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From Faith To Action: Forming Islamic Character Through A Sustainable Curriculum At Smait Asy-Syukriyyah

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ABSTRACT

This study was prompted by the growing crisis of morality and ecological awareness among students, which highlights the urgent need to integrate Islamic values into character education through a sustainable curriculum. The research aims to describe and analyse the implementation of an Islamic-based sustainable curriculum in shaping students' character at SMAIT Asy-Syukriyyah. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through interviews, observation, and documentation involving teachers, students, parents, and school administrators. The findings reveal that faith, when internalized through a transformative curriculum, becomes a driving force behind students' concrete actions to protect the environment, making spirituality a core of character formation. The integrated curriculum based on Islamic values successfully bridges cognitive learning and meaningful, sustainable actions.

Keywords: Character Education, Sustainable Curriculum, Islamic Values

INTRODUCTION

The escalating crises of environmental degradation and moral decline among today's youth have become pressing concerns within the educational sphere. Many students exhibit consumptive behaviour, a lack of social responsibility, and disregard for ecological issues, symptoms that reflect education's failure to instil deeply rooted character values and environmental awareness. In Indonesia, phenomena such as youth delinquency, destructive attitudes toward school facilities, and minimal engagement in socially oriented sustainable activities further highlight the urgency of curriculum reform. Education must move beyond the mere transfer of knowledge and toward fostering faith-based character development and ecological consciousness. *SMAIT Asy-Syukriyyah*, an integrated Islamic school, has responded

to this challenge by embedding Islamic values and environmental responsibility into its sustainable curriculum. However, the extent to which this approach effectively cultivates students' character and inspires faith-based environmental action remains underexplored (Hadi, 2016);(Rozaq, 2015).

Various theories on character education and sustainable curriculum have been developed, yet many still fall short in fully integrating spiritual dimensions with real-life action. Traditional models of character education tend to emphasize moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral acting, but often lack a theological foundation that connects faith with behavioral change (Muchtarom et al., 2019). Meanwhile, *ecopedagogy* is frequently treated as a standalone domain with limited integration into religious instruction. This is despite the fact that Islamic principles such as *amanah*, *tauhid*, and *rahmatan lil 'alamin* offer powerful ethical underpinnings that support both environmental and character education. Moreover, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in schools is often delivered with a cognitive focus, limiting its capacity to transform student behaviour (Ghufron, 2015). These theoretical gaps call for an interdisciplinary approach that unites Islamic values, character development, and sustainability into a cohesive and applicable educational model.

This research aims to describe and analyse the implementation of an Islamic-based sustainable curriculum in shaping the character of students at *SMAIT Asy-Syukriyyah*. The study focuses on how Islamic values and *ecopedagogical* principles are embedded in curriculum planning, classroom instruction, and school-wide practices. Additionally, it seeks to identify the practical strategies used by teachers and school leaders to instil values, and to examine the challenges encountered during implementation. The study aspires to contribute theoretically to curriculum design and practically to educational leadership in fostering students who embody their faith through meaningful action in daily life.

Based on empirical evidence and gaps in the literature, this study argues that integrating Islamic values into the curriculum not only shapes students' internal character but also drives concrete behaviours that reflect environmental and social responsibility. The core hypothesis is that the more deeply spiritual values are integrated into learning, the more likely students are to engage in real-world actions grounded in Islamic character (Zukarnaen et al., 2024).

Character education refers to the systematic effort to develop students' moral, ethical, and behavioural values through educational processes that integrate knowledge, feelings, and

actions. It goes beyond behavioural conditioning, aiming instead at internalizing values such as honesty, empathy, and responsibility, thus shaping consistent moral conduct both in school and society (Muchtarom et al., 2019). In the context of *sekolah Islam terpadu* (integrated Islamic schools), character education holds a spiritual foundation where faith and religious ethics form the core of personality development. It represents a transformative process embedded within the mission of Islamic education to form holistic, ethically guided individuals.

Character education manifests through three interrelated dimensions: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. These components serve as a unified framework to shape integrity and social ethics in students (Muchtarom et al., 2019). In Islamic educational institutions, this manifests in integrative teaching, religious routines, mentorship programs, and social projects that cultivate positive habits. Moreover, the role of teacher modelling and supportive school policies enhance the moral climate of the learning environment (Sirait, 2017). Consequently, character education becomes a holistic and continual effort, permeating the curriculum, school culture, and interpersonal relationships.

A sustainable curriculum is designed to integrate environmental, social, and economic sustainability issues into education, aiming to foster critical awareness and long-term responsibility among learners. It emphasizes not just the transmission of knowledge but also the development of a commitment to ecological stewardship and social justice (Astuti, 2017). Within integrated Islamic education, sustainability takes theological grounding from the belief in human stewardship (*khalifah*) over the earth. This provides a spiritual impetus that connects religious faith with environmental ethics, making sustainable education not just scientifically relevant but also spiritually significant.

The implementation of a sustainable curriculum involves integrating sustainability principles across various subjects, contextual learning, and action-based projects. Science lessons, for example, are linked with topics like pollution and conservation, while Islamic subjects emphasize accountability for creation (Astuti, 2017). Programs such as school gardening, waste reduction campaigns, and environmental audits are common manifestations. Other expressions include institutional policies promoting zero waste and resource efficiency. Overall, the sustainable curriculum nurtures not only cognitive understanding but also a deep ecological consciousness and student agency in promoting change.

Islamic values refer to moral and spiritual principles derived from the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*, which guide all aspects of a Muslim's life. In education, these values include honesty,

trustworthiness (*amanah*), compassion, and justice serving not only as moral content but also as an ethical framework for behaviour and decision-making (Jiyanto, 2022). Islamic education seeks to cultivate individuals who are not only devout but also socially responsible and environmentally conscious. Thus, Islamic values offer a foundation for both character development and sustainable living in a unified ethical system.

Islamic values in education are manifested through integrated religious instruction, a spiritually infused school culture, and daily student practices. For instance, the value of *tauhid* encourages recognition of the unity of creation and ecological responsibility; *amanah* is expressed through assigned duties and social accountability; and gratitude (*syukur*) promotes mindful consumption and resource conservation (Zidan et al., 2025). Practices include daily religious observances, integration of *Qur'anic* verses into multiple disciplines, and value-based learning models. These applications demonstrate that Islamic values can be functionally and contextually embedded into both school life and broader community interactions

METHODS

This study explores the phenomenon of integrating Islamic values and environmental education in shaping students' character through a sustainable curriculum at *SMAIT Asy-Syukriyyah*. This phenomenon arises as a response to the dual crises of moral decay and ecological indifference observed in secondary education. The school implements action-based programs such as *urban farming*, *adiwiyata*, and water conservation campaigns as part of its character education strategy. However, the primary focus of this study is to investigate how these Islamic values, embedded in the curriculum, are internalized and translated into students' daily behaviours. The research examines the dynamic interplay between curriculum design, classroom implementation, and institutional culture in promoting faith-driven ecological responsibility among students.

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, aiming to construct a detailed and systematic understanding of the educational phenomena without manipulating variables. This approach was chosen to capture the complex and nuanced ways Islamic values and sustainability are embedded in character formation. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with key stakeholders including teachers, students, parents, and school administrators directly involved in curriculum implementation. Secondary data were drawn from relevant literature focusing on character education, sustainable curriculum, and Islamic

educational values. These sources were used to develop a conceptual framework and support the interpretation of empirical findings in both academic and practical contexts.

The research involved multiple stakeholders from *SMAIT Asy-Syukriyyah* as key informants. The first informant was the Principal, who provided insight into the school's vision and strategies for integrating Islamic and environmental values. The second was the Vice Principal for Curriculum, who elaborated on the curriculum's design and integrative learning model. The third was the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher, who explained how theological concepts like *tauhid* and *amanah* were linked to environmental issues in class. The fourth was a science/environmental education teacher, who demonstrated how religious teachings were embedded into scientific content. The fifth and sixth informants were 11th- and 12th-grade students who shared firsthand experiences of curricular impacts. The seventh informant was a parent representative, who spoke on the behavioural changes observed at home. This diverse range of informants provided a comprehensive perspective on the studied phenomenon.

The research process included planning, conducting interviews and observations, and gathering supporting documentation. Data were collected using three primary techniques: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Interviews captured the perspectives, experiences, and interpretations of informants regarding the curriculum and character formation. Observations were conducted in classroom and extracurricular settings to witness firsthand how religious and environmental values were enacted. Document analysis included examining lesson plans (RPP), the school's vision-mission statements, and photographic and video evidence of environmental education activities. These complementary methods enabled the researcher to collect rich, triangulated data that illuminated both explicit practices and underlying values.

Data were analysed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction involved selecting and organizing raw data to focus on relevant themes aligned with the research objectives. Data were displayed through thematic categorization to identify recurring patterns and relationships. Final conclusions were drawn inductively and continuously verified throughout the analysis process. To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, source triangulation was employed. This involved cross-referencing data from multiple informants: school leaders, teachers, students, and parents to confirm consistency and enhance objectivity.

Triangulation ensured that the results reflected a balanced and credible interpretation of the curriculum's implementation and its outcomes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on interviews, observations, and document analysis conducted at *SMAIT Asy-Syukriyyah*, character education was found to be deeply integrated into the school's learning process and institutional culture. The school actively instils values such as discipline, responsibility, honesty, and empathy through both formal lessons and extracurricular initiatives. One of the key strategies is student involvement in environmental activities, such as waste management and water conservation. Observations confirmed that students regularly participate in cleaning programs that begin with prayer and reflections on sincerity. Educational posters featuring *Qur'anic* verses and *hadith* line the school corridors. Documentation also shows student engagement in outdoor learning activities promoting social responsibility and *ukhuwah* (brotherhood). In classroom settings, teachers consistently embed character values in both science and religious instruction.

"Sekolah tidak hanya fokus pada aspek kognitif, tetapi juga spiritual dan sosial. Kurikulum dirancang untuk menumbuhkan kesadaran bahwa menjaga alam merupakan bagian dari ibadah." (Kepala Sekolah SMAIT Asy-Syukriyyah)

Interviews with PAI teachers revealed that faith-based values are intricately linked to environmental character building. Teachers present theological concepts such as *tauhid rububiyah* and *amanah* within the context of ecological responsibility. Classroom practices include reflective questions that foster students' moral awareness. Documented materials show video reflections where students describe their environmental actions as expressions of faith. Programs like *Jumat Bersih* (Clean Friday), school waste banks, and water conservation campaigns serve not only as routine school activities but as avenues for practicing internalized values.

"Apakah membuang sampah sembarangan itu bentuk syukur atau kufur?" (Guru PAI SMAIT Asy-Syukriyyah)

These findings affirm the alignment between the school's vision and its on-the-ground practices, addressing the moral crisis at the heart of this study. Faith is no longer taught as an abstract concept, but translated into everyday actions. Student testimonials revealed that they

now regard environmental care as a religious duty rather than an academic task. This transformation reflects the success of a value-based integrative curriculum in shaping consistent, meaningful moral behaviour.

"Awalnya kami menganggap kegiatan ini hanya tugas sekolah, tapi sekarang kami merasa berdosa jika membuang-buang air, karena mubazir itu perilaku setan." (Siswa Kelas XII SMAIT Asy-Syukriyyah)

The sustainable curriculum at *SMAIT Asy-Syukriyyah* is designed with an integrative approach, embedding Islamic values across all subjects. Observations showed that science teachers incorporate *Qur'anic* verses when explaining topics like pollution and the water cycle. Planning documents and the school's annual programs reflect a clear emphasis on *tauhid*-based environmental education. Activities such as *urban farming*, the *adiwiyata* program, and water conservation efforts demonstrate that sustainability is not merely conceptual but actively practiced.

"Saat mengajarkan siklus air dan pencemaran lingkungan, saya menyisipkan QS. Ar-Rum ayat 41 untuk menekankan bahwa kerusakan alam merupakan akibat dari tangan manusia." (Guru IPA SMAIT Asy-Syukriyyah)

The Vice Principal for Curriculum emphasized that curriculum design is collaboratively developed across subjects. For example, biology lessons on ecosystems are framed within the Islamic worldview of human stewardship. Planning documents incorporate *Qur'anic* goals, and collaborative modules are developed by Islamic and science educators. Observations showed that student engagement in environmental programs is driven not by obligation but by a faith-informed understanding.

"Pendidikan karakter tidak hanya diajarkan dalam satu mata pelajaran, tetapi disisipkan di seluruh pelajaran, termasuk sains." (Wakil Kepala Sekolah Bidang Kurikulum SMAIT Asy-Syukriyyah)

The findings illustrate a strong link between the school's curriculum model and the research objective of bridging faith and real-world action. Students demonstrate both scientific and spiritual understanding of sustainability, addressing theoretical gaps in the literature where environmental education often lacks theological grounding. This integrative model positions Islamic education as a strategic medium for cultivating environmentally responsible behaviour rooted in spiritual conviction.

"Kita ingin siswa tidak hanya tahu teori iman, tapi bisa mengubahnya jadi aksi nyata. Di sini iman itu bukan konsep, tapi harus hidup dalam perbuatan." (Guru PAI SMAIT Asy-Syukriyyah)

Islamic values are consistently reinforced through both instructional content and daily practices. Teachers frame environmental responsibility as an expression of gratitude to God, and discourage wastefulness by invoking religious principles. Weekly sermons, tree-planting projects, and lessons infused with *Qur'anic* guidance shape students' moral and ecological awareness. In student video reflections, actions such as turning off unused water taps are described as worship.

"Bu, menjaga bumi itu bagian dari ibadah kita, loh." *(Orang Tua/Wali Murid SMAIT Asy-Syukriyyah, menirukan ucapan anaknya)*

Islamic teachings extend beyond ritual practice into ecological and social responsibility. Teachers consistently emphasize that wastefulness is a satanic behaviour, leading students to adopt mindful environmental habits. Visual materials throughout the school environment reinforce key values with religious references. Observations revealed students not only embody these values themselves but encourage their families to do the same at home.

"Anak menjadi lebih disiplin dalam menjaga kebersihan lingkungan rumah, bahkan mengingatkan orang tuanya untuk tidak membuang sampah sembarangan." (Orang Tua/Wali Murid SMAIT Asy-Syukriyyah)

The integration of Islamic values has proven essential in driving the development of spiritually rooted ecological behaviour among students. These results validate the hypothesis that faith-based education can address both moral and environmental challenges in youth development. By applying religious teachings in practical and contextual ways, students undergo a transformation that extends beyond school, indicating a deeply internalized ethical framework guided by Islamic principles.

The research revealed a surprising outcome: within an educational setting often stereotyped as focusing solely on ritual piety, *SMAIT Asy-Syukriyyah* demonstrated that faith-based curriculum integration can effectively cultivate both spiritual and ecological character. Students did not merely memorize religious values—they practiced them through consistent and meaningful environmental actions. Programs like waste management, tree planting, and water conservation were no longer perceived as routine school duties, but as expressions of faith. This proves that when Islamic teachings are contextualized and internalized, they

become a powerful catalyst for behaviour transformation aligned with both religious devotion and environmental stewardship.

Compared to previous studies, such as Saputra (2021), which highlighted Islamic curriculum development primarily in relation to technological and scientific adaptation, this study advances the discourse by emphasizing the spiritual-to-practical continuum of student behaviour (Saputra, 2021). Unlike Ghufron (2015), whose findings suggested that Islamic religious education remains largely cognitive, this study provides evidence of successful behavioural transformation rooted in internalized Islamic values(Ghufron, 2015). This integrative model presents an innovative pedagogical framework where religion, science, and environmental responsibility intersect to form a coherent system of character education grounded in faith.

These findings directly fulfil the study's objectives—to describe and analyse the implementation of an Islamic-based sustainable curriculum in forming student character and uncover practical strategies and challenges. More importantly, they point to the transformative value of combining faith with experiential learning. The research shows that when students are empowered to enact their beliefs, the result is a deeper sense of moral identity and responsibility. This model reflects the potential of faith-based education not merely to shape good individuals, but to inspire ethical, community-oriented agents of change.

The implications of this research extend to both policy and practice. At the policy level, it calls for a shift in national education standards to support value-based, integrative curricula that embed Islamic ethics within sustainability education. Schools, especially Islamic institutions, can adopt this model as a reference to promote religiously grounded environmental awareness. The success of *SMAIT Asy-Syukriyyah* aligns with findings by Hendriawan (2019), who emphasized that the integration of sustainability principles in education enhances students' active participation in social-environmental initiatives (Hendriawan, 2019). As such, this model can serve as a national benchmark for character education reform.

The success of the integrative model at *SMAIT Asy-Syukriyyah* can be attributed to several interrelated factors: visionary school leadership, collaborative curriculum design, and the synchronization of religious and secular teaching. Teachers played a central role in contextualizing religious texts within scientific and social topics, while institutional support ensured the consistency of value messaging across school programs. These factors echo

Muddin's (2020) findings, which showed that Islamic schools with integrated values and strong cultural practices are more effective in forming balanced, socially responsible character (Muddin, 2020). Thus, structural and pedagogical coherence emerged as the foundation of this model's success.

Based on these findings, several actionable steps are recommended. First, teacher training programs should include modules on integrating Islamic ethics and *ecopedagogy* into various subjects. Second, schools should develop interdisciplinary lesson plans that combine religious texts with environmental issues in ways that are contextually relevant. Third, policymakers should support the development of national curriculum guidelines that enable faith-based sustainability education. Finally, documentation and dissemination of best practices, like those at *SMAIT Asy-Syukriyyah* can inspire broader educational reform that reconnects religious values with practical, community-focused action.

1.1 Table of Research Findings

Research Objective Component	**Research Findings**
1. Implementation of an Islamic-Based Sustainable Curriculum	The curriculum is designed interactively, embedding Islamic values such as *tauhid*, *amanah*, and *syukur* across various subjects including science and geography, supported by value-enriched activities like *adiwiyata* and zero waste programs.
2. Character Formation of Students	Students demonstrated internalization of Islamic values through real actions such as water conservation, environmental hygiene, and active participation in ecological programs. Faith was understood as a foundation for righteous behaviour.
3. Real Practices in Curriculum Implementation	Activities like *Jumat Bersih*, *urban farming*, water-saving campaigns, and composting became routine, forming student habits. Religious values were contextualized and enacted through concrete ecological behaviour.
4. Role of Teachers and School Leadership	Teachers integrated relevant *Qur'anic* verses into lessons—e.g., QS. Ar-Rum: 41 in science classes—while school leaders promoted character formation through spiritual and social development frameworks.
5. Role of Students and Parents	Students began to view environmental care as an act of worship and even influenced their families by reminding parents to avoid littering. Character education extended from school to home life.
6. Challenges in	Key challenges included limited instructional time, uneven teacher capacity in *ecopedagogy*, and initial student resistance to

Implementation	environmental activities perceived as burdens until recontextualized as faith-driven responsibilities.

CONCLUSION

It is striking that within an Islamic educational framework often associated with ritualistic instruction, this study found compelling evidence that integrating Islamic values, character education, and environmental awareness within a sustainable curriculum can lead to meaningful behavioural change. At *SMAIT Asy-Syukriyyah*, students did not merely learn religious teachings theoretically; they actively applied them in daily ecological practices such as water conservation, waste management, and peer-to-peer environmental advocacy. The fact that students expressed feelings of guilt over wasting water—equating it with sinful behaviour—underscores how deeply values were internalized. This affirms the transformative potential of a faith-informed curriculum in developing environmentally conscious Muslim character.

This study contributes significantly to both theory and practice. Theoretically, it expands the framework of character education by demonstrating how religious values when linked to ecological action can function as a bridge between moral formation and sustainability. It introduces a model where spirituality drives behaviour change in ways that are measurable and context-sensitive. Practically, the integrative curriculum implemented at *SMAIT Asy-Syukriyyah* serves as a replicable model for other Islamic schools. The combination of interdisciplinary learning, collaborative teaching strategies, and value-rich school culture offers concrete guidance for educators and curriculum developers seeking to create impactful educational experiences rooted in both faith and action.

While this research yielded insightful findings, its scope was limited to a single school context, which raises questions about broader applicability. This is not a weakness but an invitation for future inquiry. Further research could explore how similar integrative approaches function in non-integrated Islamic schools or even public schools. Additionally, future studies could examine the psychological and sociological mechanisms that support the internalization of spiritual-ecological values in adolescent learners. By adopting interdisciplinary methods, subsequent research can deepen our understanding of how faith, education, and environmental ethics coalesce to shape character in varied educational settings.

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