



# Educator Competence in Fostering Students' Moral Development in Islamic Secondary Schools

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## Abstract

Moral development is an important component of Islamic education, requiring educators to demonstrate competence not only in delivering knowledge but also in shaping students' attitudes and behavior. This study aims to analyze the implementation of moral development, the role of educators, and educator competence in supporting students' moral development at the Islamic secondary school level. The study employed a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data were collected through observations, interviews, and document analysis involving Islamic Education teachers, students, and school personnel. The data were analyzed thematically. The findings show that moral development is implemented through classroom learning, role modeling, habituation, and school-based educational programs. Educators serve as instructors, role models, mentors, and guides in shaping students' behavior. Educator competence contributes to the integration of moral values into the learning process and educational activities. The effectiveness of moral development is supported by instructional media and school programs, while student motivation and limited environmental support constitute inhibiting factors. These findings highlight the importance of integrating educator competence with role modeling, habituation, and environmental support to foster students' moral development.

## INTRODUCTION

Education is a systematic process aimed at developing students' potential across intellectual, personal, social, and moral dimensions. Contemporary educational objectives therefore extend beyond the acquisition of knowledge to include the development of values, attitudes, and behaviors that enable students to participate responsibly in society (Kasheem et al., 2025; Rambe et al., 2025; Rusdi et al., 2026). Within this broader perspective, moral development represents an important dimension of education because students' academic achievement alone does not necessarily reflect the development of responsible and ethical behavior (Ratnawati et al., 2024).

In Islamic education, moral development occupies a central position because education is closely associated with the formation of individual character and conduct (Khasawneh & Khasawneh, 2024). Moral development in this context

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involves not only students' understanding of moral and religious values but also their ability to internalize and demonstrate these values in everyday behavior. Consequently, moral education requires continuous processes that connect knowledge, attitudes, habituation, and practice (Anggraini, 2024; Engkizar, Jaafar, Hamzah, et al., 2025; Nurhayati et al., 2024). Such processes need to be supported by educational environments that consistently reinforce moral values across learning and social interactions.

Schools play an important role in providing such an environment. As formal educational institutions, schools facilitate students' intellectual and social development while also providing opportunities for the formation of moral behavior (Pabbajah et al., 2020). Educators are particularly important in this process because their roles extend beyond delivering instructional content. Through teaching practices, interpersonal interactions, role modeling, guidance, and classroom management, educators can influence how students understand, internalize, and practice moral values. The effectiveness of these roles, however, depends partly on educators' ability to integrate moral development into everyday educational practices (Baroud et al., 2025; Engkizar et al., 2026; Rahman et al., 2025).

Educator competence is therefore an important factor in the implementation of moral education (Zainuri et al., 2022). Competence encompasses pedagogical, professional, social, and personal dimensions that influence educators' capacity to design learning experiences, establish constructive relationships with students, demonstrate appropriate behavior, and respond to students' developmental needs (Hafidz & Rachmy, 2021; Hartoni et al., 2023). However, the implementation of moral development in educational settings may be influenced by multiple factors, including student motivation, instructional practices, school programs, learning resources, family involvement, and broader social support (Giusti et al., 2022). This indicates that educator competence should be examined not only in terms of instructional ability but also in relation to its practical contribution to students' moral development.

Although previous discussions have emphasized the importance of teachers in character and moral education, greater attention is needed to how educator competence is enacted through the combination of instructional practices, role modeling, habituation, and guidance within Islamic secondary education (Subagiya, 2023; Zarkasyi, 2020). In particular, there remains a need to examine how educators translate their professional competencies into concrete practices that support students' moral development and how institutional and environmental factors shape these practices. Addressing this issue is important because moral development is a multidimensional process that cannot be adequately understood through students' cognitive achievement alone.

Therefore, this study examines educator competence in fostering students' moral development in Islamic secondary education. The study focuses on three interconnected dimensions: the implementation of moral development, the role of educators in the process, and the competencies demonstrated by educators in supporting students' moral development. By examining these dimensions within an Islamic educational context, this study seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how educator competence can be integrated with role modeling, habituation, guidance, and school-based educational practices to support students' moral development.

## METHODS

This study employed a qualitative method with a case study approach to examine educator competence in fostering students' moral development in an Islamic secondary school (Engkizar et al., 2026; Gerring, 2017; Nurhalifah et al., 2022). A

case study was selected because it enables an in-depth examination of educational practices, educator roles, and the factors influencing students' moral development within their natural school context. The study focused on three interconnected aspects: the implementation of moral development, the role of educators, and educator competence in integrating moral values into educational practices (Irhamni & Ashari, 2023; Mustapha et al., 2025).

The research was conducted in an Islamic secondary school. The school had 16 educators and 75 students. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their involvement in and knowledge of the moral development process. The participants included Islamic Education teachers, students, and relevant school personnel. Participants were selected because they were considered capable of providing information related to educator competence, instructional practices, role modeling, habituation, and students' moral development. The number of participants was determined based on the relevance and adequacy of the information obtained during data collection (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022; Preiser et al., 2021).

Data were collected through observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Observations were conducted to examine educational activities, teacher–student interactions, classroom practices, role modeling, habituation, and school programs related to students' moral development. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected educators, students, and relevant school personnel to obtain in-depth information regarding educators' roles, competencies, and practices in fostering students' moral development. Document analysis was used to examine relevant school documents and educational programs that supported the implementation of moral development (M et al., 2026; Masani & Fabanjo, 2026). The combination of these data collection techniques enabled the researchers to compare information obtained from different sources and provided a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

The collected data were analyzed thematically. The analysis involved several iterative stages, including data familiarization, initial coding, identification of categories, development of themes, review of emerging themes, and interpretation of the findings. Data from observations, interviews, and documents were compared to identify recurring patterns related to the implementation of moral development, educators' roles, educator competence, and supporting and inhibiting factors. The themes were subsequently interpreted in relation to the research objectives and the broader context of Islamic education (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022; Welsh, 2002).

The trustworthiness of the findings was established through source and method triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from educators, students, and relevant school personnel. Method triangulation involved comparing findings from observations, interviews, and document analysis. The researchers also reviewed the consistency of emerging themes across different data sources before drawing conclusions. These procedures were used to enhance the credibility and dependability of the findings.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Implementation of Students' Moral Development**

The findings indicate that students' moral development was implemented through both classroom learning and school-based activities. Moral values were integrated into the learning process so that students were encouraged not only to understand Islamic teachings cognitively but also to apply them in their daily behaviour (Khoirunnisa et al., 2024; Syahrin et al., 2025). Educators incorporated values such as discipline, responsibility, respect, and appropriate conduct into classroom interactions and learning activities.

Moral development was also reinforced through habituation and religious activities conducted regularly within the school environment. These activities included congregational worship, Quran reading, and other religious programs (Abishev et al., 2025; Engkizar, Jaafar, Alias, et al., 2025; Putri et al., 2025). The findings suggest that the combination of classroom instruction and routine activities provided students with opportunities to repeatedly practice the values introduced through learning.

### **Educators' Roles and Competence in Moral Development**

The findings show that educators performed multiple roles in supporting students' moral development. They acted as instructors, role models, mentors, and guides. These roles were reflected in educators' daily interactions with students and in their efforts to integrate moral values into educational activities. Four dimensions of educator competence emerged from the data: pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competence (Keinänen et al., 2018; Oktavia et al., 2023). Pedagogical competence was reflected in educators' efforts to incorporate moral values into lesson planning and classroom activities. Rather than limiting instruction to the delivery of subject matter, educators connected learning content with students' attitudes and everyday behaviour (Arfandi & Samsudin, 2021; Khaleel et al., 2025).

Personal competence was demonstrated through educators' role modeling. Discipline, responsibility, respectful communication, and appropriate conduct were consistently presented as behavioral examples for students. This dimension was particularly relevant to moral development because students encountered moral values not only through verbal instruction but also through educators' observable behaviour (Fadilawati et al., 2026; Nudin et al., 2024).

Social competence was reflected in educators' communication and interpersonal relationships with students. Educators attempted to establish supportive relationships and provided personal guidance to students experiencing behavioral difficulties (Duguma et al., 2021; Han & Abdrahim, 2023). Such interactions created opportunities for educators to address students' moral development according to their individual circumstances. Professional competence was evident in educators' subject-matter knowledge and classroom management. Effective management of learning activities helped create an organized learning environment in which moral values could be incorporated into instructional practices.

### **Supporting and Inhibiting Factors**

The implementation of moral development was supported by instructional media, school programs, and routine religious activities. These elements provided a structured environment for reinforcing moral values through repeated practice. School-based programs also created opportunities for educators to extend moral education beyond classroom instruction (Utari et al., 2020). However, the findings also identified several challenges. Differences in students' backgrounds influenced their responses to moral guidance and habituation. Limited family support and social environments that were not always conducive to positive behavior also created difficulties for educators. These factors indicate that students' moral development cannot be addressed solely through classroom practices but is influenced by the broader environments in which students interact (Fitriani & Zulfiati, 2021).

The findings demonstrate that educator competence operates as an integrated element of students' moral development rather than as a separate instructional capacity. The four dimensions identified in the study pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competence function together in shaping how educators introduce, model, reinforce, and guide students in practicing moral values. The role of pedagogical competence is particularly evident in the integration of moral values into classroom learning. When moral development is incorporated into instructional

activities rather than treated as a separate component, students have greater opportunities to connect knowledge with behavior. This finding suggests that moral education can be strengthened when educators deliberately connect learning content with students' everyday experiences and behavioral practices (Shin & Konrad, 2017).

Personal competence provides another important mechanism through which moral development occurs. The findings indicate that educators' behavior serves as a practical reference for students (Lokkesmoe et al., 2016). Discipline, responsibility, respectful communication, and consistency in behavior allow students to observe how moral values are enacted in everyday interactions. Thus, moral development is not limited to explicit instruction but also occurs through social learning and continuous exposure to behavioral models (Murniyetti et al., 2016; Ningsih, 2023; Prno et al., 2021). Social competence further strengthens this process by creating supportive relationships between educators and students. The use of personal approaches in responding to students' behavioral difficulties suggests that moral development requires interpersonal engagement rather than merely disciplinary intervention. A supportive educator–student relationship can provide space for students to receive guidance, reflect on their behavior, and develop more appropriate responses to social situations (Abidin et al., 2024).

Professional competence complements these dimensions by enabling educators to organize learning effectively. Subject-matter knowledge and classroom management provide the instructional foundation through which moral values can be incorporated into learning activities. However, professional competence alone is insufficient if it is not accompanied by personal and social capacities that allow educators to model and reinforce the values being taught. An important finding of this study is that educator competence does not operate independently of the students' broader social environment (Navarro et al., 2016; Sharifnia et al., 2022). Differences in student backgrounds, limited family involvement, and less supportive social environments can weaken the continuity of moral development between school and students' everyday lives. This finding suggests that schools cannot be viewed as isolated sites of moral formation. Instead, students' moral development is shaped through interaction between school practices, family support, and the wider social environment.

Taken together, the findings indicate that effective moral development requires an integrated approach in which educators combine instructional competence with role modeling, habituation, personal guidance, and supportive interpersonal relationships. The contribution of this study lies in highlighting educator competence as a multidimensional process that connects classroom instruction with students' everyday moral practices. This perspective extends the understanding of moral education by emphasizing that the effectiveness of moral development depends not only on what educators teach, but also on how they model, reinforce, and contextualize moral values within students' educational and social environments.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that educator competence functions as an integrated component of students' moral development in Islamic secondary education. Rather than operating solely through the delivery of instructional content, educator competence is enacted through the combination of classroom instruction, role modeling, habituation, personal guidance, and supportive relationships with students. The findings indicate that moral development is strengthened when these practices are consistently integrated into students' everyday educational experiences.

At the same time, the development of students' moral behavior cannot be attributed to educators alone. Differences in students' backgrounds, limited family support, and less supportive social environments may affect the continuity of moral

development beyond the school setting. This highlights the need for stronger collaboration among schools, families, and communities to create a consistent environment for students' moral development. The study therefore emphasizes that improving educator competence should extend beyond instructional skills to include the capacity to model moral values, build meaningful relationships with students, and integrate moral development into everyday educational practices. Future efforts should focus on strengthening professional development and establishing collaborative support systems that connect school-based moral education with students' family and social environments.

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