Improving Students' Religious Character by Using Audiovisual Media in Islamic Education Learning at MIN 4 Aceh Selatan

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to improve students' religious character through the use of audiovisual media in Islamic Education learning at MIN 4 Aceh Selatan. The research employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design conducted in two cycles, each consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection stages. The participants were 28 fifth-grade students. Data were collected through observation sheets, religious character assessment rubrics, interviews, and documentation. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine the percentage of improvement across cycles, while qualitative data were analyzed through reflective analysis to identify changes in students' attitudes and learning engagement. The findings indicate a significant improvement in students' religious character after the implementation of audiovisual media. In the pre-cycle stage, the average religious character score was 68.21 (moderate category), with only 46.4% of students achieving the minimum mastery criterion (≥75). In Cycle I, the average score increased to 76.35, with 71.4% mastery. After refinement in Cycle II, the average score reached 85.12, with 92.8% of students meeting the mastery criterion. Observational data also revealed increased student engagement, active participation, discipline in prayer practice, respect toward teachers and peers, and improved moral behavior during classroom activities. The results demonstrate that integrating audiovisual media in Islamic Education learning effectively enhances students' religious character by providing contextual, visual, and emotionally engaging learning experiences. This study contributes to the growing body of research on innovative instructional strategies in Islamic Education and offers practical implications for teachers seeking to strengthen character education through technology-enhanced learning environments.

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Introduction

Character education has become a central concern in contemporary educational discourse, particularly in societies facing rapid social transformation and technological

disruption. Schools are no longer viewed solely as institutions for cognitive development, but also as strategic spaces for shaping students' moral and religious dispositions. Scholars have consistently argued that character formation is inseparable from the broader aims of education, which include fostering ethical awareness, responsibility, and spiritual maturity (Lickona, 2012; Nucci & Narvaez, 2008). In the context of Islamic Education, this dimension is even more explicit, as religious character constitutes both an educational objective and a theological mandate.

Religious character in Islamic pedagogy refers to the internalization of faith-based values that manifest in behavior, attitudes, and daily practices. It encompasses dimensions such as honesty, discipline, respect, responsibility, sincerity, and devotion to worship. Within Islamic educational philosophy, the integration of faith ('iman'), knowledge ('ilm'), and action ('amal') forms the core of holistic development (Al-Attas, 1991). Consequently, Islamic Education is not merely a transfer of doctrinal knowledge but a transformative process aimed at nurturing moral excellence ('akhlaq al-karimah').

In Indonesia, strengthening religious character has become a national priority, particularly in response to concerns regarding moral decline among youth. The government's emphasis on character education reflects a broader recognition that academic achievement alone is insufficient to prepare students for social and ethical challenges (Kemendikbud, 2017). Islamic primary schools, including madrasah ibtidaiyah, are expected to play a pivotal role in cultivating students' religious dispositions from an early age. However, empirical observations indicate that instructional practices often remain teacher-centered and heavily reliant on verbal exposition, which may limit students' affective engagement.

Research in educational psychology suggests that moral and religious character development is strongly influenced by meaningful learning experiences and modeling (Bandura, 1977; Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). When instruction fails to connect abstract values with concrete contexts, students may struggle to internalize moral principles. In many Islamic Education classrooms, lessons on faith and morality are delivered through lectures and textbook readings, with limited integration of interactive or multimodal resources. Such approaches risk reducing religious education to cognitive memorization rather than transformative engagement.

The integration of technology in education offers promising opportunities to address this gap. Audiovisual media, in particular, have been recognized as effective tools for enhancing comprehension, emotional resonance, and long-term retention (Mayer, 2009). By combining visual and auditory stimuli, audiovisual materials can present religious narratives, ethical dilemmas, and exemplary behaviors in ways that are vivid and contextually grounded. This multimodal approach aligns with the cognitive

theory of multimedia learning, which posits that individuals learn more deeply from words and pictures together than from words alone (Mayer, 2009).

Empirical studies have demonstrated that audiovisual media can increase student motivation and engagement across various subjects (Moreno & Mayer, 2007; Schindler et al., 2017). In religious education contexts, multimedia storytelling has been found to facilitate moral reflection and empathy (Hess & McAvoy, 2015). Visual representations of moral exemplars, historical events, and ritual practices can help bridge the gap between abstract concepts and lived experience. This is particularly relevant in primary education, where students are developmentally responsive to concrete and sensory-rich stimuli.

Within Islamic Education, audiovisual media may include animated stories of prophets, documentary clips on Islamic practices, dramatizations of ethical scenarios, and instructional videos demonstrating ritual acts such as prayer and ablution. Such materials not only convey information but also model behavior, thereby supporting observational learning processes as described by Bandura (1977). When students observe positive religious conduct represented in engaging formats, they are more likely to imitate and internalize those behaviors.

Despite these theoretical advantages, the application of audiovisual media in Islamic primary schools remains uneven. Several studies in Indonesian madrasah settings indicate that teachers often face constraints related to technological infrastructure, pedagogical training, and resource availability (Suyadi & Selvi, 2019; Huda et al., 2020). Moreover, some educators express concern that technology may distract rather than support moral formation if not carefully integrated. These challenges highlight the need for context-sensitive research that examines how audiovisual media can be effectively implemented to enhance religious character.

Classroom Action Research offers a practical and reflective framework for addressing such pedagogical challenges. Rooted in cyclical processes of planning, action, observation, and reflection, Classroom Action Research enables teachers to systematically improve instructional practices within their own classrooms (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). This approach is particularly suitable for character education, where iterative refinement and close observation of behavioral change are essential. By engaging directly with classroom realities, researchers can generate contextually grounded insights that bridge theory and practice.

Previous research on media use in Islamic Education has primarily focused on cognitive outcomes, such as improved test scores or conceptual understanding (Rahman & Angraeni, 2021). While these findings are valuable, they do not fully address the affective and behavioral dimensions central to religious character. Character development involves observable changes in attitudes and conduct, which require

systematic assessment through validated instruments and reflective observation (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). Therefore, a more comprehensive evaluation of instructional innovation is needed.

The present study is situated at MIN 4 Aceh Selatan, an Islamic primary school operating within a socio-religious environment that strongly values Islamic identity and practice. Preliminary observations revealed that although students demonstrated adequate cognitive understanding of religious content, manifestations of religious character—such as discipline in prayer, respect for teachers, and honesty in classroom interactions—were inconsistent. This discrepancy underscores the importance of exploring pedagogical strategies that move beyond knowledge transmission toward character internalization.

The theoretical framework of this study integrates multimedia learning theory and Islamic character education principles. Multimedia learning theory emphasizes the role of dual-channel processing and cognitive integration in constructing meaning (Mayer, 2009). Meanwhile, Islamic educational philosophy stresses the unity of knowledge and action, where understanding must culminate in righteous behavior (Al-Attas, 1991). The convergence of these perspectives suggests that well-designed audiovisual media can serve as catalysts for both cognitive comprehension and moral embodiment.

Furthermore, social learning theory provides additional explanatory power. According to Bandura (1977), individuals acquire new behaviors through observation, imitation, and reinforcement. Audiovisual media can function as virtual models, presenting examples of desirable religious conduct. When combined with teacher guidance and reflective discussion, such media may strengthen students' motivation to emulate positive behaviors. This integrative approach aligns with contemporary character education frameworks that emphasize experiential and dialogical learning (Lickona, 2012).

In the Indonesian educational context, efforts to integrate digital technology into classroom practice have accelerated in recent years (Huda et al., 2020). However, empirical research specifically examining the impact of audiovisual media on religious character in Islamic primary schools remains limited. Existing studies often employ experimental designs without iterative refinement, thereby overlooking the dynamic nature of classroom practice. Classroom Action Research, by contrast, allows for adaptive implementation responsive to students' evolving needs.

The significance of this study lies in its dual contribution to theory and practice. Theoretically, it extends multimedia learning and social learning frameworks into the domain of Islamic character education. Practically, it offers evidence-based guidance for teachers seeking to enhance students' religious dispositions through technology-

enhanced instruction. By documenting measurable changes across action cycles, this research provides concrete data to inform pedagogical decision-making.

Moreover, the study addresses a broader concern regarding the integration of faith and technology. In some educational discourses, technology is perceived as value-neutral or even morally ambiguous. However, when intentionally designed and aligned with ethical objectives, technological tools can serve as instruments of moral cultivation rather than mere entertainment (Schindler et al., 2017). This perspective reframes audiovisual media as a medium for reinforcing, rather than undermining, religious values.

Given these considerations, the present research seeks to investigate how the use of audiovisual media in Islamic Education learning can improve students' religious character at MIN 4 Aceh Selatan. The study adopts a Classroom Action Research design to systematically implement and evaluate instructional interventions over two cycles. By analyzing quantitative indicators of character development alongside qualitative observations of behavioral change, the research aims to provide a comprehensive account of pedagogical effectiveness.

In summary, the cultivation of religious character remains a fundamental objective of Islamic Education, yet traditional instructional approaches may not sufficiently engage students' affective and behavioral dimensions. The integration of audiovisual media, grounded in established learning theories and implemented through reflective action research, offers a promising pathway for enhancing character formation. Through rigorous empirical investigation, this study endeavors to contribute meaningful insights to the discourse on innovative strategies for strengthening religious character in Islamic primary education.

Methods

This study employed a Classroom Action Research design to improve students' religious character through the integration of audiovisual media in Islamic Education learning. Classroom Action Research was selected because it enables systematic, reflective, and context-based improvement of instructional practices within authentic classroom settings (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). The cyclical structure of planning, action, observation, and reflection allowed the researcher to iteratively refine the instructional strategy based on empirical evidence and classroom realities. This design is widely recognized as appropriate for interventions aimed at behavioral and character development, where continuous adjustment and reflection are essential (Stringer, 2014).

The research was conducted at MIN 4 Aceh Selatan, an Islamic primary school located in Aceh Province, Indonesia. The participants consisted of 28 fifth-grade students enrolled in the Islamic Education course during the 2025/2026 academic year.

The class was selected purposively because preliminary observation indicated that students' religious character, particularly in terms of discipline in worship practices, respect toward teachers and peers, and responsibility in classroom tasks, required improvement. The teacher of the class collaborated with the researcher throughout the implementation process to ensure ecological validity and instructional consistency.

The study was implemented over two action cycles, each consisting of four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. In the planning stage, the researcher developed lesson plans integrating audiovisual media aligned with the curriculum objectives. The materials included short animated videos illustrating moral values, documentary clips on Islamic practices, and instructional videos demonstrating proper worship procedures. The lesson plans incorporated structured reflection sessions to encourage students to articulate moral insights and relate them to their daily behavior.

During the action stage, the planned lessons were implemented in regular classroom sessions. Audiovisual materials were presented using a projector and sound system to ensure clarity and engagement. The teacher facilitated guided discussions after each viewing session, encouraging students to analyze the moral messages conveyed and to reflect on their own conduct. Students were also involved in role-playing activities to reinforce the values demonstrated in the audiovisual content. Each cycle consisted of three instructional meetings and one evaluation meeting.

The observation stage involved systematic monitoring of students' behavioral changes and classroom engagement. Two observers—the researcher and a collaborating teacher—used structured observation sheets to assess indicators of religious character. The observation instrument was developed based on established character education frameworks (Lickona, 2012) and Islamic moral principles. The indicators included discipline in performing prayers, honesty in completing tasks, respect toward teachers and peers, responsibility in group activities, and attentiveness during religious instruction.

In the reflection stage, quantitative and qualitative findings from each cycle were analyzed to determine strengths, weaknesses, and necessary improvements. Reflection meetings were conducted after each cycle to evaluate the effectiveness of the instructional strategy and to identify adjustments for the subsequent cycle. Revisions included refining video selection, improving discussion prompts, and increasing opportunities for student participation.

Data were collected using multiple instruments to ensure methodological rigor and triangulation. The primary quantitative instrument was a religious character assessment rubric scored on a scale of 1 to 4 across five behavioral indicators. Scores were aggregated to obtain individual and class averages. Mastery criteria were established at a minimum score equivalent to 75 on a standardized 100-point scale.

Qualitative data were obtained from observation notes, field documentation, and semi-structured interviews with selected students and the classroom teacher to capture perceptions of behavioral change and engagement.

Instrument validity was established through expert judgment involving two senior lecturers in Islamic Education and one experienced madrasah supervisor. Content validity was assessed by aligning each indicator with core competencies in the Islamic Education curriculum. Reliability of the observation rubric was examined using inter-rater reliability analysis, resulting in a Cohen's kappa coefficient of 0.82, indicating strong agreement between observers.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean scores, percentage of mastery, and improvement rates between cycles. The level of improvement was calculated by comparing pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II averages. Qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis, involving data reduction, categorization, and interpretation to identify recurring patterns of behavioral transformation. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings strengthened the credibility and comprehensiveness of the results.

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed. Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the school principal and the local education authority. Informed consent was secured from students' parents or guardians. Participants were assured that data would be used solely for research purposes and that confidentiality would be maintained. The intervention was designed to enhance, rather than disrupt, regular instructional activities, thereby ensuring minimal risk to participants. Through this systematic and reflective methodological approach, the study sought to generate empirically grounded evidence on the effectiveness of audiovisual media in improving students' religious character within Islamic primary education.

Result

This section presents the empirical findings of the Classroom Action Research conducted in two cycles. The results are organized into quantitative findings derived from the religious character assessment rubric and qualitative findings obtained from classroom observations and interviews. The quantitative results focus on changes in mean scores and mastery percentages across the pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II stages, while the qualitative findings elaborate on behavioral transformations observed during the intervention.

Quantitative Findings

Prior to the implementation of audiovisual media, a pre-cycle assessment was conducted to establish the baseline level of students' religious character. The assessment was based on five indicators: discipline in worship, honesty, respect,

responsibility, and attentiveness during Islamic Education lessons. Scores were converted into a 100-point scale to determine mastery. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of students' religious character scores across the three stages of the research.

Table 1. Students' Religious Character Scores Across Research Stages

Stage	Mean Score	Mastery Percentage (%)	Category
Pre-Cycle	68.21	46.4%	Moderate
Cycle I	76.35	71.4%	Good
Cycle II	85.12	92.8%	Very Good

As shown in Table 1, the pre-cycle mean score was 68.21, categorized as moderate. Only 13 out of 28 students (46.4%) achieved the minimum mastery criterion of 75. This finding confirmed the need for pedagogical intervention.

Following the implementation of audiovisual media in Cycle I, the mean score increased to 76.35, reflecting an improvement of 8.14 points. The percentage of students achieving mastery rose to 71.4% (20 students). Although the results indicated substantial progress, several students still displayed inconsistencies in discipline and attentiveness, particularly during reflective discussions.

Further refinement of instructional strategies in Cycle II, including improved video selection and more structured guided reflection, resulted in a mean score of 85.12. This represents an overall improvement of 16.91 points from the pre-cycle stage. In Cycle II, 26 out of 28 students (92.8%) achieved the mastery criterion. The class average moved into the "very good" category, indicating that the intervention was highly effective. To provide a more detailed perspective, Table 2 presents the improvement across each religious character indicator.

Table 2. Mean Scores by Religious Character Indicator

Indicator	Pre-Cycle	Cycle I	Cycle II
Discipline in Worship	67.50	75.80	86.40
Honesty	69.10	77.20	84.70
Respect Toward Teachers & Peers	70.00	78.50	87.10
Responsibility in Tasks	66.80	74.60	83.90
Attentiveness in Learning	67.65	75.65	83.50

The most notable improvement occurred in the indicator of discipline in worship, which increased by 18.90 points from the pre-cycle to Cycle II. Respect toward teachers and peers also demonstrated substantial growth. These findings indicate that audiovisual media not only enhanced cognitive understanding but also positively influenced observable religious behaviors.

Qualitative Findings

Classroom observations revealed marked changes in students' engagement and moral conduct. During the pre-cycle phase, several students appeared passive, distracted, and less enthusiastic in participating in discussions about religious values. Prayer practices conducted during school hours were often performed without full attentiveness.

In Cycle I, students exhibited increased curiosity and enthusiasm when audiovisual materials were introduced. Animated stories depicting moral exemplars stimulated active questioning and discussion. However, some students still required teacher reinforcement to translate moral messages into consistent behavior.

By Cycle II, behavioral changes became more stable and observable. Students demonstrated greater punctuality in congregational prayers, more respectful interactions during group activities, and improved honesty in completing assignments. Reflective discussions showed deeper moral reasoning, as students were able to articulate connections between the video content and their daily experiences. Interviews with the classroom teacher confirmed that improvements were not limited to Islamic Education sessions but extended to other school activities. The findings indicate that the integration of audiovisual media significantly enhanced students' religious character both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the integration of audiovisual media in Islamic Education learning significantly improved students' religious character. The progressive increase in mean scores and mastery percentages across research cycles suggests that multimedia-based instruction can effectively facilitate moral internalization. These results are consistent with multimedia learning theory, which posits that individuals learn more deeply from combined verbal and visual representations than from verbal instruction alone (Mayer, 2009).

The substantial improvement observed in students' discipline in worship aligns with the principles of social learning theory. Bandura (1977) emphasized that observational learning plays a crucial role in behavioral acquisition. In this study, audiovisual media functioned as modeled representations of desirable religious

conduct. When students observed proper prayer practices and moral exemplars through engaging visual narratives, they were more inclined to imitate those behaviors.

The increase in attentiveness and classroom engagement corroborates findings from Schindler et al. (2017), who reported that technology-enhanced learning environments positively influence student motivation and active participation. The emotional and sensory stimulation provided by audiovisual media likely contributed to deeper cognitive processing and affective involvement, thereby strengthening moral reflection.

Moreover, the observed improvement in respect and responsibility supports Lickona's (2012) assertion that character education must integrate moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. The audiovisual materials in this study did not merely convey information but also evoked emotional responses and prompted behavioral commitment. Guided reflection sessions facilitated the transition from moral awareness to moral practice.

The iterative nature of Classroom Action Research also contributed significantly to the success of the intervention. The reflective adjustments made between cycles enhanced instructional effectiveness, consistent with the principles articulated by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988). This finding underscores the importance of adaptive pedagogy in character education, where continuous evaluation and refinement are essential.

The qualitative findings further reveal that moral transformation was not instantaneous but developed progressively. This observation aligns with Berkowitz and Bier (2005), who emphasized that character development requires sustained reinforcement and consistent modeling. The stability of behavioral changes observed in Cycle II suggests that repeated exposure to meaningful audiovisual content strengthened internalization processes.

In the context of Islamic Education, the results affirm the integration of faith, knowledge, and action as central to holistic development (Al-Attas, 1991). Audiovisual media served as a bridge connecting doctrinal knowledge with lived moral experience. By contextualizing abstract religious principles within relatable narratives, the intervention supported the embodiment of Islamic values in daily conduct.

Furthermore, the findings address concerns that technology may distract from moral formation. Instead, when carefully curated and pedagogically guided, audiovisual media can function as a powerful instrument for ethical cultivation. This perspective resonates with contemporary research highlighting the constructive role of digital tools in fostering reflective and value-based learning (Huda et al., 2020).

The results of this study provide robust empirical evidence that audiovisual media, when implemented through a reflective and structured approach, significantly enhance students' religious character. The combination of statistical improvement and observable behavioral transformation strengthens the validity of the findings. These outcomes contribute to the expanding discourse on innovative instructional strategies in Islamic primary education and reinforce the pedagogical potential of multimedia integration in character formation.

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the use of audiovisual media in Islamic Education learning at MIN 4 Aceh Selatan effectively improves students' religious character. Quantitative results indicated substantial increases in mean scores and mastery percentages across all assessed indicators, while qualitative observations confirmed enhanced discipline in worship, honesty, respect, responsibility, and attentiveness during classroom activities. The integration of multimedia resources, combined with guided reflection and interactive discussions, facilitated both cognitive understanding and moral internalization, supporting theoretical perspectives from multimedia learning and social learning theories. Furthermore, the iterative Classroom Action Research approach allowed for adaptive refinement of instructional strategies, ensuring sustained and observable behavioral improvements. These results suggest that carefully designed audiovisual media can serve as a powerful pedagogical tool for fostering religious character in primary school students, providing both practical guidance for educators and empirical evidence for future research on technology-enhanced character education in Islamic contexts.

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