character education beyond the classroom. Fourth, it aims to identify digital challenges and teacher readiness issues in maintaining the relevance and sustainability of religious character education in the digital era.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Integration of Religious Education into a Comprehensive Curriculum

Religious education has been a major aspect of value development and is still seen as one of the essential elements. However, when religious education is combined with other subjects to create a unified curriculum, the results are not always the same across

educational contexts (Marshall, 2024). The inclusion of religion-related topics in cross-disciplinary subjects helps learners not only develop intellectual understanding but also apply moral values more naturally in life outside school (Carmody, 2025; Corpuz, 2025). The implementation of an integrated religious education curriculum has also been associated with higher social-emotional skills, such as empathy, respect, and resilience, compared with approaches in which religious education is offered only as a separate subject (Ardi et al., 2024; Astuti et al., 2020; Jovkovska et al., 2025; Kurniawan et al., 2025). Therefore, integration allows religion to be understood not merely as an isolated discipline, but as part of a comprehensive curriculum that connects academic competencies with moral and ethical foundations (Rabon, 2024).

One of the benefits of curriculum integration is that it can create a closer connection between formal education and students' socio-cultural environments. In this way, religious education may remain relevant in the era of globalisation (Azqueta & Merino, 2025). Nevertheless, previous studies also identify several challenges, such as limited teacher training for implementing integrative models and the lack of supportive policy frameworks for inclusion (Balasubramanian & Banerjee, 2024; Koç, 2025). These findings show that curriculum integration should not be understood simply by adding religious content to different subjects. Rather, it requires teacher competence, institutional support, and pedagogical planning so that religious values can be connected meaningfully with students' learning experiences and daily behaviour.

The literature therefore presents two related perspectives. On the one hand, integrated religious education can strengthen students' moral, social, and spiritual development. On the other hand, the success of this integration depends on teachers' readiness, curriculum design, and school support. This tension is important for the present study because it examines how teachers in Islamic primary schools perceive the integration of religious character education into curriculum, school routines, and classroom practices.

## Active Learning Approaches in Religious Education

Active learning is considered one of the most effective ways to engage Generation Alpha, as this group of children has grown up in a technologically interactive environment. Methods involving practice, reflection, and collaboration not only increase students' participation but also deepen their understanding and commitment to religious values (Kurniawan, Bakti, et al., 2025; Purwanto et al., 2023; Sipper-Denlinger, 2021). Soboslai (2025) provides evidence that role-play, group discussions, and project-based assignments contribute significantly to students' ability to internalise abstract spiritual concepts. These findings confirm the importance of moving away from purely teacher-centred approaches toward more student-centred methodologies in religious education.

Capecchi (2024) argues that digitally assisted active learning models, such as gamification platforms and virtual simulations, can contextualise values in ways that make sense to the digital generation. When educators combine experiential methods with technology, they can design learning processes that are more immersive and help learners connect theoretical knowledge with real-life applications. This is supported by studies on interactivity and engagement in learning environments (Digout & Samra, 2023; Ragab et al., 2024; Selvakumar et al., 2025), as well as studies on the educational needs of Generation Alpha (Aşik, 2020; Höfrová et al., 2024; Jukic & Skojo, 2021).

However, the literature also indicates a tension between traditional religious instruction and digital pedagogical demands. Traditional religious education often emphasises explanation, memorisation, discipline, and normative instruction, whereas active and digital learning emphasises participation, reflection, storytelling, collaboration, and media-supported engagement. This does not mean that traditional religious instructions should be abandoned. Rather, it suggests that teachers need to adapt to religious pedagogy so that religious values remain meaningful to students who live in digital environments.

The issue of the digital divide and the sustainability of technology-supported approaches in areas with limited resources also remains important. Therefore, the literature recommends the development of hybrid models that maintain the depth of religious values while also responding to students' digital learning habits. Recent studies on students' digital skills suggest that while students may be good at finding and assessing information, they still need help with digital teamwork and being aware of security issues (Bariyyah et al., 2025). The fact that this relates to religious moral education is quite insightful as digital media should not only be focused on enhancing learning interest but also be aimed at leading students to ethical, thoughtful, and responsible use of digital media.

For this reason, the present study examines how teachers describe active, reflective, and digitally supported learning strategies in religious character education.

## Parental and Community Engagement in Religious Character Formation

The involvement of parents and the community has always been a significant factor in supporting religious character education beyond the school context. Stanford et al. (2024) found that children whose parents are actively involved in religious activities and discussions tend to carry out practices at home that are more consistent with what they learn at school. Gemar (2023) also argues that community-based religious programmes create a shared commitment to transmitting values and help reduce inconsistency in students' moral development. These studies confirm that character education cannot depend only on formal institutions, because students' social lives also shape the way values are practiced.

Hoang (2024) and Malone (2020) emphasise that the coordinated efforts of schools, parents, and local communities provide sustained moral guidance and strengthen students' ability to withstand digital distractions. However, (Alam & Hamzah, 2025) argue that in urban contexts, parental engagement may be limited because of parents' work demands and weakening community ties. This indicates that parental and community involvement should not be assumed to be automatically strong or uniform across contexts. It is shaped by family conditions, community culture, time availability, and institutional support.

Therefore, it is necessary to rethink parental and community involvement not only as physical participation but also as continuity of value reinforcement across home, school, and community settings. Digital instruments, such as online parent forums or community-based learning platforms, may support this continuity, but they also require coordination and shared commitment. In the present study, parental and community involvement is examined through teachers' perspectives. This distinction is important because the data were collected from teachers, not directly from parents or community members. Therefore, the study does not claim to represent parents' or community members' direct voices but explores how teachers perceive their role in strengthening students' religious character.

## Conceptual Synthesis and Analytical Framework

The reviewed literature indicates that religious character formation cannot be understood through curriculum, pedagogy, or family-community engagement in isolation. Curriculum integration provides the formal structure through which religious values are embedded across subjects, school routines, and institutional culture. Active and reflective learning explains how teachers can make those values meaningful through practice, storytelling, reflection, collaboration, and digital media. Parental and community involvement provides continuity beyond the classroom by reinforcing values in students' home and social environments.

At the same time, the literature reveals several tensions that directly inform the analytical framework of this study. First, there is a tension between religious education as normative instruction and religious education as reflective, experiential, and student-centred learning. Second, there is a tension between traditional religious pedagogy and the digital learning needs of Generation Alpha. Third, there is a tension between school-based character education and the need for family-community continuity. These tensions show that strengthening religious character requires an integrated analytical approach rather than a fragmented one.

Based on this synthesis, the analytical framework of this study links five interrelated dimensions: curriculum integration, active

and reflective learning, parental/community involvement, digital challenges, and religious character formation. Curriculum integration explains how religious values are formally embedded in school learning. Active and reflective learning explains how teachers make those values meaningful for Generation Alpha. Parental and community involvement explains how teachers perceive value reinforcement beyond school. Digital challenges explain the opportunities and constraints faced by teachers in adapting religious character education to contemporary learning environments. Together, these dimensions guide the analysis of teachers' perspectives on strengthening religious character among Generation Alpha in Islamic primary schools.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study employed a qualitative interview-based design supported by corpus-assisted analysis. Participants were selected using purposive sampling with maximum variation across school types, including Integrated Islamic Primary Schools, State Islamic Primary Schools, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, and Muhammadiyah Primary Schools. The inclusion criteria were: teachers working in Islamic primary schools, having experience in implementing religious character education, and being willing to participate in the study. Variation in teaching experience was also considered.

Semi-structured interviews were guided by questions related to curriculum integration, active and reflective learning, parental and community involvement, and digital challenges. Examples of guiding questions included: 'How do you integrate religious values into classroom learning and school routines?'; 'What active or reflective learning strategies do you use to strengthen students' religious character?'; 'How do parents and communities support religious character education?'; and 'What digital challenges do you face in teaching religious values to Generation Alpha? The interviews were transcribed verbatim, anonymised, checked for accuracy, and translated into English where necessary while preserving the meaning of participants' statements. The transcripts were cleaned by removing repeated words, interviewer prompts, and identifying information before being uploaded to Voyant Tools. Manual thematic coding was conducted first through repeated reading, initial coding, categorisation, and theme development. Voyant Tools was then used as a supporting tool to visualise word frequency, term distribution, and corpus patterns.

### Participants

The study took place in four primary schools that were in Central Java, Yogyakarta, and East Java, Indonesia. The schools were chosen depending on how differently they taught religion through various methods. The research concentrates on twelve primary school teachers who are considered as the main participants, each of them having more than five years of teaching experience. These teachers were from different kinds of

schools such as Integrated Islamic Primary Schools (SD IT), State Islamic Primary Schools (SD MIN), Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), and Muhammadiyah Primary Schools. The number of samples was enough for qualitative research as the major aim was to get deep insight rather than statistical generalisation. Actually, the small number of participants enhances the descriptive validity of this study.

The choice of research locations and the people involved in the study were a good match for the goals of the study, that is, to find out teachers' views about the carrying out of value-based religious character reinforcement in a contemporary educational context. As shown in Table 1, the study involved 12 teachers representing different educational backgrounds, teaching roles, levels of teaching experience, school affiliations, and gender.

Table 1
*Summary of participant characteristics*

| Category | Frequency |
|---|---|
| Education - S2 TIK | 1 |
| Education - S1 English | 1 |
| Education - S1 PGSD | 4 |
| Education - S1 PAI | 6 |
| Status - Subject Teacher | 6 |
| Status - Class Teacher | 6 |
| Teaching Experience > 6 Years | 9 |
| Teaching Experience < 5 Years | 3 |
| School - MIN | 3 |
| School - MI | 3 |
| School - SD IT | 3 |
| School - SD Muhammadiyah | 3 |
| Gender - Male | 5 |
| Gender - Female | 7 |

*(N=12)

## Ethics Approval

The research was conducted in line with moral standards by securing the privacy of those involved. All participants provided informed consent before the interviews. Their identities and school names were anonymised using participant codes. The data were stored securely and used only for research purposes. Confidentiality and data protection procedures were applied throughout the study. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Institute for Research and Community Service, Indonesia (Approval No.: 12.9.15/UN32.14/PB/2025).

## Research Stage

The research phases (Figure 1) turned out to be the following core six: (1) Preparation and Data Collection - the data were primarily obtained through semi-structured interviews with 12 primary school teachers. The focus of the interviews was on teaching practices related to the reinforcement of religious characters, the methods used, and the difficulties experienced; (2) Data Gathering - in order to obtain rich data, more interviews were carried out; (3) Data Analysis - the data obtained were analysed thematically with the help of Voyant Tools to locate the keywords, themes, and the relationships between the themes in the interview transcripts; (4) Data Processing - The credibility of the findings was strengthened through peer debriefing, audit trail, member checking, and comparison between coded excerpts and corpus visualisations. The researchers discussed coding differences to refine the themes and reduce interpretive bias.

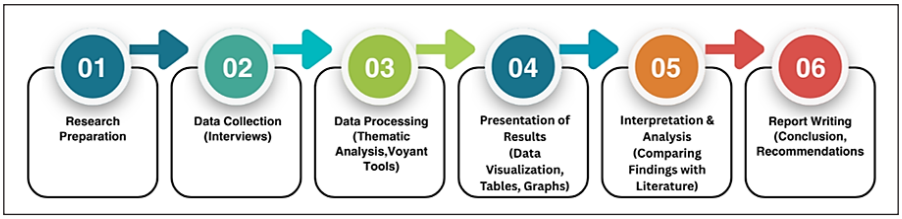


*Figure 1*. Research procedure

Reflexivity was maintained by acknowledging the researchers' background in education and Counselling and by ensuring that interpretations remained grounded in participants' narratives. Data saturation was considered reached when the final interviews no longer produced substantially new themes beyond curriculum integration, active learning, school family community collaboration, and digital challenges; (5) Presentation of Findings - the narratives reflecting the researchers' findings were supported by tables and figures to make the presentation more vivid and easier for the reader to grasp; and (6) Reporting - the research conclusions and recommendations were written down and presented in the final.

### Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data from interviews were assessed with the help of Voyant Tools that allowed the researchers to carry out thematic analysis conjointly with the visualisation of the most frequent words and the interaction of the themes (Gregory et al., 2022; Kairaitytė-Užupė et al., 2023; Sánchez Tarragó, 2021). Using this instrument, the researchers identified patterns emerging from the interview data and used these patterns as supporting evidence for interpreting teachers' perspectives on religious character education. The interpretative outputs were pictured with the help of words and relations between them in graphical and diagrammatic form to make the understanding of the results easier. Such a presentation of findings is likely to reveal not only more aspects but also the depth of the teachers' instructional practices in reinforcing the religious character.

## RESULTS

### Theme 1: Curriculum Integration of Religious Character

The corpus visualisation in Figure 2 indicates that terms such as religion, Qur'an, prayer, students, education, morality, character, and values appeared frequently in teachers' narratives. These patterns were interpreted alongside manual thematic coding, which showed that teachers perceived religious character education as being integrated not only into formal religious subjects but also into school routines and cross-curricular learning activities.

One teacher stated:

> Religious values are not only taught in Islamic Religious Education lessons.

> In other subjects, we also connect them with honesty, responsibility, discipline, and respect for classmates. Thus, students not only understand religious teachings, but also learn to practice them in their daily activities at school. (G3, classroom teacher translated from Indonesian)

This quotation indicates that curriculum integration was understood by teachers as a process of embedding religious values into subject learning, daily routines, and student behaviour. The occurrence of terms such as narratives and prophetic figures suggests that teachers used contextual pedagogical strategies to connect religious values with students' life experiences. Meanwhile, terms such as morality, character, prayer, and fiqh indicate that religious character education was perceived as involving cognitive, affective, and practical dimensions. The word cloud also shows the prominence of terms such as religion, prayer, students, education, lesson, values, activities, and experience, suggesting that religious education was linked not only to worship practices but also to structured learning activities and daily school experiences.

Overall, these findings suggest that teachers perceived curriculum integration as a way to position religious education beyond a separate subject. Religious values were described as being embedded horizontally across classroom learning, school routines, and student interactions, allowing students to connect religious knowledge with attitudes and daily practices.

### Theme 2: Active and Reflective Learning for Generation Alpha

The dominant terms in this theme included values, reflection, practice, engagement, interactive, storytelling, media, digital, and applications (Figure 3). These terms suggest that teachers perceived active and reflective learning as relevant for engaging Generation Alpha in religious character education.

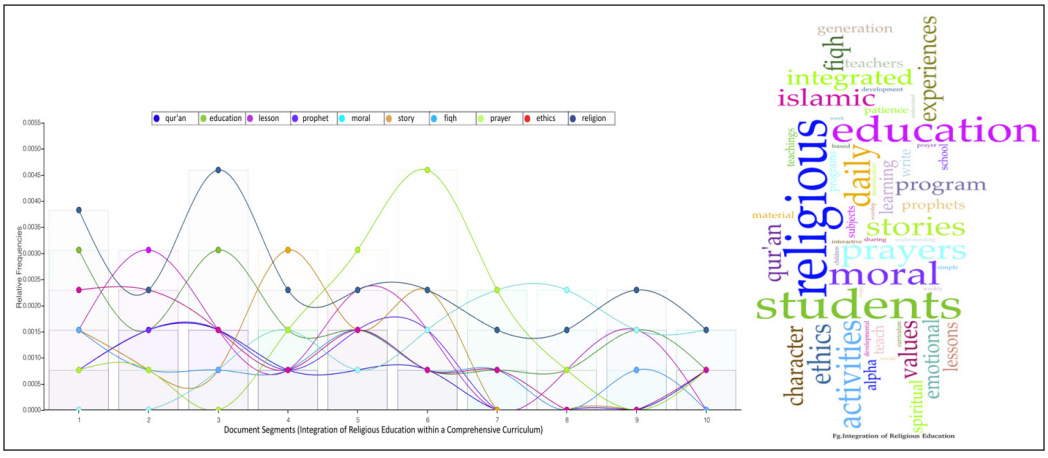


*Figure 2.* Trend graph and word cloud of curriculum integration in religious character education

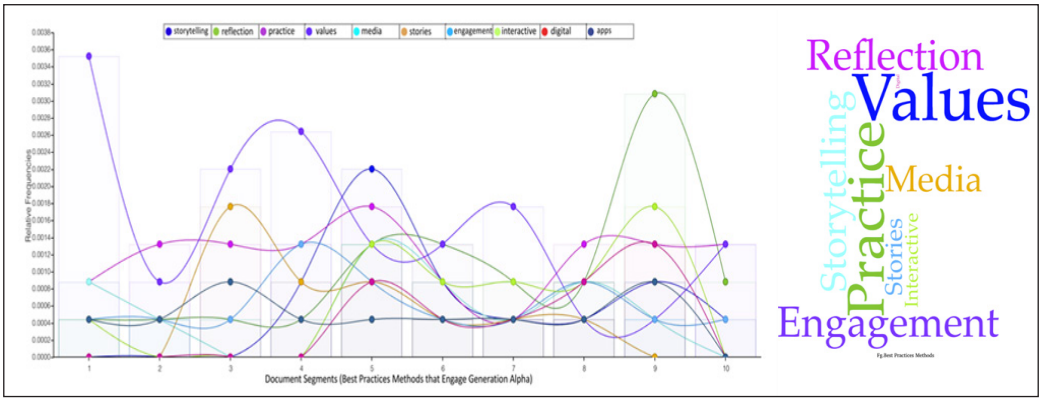


*Figure 3.* Trend graph and word cloud of active and reflective learning methods

One teacher explained:

> Students today are more interested when religious learning is active. If the lesson is delivered only through lectures, they quickly become bored. I usually use stories, short videos, group discussions, or simple games so that they can become more involved. (G7, subject teacher, translated from Indonesian)

This quotation shows that teachers used storytelling, discussion, simple games, and digital media to make religious character education more participatory and meaningful. It also indicates that active and reflective learning was perceived as a way to connect religious values with the learning preferences of Generation Alpha.

The frequent appearance of values, reflection, and practice indicates that teachers viewed religious education not merely as the transfer of knowledge, but as a process of value internalisation. Reflection was used to help students relate religious teachings to their own experiences, while practice-based activities encouraged them to apply moral and spiritual values in daily life. Similarly, the terms of engagement and interactive suggest that teachers attempted to move beyond passive learning by creating classroom activities that required student participation.

The co-occurrence of storytelling, media, digital, and applications further indicates that teachers connected religious character education with creative and technology-supported pedagogy. Storytelling served as a narrative strategy for introducing moral and religious values in ways that were closer to students' experiences. Meanwhile, short videos, digital media, and interactive applications were used to make learning more relevant to students who are familiar with technology. However, these digital tools were not viewed as ends in themselves, but as supporting resources for strengthening reflection, engagement, and value-based learning.

Overall, the findings suggest that teachers perceived active and reflective learning as a suitable approach for religious character education among Generation Alpha. This approach combines values, reflection, practice, interaction, and digital support to make religious learning more meaningful, participatory, and connected to students' everyday lives.

### Theme 3: School Family Community Collaboration

The word cloud and word distribution graph (Figure 4) indicate that the terms of religion, parents, community, activities, figures, students, home, parenting, values, morality, and school appeared frequently in teachers' narratives. These dominant terms suggest that teachers perceived religious character education as extending beyond classroom instruction and requiring continuity between school, family, and community environments.

The prominence of the terms of parents, community, and figures indicates that teachers viewed families, social environments, and role models as important sources of support for students' religious character formation. Meanwhile, terms such as activities, social, school, home, and sermons suggest that religious values were perceived as being reinforced through routine practices at home, school activities, and community-based religious activities.

One teacher stated:

> The school can teach prayer, good manners, and discipline, but if these values are not practiced at home, students will find it difficult to be consistent. Therefore, we always remind parents that the habits developed at school need to be continued at home. (G4, classroom teacher, translated from Indonesian)

This quotation indicates that teachers viewed religious character formation as a shared responsibility between school and family. It also shows that school-based religious character education was perceived

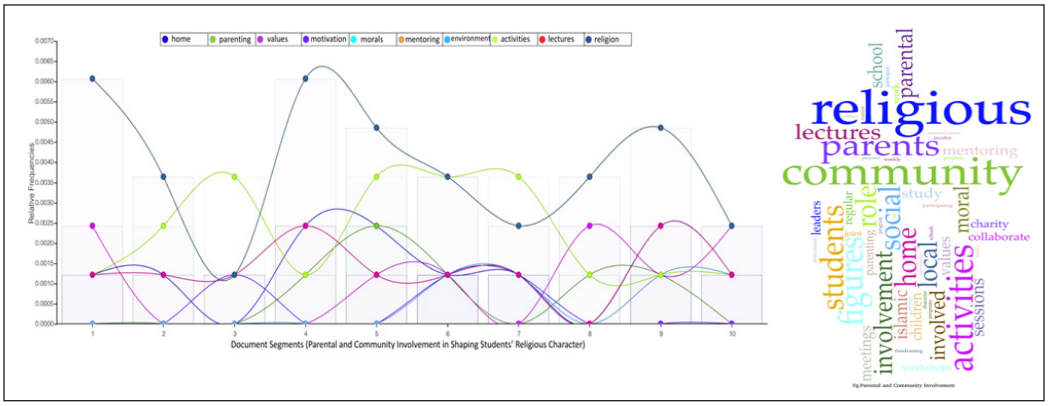


*Figure 4.* Trend graph and word cloud of school family community collaboration

as requiring reinforcement beyond the classroom. Because the data were collected only from teachers, this finding is framed as teachers' perceptions of parental and community involvement rather than as a direct claim about parents' or community members' views.

From teachers' perspectives, parents were seen as important figures in continuing religious habits at home, while community activities were perceived as providing social spaces where students could practice religious values collectively. The integration of school, family, and community was therefore understood as a supporting ecosystem for religious character education. However, the findings should be interpreted cautiously, as the study did not directly interview parents, students, or community members.

Overall, this theme suggests that teachers perceived school-family-community collaboration as an important form of support for strengthening students' religious character. Rather than demonstrating a causal effect, the data indicate how teachers understood the continuity of religious values across school, home, and community settings.

Parents serve as the first educators, instilling moral and spiritual values at home, while the community provides a social arena for practice and the reinforcement of religious identity through collective activities, sermons, and study circles. The integration of home, school, and community creates a comprehensive ecosystem of religious education, enabling students not only to acquire cognitive understanding but also to internalise and embody religious values in their daily behaviour.

### Theme 4: Digital Challenges and Teacher Readiness

In the theme of digital challenges (Figure 5) and teacher readiness, dominant terms included religion, students, education, teachers, challenges, morality, media,

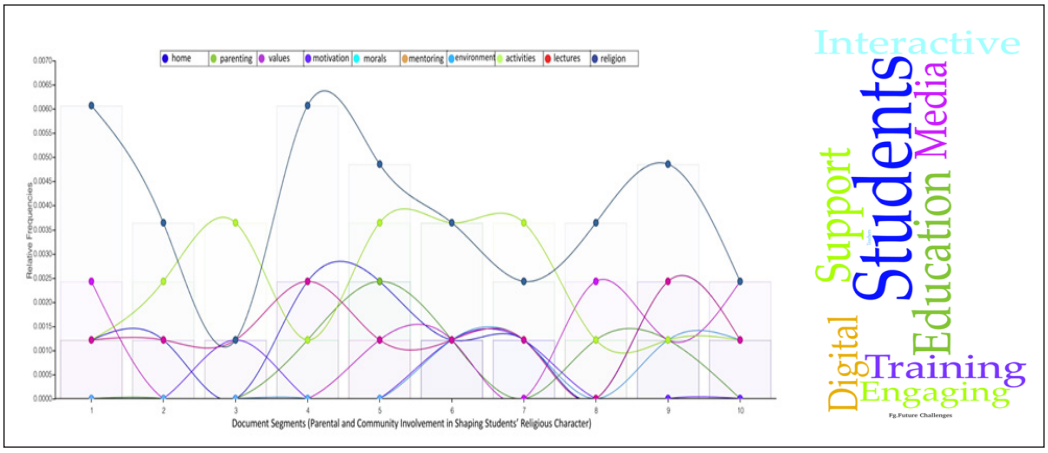


*Figure 5.* Trend graph and word cloud of digital challenges and teacher readiness

digital, interactive, support, and training. These terms indicate that teachers perceived digitalisation as both an opportunity and a challenge for sustaining religious character education. The prominence of religion suggests that teachers continued to position religious values as the core of character formation, while the terms digital, media, and interactive reflect the need to adapt religious learning to students' digital environments.

One teacher explained:

> The greatest challenge today is that students are very close to gadgets. On the one hand, technology can support learning. On the other hand, students are also easily influenced by content that is not aligned with religious values. (G8, classroom teacher, translated from Indonesian)

This quotation shows that teachers recognised the pedagogical potential of digital media while also emphasising the need for guidance, ethical control, and teacher readiness. It indicates that technology was not perceived only as a learning resource, but also as a source of distraction and moral concern for students. This concern is in line with the recent discourse on social networking dependency wherein it is suggested that students' digital engagement should not be solely measured by academic performances but also, and more importantly, by their developmental aspects such as digital literacy, adaptability, emotional resilience, and responsible online behaviour at the very least (Suhardita et al., 2026). Considering the religious character education, from that angle, it can be interpreted that the teachers' roles are not limited to only assisting the students' digital media usage for academic purposes but also to help them develop self-regulation and ethical awareness when dealing with content online.

The word distribution graph also shows the recurring presence of terms such as students, education, teachers, support, and training. These terms suggest that teachers viewed digital adaptation as a shared educational responsibility. Teachers are expected to design religious learning that is relevant to Generation Alpha, while schools need to provide support and training so that digital media can be used appropriately. In this sense, teacher readiness becomes an important condition for adapting religious character education to the digital era.

The emergence of media, digital, and interactive in the corpus further indicates that religious education needs to respond to students' familiarity with technology. However, digital tools should not be used merely to make lessons more entertaining. From teachers' perspectives, digital media should support reflection, value internalisation, and moral guidance. Therefore, the challenge is not simply whether technology should be used, but how it can be used responsibly to strengthen religious character without weakening students' discipline, manners, and spiritual awareness.

Overall, this theme suggests that future challenges in strengthening religious

character are related to three main issues: maintaining religious values amid digitalisation and globalisation, improving teacher readiness to use digital media appropriately, and building collaboration among schools, families, and communities. These findings suggest that, from teachers' perspectives, religious character education for Generation Alpha requires adaptation, innovation, and guidance while maintaining its moral and spiritual foundations.

## DISCUSSION

The first finding suggests that, in the context of Islamic primary schools in Java, religious character education is not limited to formal religious subjects. Empirically, teachers described religious values as being embedded in classroom instruction, daily worship routines, school culture, and teacher modeling. This context is significant because Islamic primary schools in Java often combine curriculum-based religious instruction with habitual practices such as prayer, Qur'anic learning, greetings, discipline, and moral conduct. The authors interpret this pattern as indicating that religious character formation operates as a moral ecology rather than as a single subject-based intervention.

The frequent usage of the words religion and Qur'an indicates the establishment of a strong normative basis in the development of the curriculum, which is in line with the concept of a comprehensive curriculum that links core values across different disciplines (Nislev, 2020; van Lambalgen & van der Tuin, 2024). This method gives a moral basis while at the same time, it embeds the values in every learning aspect. The integration discussed here corresponds with the opinions of Andrei, (2023) and Demirtaş (2023), which claim that a comprehensive religious education should cover cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Thus, religious education becomes less abstract as students not only gain conceptual knowledge but are also led to developing attitudes and life skills in line with spiritual values.

The second finding shows the significance of active learning methods that are based on practice, reflection, and engagement. The major occurrence of the word's values, reflection, practice, and interactive points to the fact that methods which focus on student involvement are more suitable for Generation Alpha. This finding is in agreement with active learning theory, which highlights that direct experience is the most effective way of knowledge construction (Aricò & Lancaster, 2018; Demirtaş et al., 2023; Lim, 2025; Schmidt & Libre, 2020; Selvakumar et al., 2025). Generation Alpha, being a tech-savvy from their early years, demands learning styles that can merge religious values with digital innovation (Aşik, 2020; Höfrová et al., 2024; Jukic & Skojo, 2021). The appearance of storytelling and digital applications in the research is a proof that narrative and interactive teaching strategies can not only elevate student engagement but also their understanding (Lazareva & Cruz-Martinez, 2021; Modi et al., 2024; Navas Romero, 2025; Ungerer, 2019).

Hence, religious education that is suitable for Generation Alpha should take tech as a vehicle for value internalisation and not just a tool for fun.

The third finding points out that families and communities are the main sources that help build the religious character of students. The prominence of the term parents and community points to the understanding that schools are not alone in the responsibility to provide religious education as the home, and the wider social environment also have their roles. The findings of the study by (Kobayashi & Ogawa, 2025; Manilal & Jairam, 2023) suggest that involvement of parents and community members promotes the success of character education. The parenting styles and motivation patterns unveiled by the data put forward not only the great role of parental upbringing in the internalisation of religious values but also community engagement through sermons or social activities as a way of providing a collective space for the practice of spiritual values. These results support Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory that the educational environment of a child is influenced by the interaction of the microsystem (family), mesosystem (school), and exosystem (community) (Fulantelli et al., 2021; Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017). The findings suggest that teachers perceived collaboration among school, family, and community as important for sustaining religious character education. This interpretation is consistent with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which emphasises the interaction between family, school, and community environments. However, because the data were collected from teachers, this conclusion is framed as teachers' perception of ecological support rather than as direct evidence from parents or community members.

The fourth finding points out the main issues that religious education needs to solve in the future, especially during the period of digitalisation and globalisation. The majority of the words of challenges, digital, interactive, and support reveal the need to change the strategies for the reinforcement of religious character in the technological ecosystem. These findings are in line with the results of the research by (Ghofar et al., 2024; Sati et al., 2025), which suggests that religion in the digital era is in a dilemma position of either keeping the traditional values or adjusting to the technological changes. The teachers' and parents' roles are becoming very important as the standard of future learning will depend mainly on the teachers' ability to blend technology and values (Nurhidayat et al., 2024; Thapa et al., 2024). The other issue is to keep religious teachings attractive for young generations who are very likely to be distracted by the consequences of globalisation (Bećirović, 2023; Sepadi et al., 2025). In this way, religious education should focus on innovation, collaboration, and sustainability to be still a moral anchor in the time of change.

Although this study is context-specific, its findings may offer relevant insights for value-based education that aligns with

the broader aims of SDG 4 on quality education and SDG 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies. This connection should be understood as an interpretive implication rather than a direct empirical claim. From teachers' perspectives, the integration of religious education into the curriculum, the use of active and reflective learning, and the perceived support of families and communities may contribute to educational practices that promote moral development, student engagement, and socially responsible behaviour. In this sense, digitally contextualised religious education can be understood as one possible approach to supporting character-oriented learning in primary education, while still requiring further empirical investigation across broader participant groups and contexts.

The worldwide implications of these results are in the great necessity of changing religious education practices to be prepared for the 21st century challenges such as digitalisation, cultural pluralism, and moral identity crises. This study provides contextual insights that may inform discussions among multicultural societies regarding strategies for strengthening religious character education. Also, these findings highlight the need for collaboration among teachers, parents, communities, and educational policymakers to create an ecosystem that will not only nurture the religious character but also be sustainable. In this way, the outcomes not only extend to the Indonesian context but also offer insights to the international community about the role of value-based education as a powerful tool for promoting peace, justice, and the strengthening of social institutions at the global level.

## CONCLUSION

This study suggests that, from teachers' perspectives, religious character education in Islamic primary schools can be strengthened through curriculum integration, active and reflective learning, school-family-community collaboration, and careful adaptation to digital challenges. The findings indicate that teachers viewed religious character formation as a process that extends beyond formal religious subjects and is supported by daily school routines, classroom practices, family habituation, and community religious activities. The study also shows that teachers perceived active and reflective learning as relevant for Generation Alpha. Storytelling, discussion, practice-based activities, reflection, and digital media were described as ways to make religious values more meaningful and connected to students' daily experiences. However, digital technology was also perceived as a challenge, particularly because students are increasingly exposed to gadgets and online content that may not always support religious and moral development. Rather than offering broad generalisations, this study contributes contextual evidence on how teachers in Islamic primary schools in Java understand the need to adapt religious character education to the learning characteristics and digital experiences of Generation Alpha.

The main contribution of this study lies in showing how curriculum, pedagogy, school-family-community collaboration, and digital readiness are interconnected in teachers' perceptions of religious character formation.

## IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

The implications of this study are organised into practical, policy, and theoretical implications. This organisation is intended to clarify how the findings may inform schools, teachers, policymakers, and future academic discussions on religious character education in the digital era. Practical implications: Schools and teachers can strengthen religious character education by integrating religious values into classroom learning, daily school routines, storytelling, reflective activities, and guided digital media use. Teachers can design active learning activities that connect religious values with students' daily experiences while ensuring that technology is used to support, rather than replace moral reflection and habituation. In this way, digital media can function as a pedagogical resource for making religious learning more engaging, while still maintaining the core purpose of character formation.

Policy implications: School leaders and policymakers should provide teacher training on digital pedagogy for religious character education, develop guidelines for ethical digital media use, and strengthen structured collaboration between schools, parents, and communities. Such support is important because teachers in this study perceived digitalisation as both an opportunity and a challenge. Policies should therefore not only encourage the use of technology but also ensure that digital tools are used responsibly to support students' moral, spiritual, and social development.

Theoretical implications: This study contributes to discussions on religious character education by showing how curriculum integration, active and reflective learning, ecological collaboration, and digital challenges interact in shaping teachers' perspectives on character formation among Generation Alpha in Islamic primary schools. The findings suggest that religious character formation should be understood as an integrated process involving curriculum, pedagogy, school culture, family support, community involvement, and digital readiness. Rather than presenting a universal model, this study offers context-specific implications that may inform similar value-based education practices in comparable Islamic, multicultural, and digitally mediated school contexts.

## LIMITATION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study is limited to Islamic primary schools in Java and relies solely on teachers' perspectives. It did not include students, parents, or community members as direct participants; therefore, the findings should be understood as teachers' perceptions rather than direct accounts from all stakeholders involved in religious character education. This limitation is important

because religious character formation involves multiple actors, including students, families, schools, and communities. Another limitation concerns the use of corpus-assisted word-frequency analysis. Although Voyant Tools helped visualise dominant terms and patterns in the interview corpus, word-frequency analysis cannot fully capture the complexity of religious meaning-making, moral development, and value internalisation. Therefore, the corpus visualisation in this study should be understood as a supporting tool rather than the main source of qualitative interpretation. Future studies should involve students, parents, and community members to provide a more comprehensive understanding of religious character education. Further research may also use larger and more diverse samples, compare Islamic and non-Islamic school contexts, and expand the geographical scope beyond Java. In addition, longitudinal or mixed-method designs are recommended to examine how religious character education develops over time and how digital methods influence students' moral and spiritual development in different educational contexts.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors gratefully acknowledge the support provided by the Indonesian Education Scholarship and the relevant funding institutions during the completion of this study. The authors also thank the participating schools and teachers for their valuable time, cooperation, and contributions to the research process.

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