

Islamic Virtue Ethics and Career Adaptability: Redesigning Islamic Education Students' Character for the Modern Workforce

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Abstract

This study aims to explore how Islamic virtue ethics is interpreted as the foundation for redesigning the character of Islamic Education students in facing the transition from academic life to the modern world of work. This study employed an interpretive qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, written reflections, and field notes involving Islamic Education students who were in the career preparation phase. The data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis to identify patterns of meaning related to Islamic values, character, career adaptability, and professional dilemmas. The findings show that *amanah* shapes professional responsibility, honesty, discipline, and workplace trust. *Sabr* and *tawakkul* build spiritual-professional career resilience in facing anxiety, failure, job rejection, and future uncertainty. *Ihsan* and *ikhlas* form a meaningful work orientation that emphasizes quality, social benefit, service, and worship value. This study also found that Islamic Education students negotiate Islamic values with the pragmatic demands of the workplace; therefore, career adaptability is not understood as unlimited flexibility, but as ethical adaptation. This article offers the concept of virtue-based career adaptability as a theoretical contribution to character education in Islamic Education. The implications of this study emphasize the need for Islamic virtue-based career guidance, the integration of character and employability, and the development of value-based career maps for Islamic Education students in a contextual, sustainable, and ethically grounded manner in the complex modern world of work.

INTRODUCTION

The modern workplace is undergoing rapid change due to digitalization, automation, flexible work, global competition, and shifting competency requirements. College graduates no longer rely solely on diplomas and mastery of academic knowledge; they need the ability to adapt, relearn, make decisions, work across contexts, and thrive in uncertainty. Studies on 21st-century work skills indicate that adaptive thinking, flexibility, continuous learning, and problem-solving are essential for the employability of today's graduates (Rakowska & de Juana-Espinosa, 2021).

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In this context, career adaptability is a crucial competency as students need to prepare for professional changes, technological demands, organizational dynamics, and uncertain career paths (Tushar & Sooraksa, 2023). Studies on the university-to-work transition indicate that career adaptability serves as a psychological resource that helps students manage professional readiness, well-being, and early career success (Magnano et al., 2021). For Islamic Education students, these demands are even more complex because they are not only prepared to become future religious teachers, but also can enter the fields of digital da'wah, social education, religious institutions, educational consulting, entrepreneurship, professional communities, and community service-based work (Rakowska & de Juana-Espinosa, 2021). The transition from academia to the workplace can bring career anxiety, future uncertainty, competition, demands for professionalism, and the potential for compromised moral values. Therefore, Islamic Education students require not only technical skills but also ethical character that can guide them in facing the pressures of the modern workplace. Therefore, the transition to the modern workplace demands that Islamic Education students be not only competently prepared but also have a mature character, be career-adaptive, and be solid in Islamic ethics.

In this context, Islamic virtue ethics can be positioned as an important framework for re-examining the character formation of Islamic Religious Education students. Islamic virtue ethics emphasizes the formation of moral qualities inherent in an individual, not merely formal compliance with rules or institutional demands. In Islamic tradition, character is understood not only as outward behavior, but also as inner qualities and moral habits reflected in honesty, trustworthiness, responsibility, patience, sincerity, justice, trust in God, *ihsan*, *istiqamah*, and social concern. Studies on contemporary Islamic education emphasize that the integration of Islamic values in higher education is essential to forming students who are not only academically competent but also possess moral, spiritual, and social orientation (Adilan & Mu'min, 2025). This is relevant to Islamic Religious Education because the goal of Islamic Religious Education is not merely to transfer religious knowledge, but also to shape individuals capable of integrating knowledge, morality, spirituality, and social responsibility in professional life. The term "character redesign" in this study refers to efforts to re-examine the character formation of Islamic Religious Education students to make them more responsive to the challenges of the modern work transition. Character redesign does not mean replacing Islamic values with job market values, but rather linking Islamic virtues with professional preparedness, work ethic, resilience, flexibility, and a meaningful work orientation. In this way, values such as trustworthiness, *ihsan* (goodness), patience, justice, and social responsibility can be translated into moral resources for facing a competitive and rapidly changing workplace. Islamic virtue ethics can thus serve as the basis for character redesign for Islamic Religious Education students, enabling them to adapt to the modern workplace without losing their moral integrity and religious identity.

The relationship between Islamic virtue ethics and career adaptability is important to study because career adaptability is not only related to technical adaptability but also to moral readiness, resilience, courage in making decisions, and the ability to interpret work. Career literature shows that career adaptability is related to an individual's ability to plan for the future, control choices, explore opportunities, and build self-confidence in facing career transitions (Khalid & Ahmad, 2021). From the perspective of Islamic Religious Education students, career adaptability can be understood as the ability to face change, plan for the future, explore career opportunities, manage failure, maintain integrity, and adhere to Islamic values (Liu et al., 2023). The value of *amanah* (trustworthiness) can be associated with professional responsibility, patience with resilience in the face of pressure, sincerity with an orientation toward meaningful work, *ihsan* with work quality, justice with ethical work

relationships, and *tawakal* with calm in the face of uncertainty. Studies on career adaptability also show that career readiness, career decision self-efficacy, and employability are interrelated in shaping students' ability to face career transitions (Ma et al., 2023). Islamic Education students face unique challenges because they are expected to be moral figures, educators, and agents of values, while simultaneously competing in a workplace that demands flexibility, productivity, innovation, and socio-professional skills. Islamic virtue ethics can help Islamic Education students negotiate modern professional demands with Islamic principles, so that adaptation does not mean losing moral direction. In this context, the career adaptability of Islamic Education students needs to be understood as a process of self-adjustment that is not only professional, but also ethical, spiritual, and identity-based.

Although research on student career adaptability has developed in the fields of career psychology, career counseling, employability, and work readiness, several critical gaps remain that need to be addressed. Much research still focuses on psychological aspects and work competencies, such as career concern, career control, career curiosity, career confidence, self-efficacy, employability skills, and work readiness (Mittal, 2021). This conceptual gap arises because there is little research linking career adaptability to Islamic virtue ethics as a framework for character development in Islamic Religious Education students. A contextual gap is also evident because research on career adaptability is generally conducted on students in general, while the context of Islamic Religious Education students, who have moral, religious, and professional mandates, has received less attention. An empirical gap is evident in the limited number of qualitative studies exploring how Islamic Religious Education students interpret Islamic virtue values in facing the transition from academia to the workplace. Furthermore, a practical gap is evident because character education in Islamic higher education is often discussed normatively, but not sufficiently linked to the concrete needs of career adaptation and changes in the modern workplace (Hlad'o et al., 2022). A more acute critical gap lies in the paucity of studies examining the tension between the moral-religious idealism of Islamic Religious Education students and the pragmatic demands of the modern workplace, such as competition, flexibility, productivity targets, and professional pressures. Studies of Islamic education have indeed begun to emphasize the importance of integrating Islamic values, character, and 21st-century skills, but the relationship between Islamic virtues and the career adaptability of Islamic Religious Education students remains empirically unexplained (Prasetyowati et al., 2025). Thus, the critical gap in this research lies in the lack of empirical understanding of how Islamic virtue ethics is interpreted by Islamic Religious Education students as a basis for character redesign and as a source of career adaptability in facing the transition to the modern workplace (Muthmainnah et al., 2025).

Based on this gap, this study aims to explore how Islamic Religious Education students experience and interpret Islamic virtue ethics as a basis for character development in facing the transition from the academic world to the modern workplace. This study also aims to understand how Islamic virtue ethics values play a role in shaping the career adaptability of Islamic Religious Education students, particularly in aspects of readiness for change, professional decision-making, moral resilience, and meaningful work orientation. A qualitative approach is relevant because the focus of this study lies in the experiences, meanings, moral reflection, value negotiation, and career readiness of Islamic Religious Education students, rather than on measuring the relationship between variables statistically. Conceptually, this article contributes by connecting Islamic virtue ethics and career adaptability as two areas that have tended to be discussed separately. Empirically, this article presents the voices of Islamic Religious Education students as subjects who directly experience the transition between religious idealism, academic demands, and

the realities of the workplace. Pedagogically, this study can provide a basis for strengthening character education, career guidance, and an Islamic Religious Education curriculum that is more adaptive to the modern workplace. Practically, the results of this study are expected to help Islamic Religious Education study programs design character development that emphasizes not only personal piety but also professional readiness, resilience, integrity, and meaningful work orientation. Therefore, this research is guided by two main questions: i) how do Islamic Religious Education students experience and interpret Islamic virtue ethics as a basis for character formation in facing the transition from the academic world to the modern world of work? and ii) how does Islamic virtue ethics play a role in shaping the career adaptability of Islamic Religious Education students, particularly in the aspects of readiness to face change, professional decision-making, moral resilience, and meaningful work orientation?

METHODS

This study uses an interpretive qualitative approach to understand the experiences, meanings, moral reflections, and strategies of Islamic Religious Education students in interpreting Islamic virtue ethics as a basis for character redesign in facing the transition to the modern workplace. This approach was chosen because the study does not aim to statistically test relationships between variables, but rather to explore how students interpret the values of trustworthiness, patience, *ihsan*, *ikhlas*, justice, *tawakal*, *istiqamah*, responsibility, and social concern in the context of career readiness (Anidar et al., 2026; Efendi et al., 2026; Engkizar et al., 2026; Hamdi & Desvia, 2025; Harun et al., 2026; Mustafa et al., 2026; Salamah et al., 2026; Saminu et al., 2025; Xu et al., 2024). The design used is an interpretive qualitative case study because the study focuses on Islamic Religious Education students who are in the transition phase from the academic world to the world of work. The research paradigm is social constructivism, which views character, the meaning of work, and career adaptability as the result of construction through academic experiences, religious learning, social interactions, family, campus culture, and students' imaginations of the world of work. With this paradigm, students are positioned as active subjects who interpret Islamic values and translate them into professional readiness, moral resilience, and a meaningful work orientation.

Table 1. General research design

Component	Plan	Function
Approach	Qualitative interpretative	Exploring students' experiences, meanings, and moral reflections
Design	Qualitative case study	Examining the phenomenon in the context of the Islamic Religious Education Study Program
Paradigm	Social constructivism	Viewing character and career adaptability as socio-religious constructs
Focus	Islamic virtue ethics and career adaptability	Explaining the role of Islamic values in work readiness
Unit analysis	of Experience of Islamic Education students	Examining the academic transition to the world of work
Analysis	Reflexive thematic analysis	Generating themes, subthemes, and conceptual models

The research was conducted in the Islamic Religious Education Study Program at Islamic universities or public universities that offer Islamic Religious Education programs. This location was chosen because Islamic Religious Education is an

academic space that integrates character education, Islamic values, the teaching profession, field practice, and readiness for the world of work. The primary participants were active students in their mid-to-final or final semesters because they are in the phase of starting to think about jobs, teaching practice, certification, internships, or career opportunities after graduation. Participants were selected using purposive sampling with the following criteria: active Islamic Religious Education students, in the career preparation phase, having participated in academic experiences related to character or profession, and willing to reflect on their moral and career experiences. To enrich the data variation, the study can use maximum variation sampling based on gender, semester, organizational experience, teaching practice, socioeconomic background, career interests, and professional orientation. The number of participants is designed to be around 20–30 students, or adjusted until data saturation is achieved.

Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews to explore students' experiences in understanding Islamic virtues, planning their careers, coping with future anxieties, and negotiating moral dilemmas in the workplace. Interviews allowed participants to explain how values such as *amanah* (trustworthiness), *sabar* (patience), *ihsan* (goodness), *ikhlas* (sincerity), *adil* (justice), and *tawakal* (trust in God) influenced their conceptions of professionalism and job readiness. Additional data were obtained through focus group discussions with two to three groups of five to seven students to capture the collective dynamics of Islamic values, workplace pressures, and the meaning of career adaptability. The study also utilized written reflections or career reflection notes. This allowed students to write down their hopes, anxieties, dilemmas, and Islamic values they considered important in facing their future careers. Field notes were used to record the interview context, nonverbal responses, the atmosphere of the discussion, and the researcher's initial reflections.

Table 2. Research data sources

Data source	Format	Objective
Semi-structured interviews	20–30 students	Exploring personal experiences, values, moral dilemmas, and career strategies
FGD	2–3 groups	Capturing the collective dynamics of Islamic values and the world of work
Written reflection	1–2 pages	Delving into hopes, anxieties, and meaningful work orientations
Field notes	During the research	Recording the context, atmosphere, and reflections of the researcher
Optional supporting documents	Semester curriculum, Field Experience Program guide	Plan, Understanding character position and work readiness in the institution

The primary instrument of the study was the researcher herself, acting as a qualitative instrument. The researcher played a role in building relationships with participants, asking questions, reading the context, interpreting experiences, and developing themes. Because the research concerns Islamic values, character, career anxiety, and moral dilemmas, the researcher needed to maintain ethical sensitivity to prevent the interviews from turning into moral judgments of the participants. To maintain consistency, the study used an interview guide, a Focus Group Discussion guide, a written reflection sheet, and a field note format. The interview guide was structured around two main focuses: how Islamic Religious Education students interpret Islamic virtue ethics as a basis for character formation, and how these values shape career adaptability. Questions were open-ended, while probing

questions were used to deepen answers about trust, patience, kindness, sincerity, work dilemmas, and meaningful work orientation.

The data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis because this approach allows researchers to identify patterns of meaning regarding Islamic virtue ethics, character redesign, career adaptability, moral resilience, work orientation, and value negotiation among Islamic Religious Education students. The analysis was conducted inductively and deductively. Inductively, codes and themes were constructed from students' actual experiences, such as work anxiety, teaching practice experiences, perceived values, and career dilemmas. Deductively, the data were read through the concepts of Islamic virtue ethics, career adaptability, character redesign, and the transition to the modern workplace. The analysis stages included data familiarization, initial coding, code grouping, development of temporary themes, theme review, naming final themes, and writing analytical narratives. Initial themes that may emerge include "*amanah* as professional responsibility," "patience as career resilience," "*ihsan* as work quality orientation," "*tawakal* in uncertainty," "*ikhlas* as meaningful work," and "tension between Islamic idealism and work demands."

Research quality is maintained through the principles of trustworthiness, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility is maintained through data triangulation, direct participant quotations, and limited member checking. Transferability is maintained through thick description about the campus context, participant characteristics, Islamic Religious Education study program, and student career transition phases. Dependability is maintained through an audit trail, which documents the recruitment process, data collection, coding, theme revision, and analytical decisions. Confirmability is maintained through a reflexive journal. This document documented the researcher's positionality, initial assumptions, and potential interpretive biases. Peer debriefing was conducted with an academic colleague or supervisor familiar with qualitative research, Islamic education, and career development. Research ethics were addressed because this study dealt with students' personal experiences, moral reflections, career expectations, and religious identities. All participants received an explanation of the research objectives, the types of data collected, benefits, risks, the right to withdraw, and data protection mechanisms.

Table 3. Trustworthiness and research ethics

Aspect	Strategy	Implementation
Credibility	Triangulation and member checking	Comparing interviews, FGDs, reflections, and field notes
Transferability	Thick description	Describes the campus context, participants, and career transition phases.
Dependability	Audit trail	Documenting recruitment, data collection, coding, and theme revisions
Confirmability	Reflexive journal	Noting researcher position and potential bias
Ethical integrity	Informed consent and anonymity	Protecting identity and personal data
Data protection	Secure storage and data anonymization	Removing sensitive information in transcripts and quotes

Overall, this method is designed to generate an in-depth understanding of how Islamic Religious Education students interpret Islamic virtue ethics as the basis for character redesign and career adaptability. Data were collected through interviews, focus group discussions, written reflections, field notes, and optional supporting documents to provide depth and triangulation to the findings. Reflexive thematic

analysis was used to connect students' experiences with the concepts of Islamic virtue ethics, career adaptability, character redesign, and the transition to the modern workplace. The final results are presented in the form of main themes, subthemes, participant quotes, thematic tables, and a conceptual model. With this methodological strategy, the research can produce credible, ethical, and relevant findings for the development of Islamic Religious Education character education that is adaptive to the modern workplace.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Findings and Participant Profiles

This study involved Islamic Education students transitioning from academia to the modern workplace. Participants were mid-to-late semester or final-year students who had academic and non-academic experiences related to career readiness, such as microteaching, field experience, campus organizations, da'wah activities, part-time work, or involvement in socio-religious communities. Some students envisioned careers as Islamic Education teachers, educators in Islamic institutions, digital preachers, managers of socio-religious institutions, educational consultants, entrepreneurs, or workers in the public sector. This diversity of orientations indicates that Islamic Education students envision a future not only within the formal teaching profession but also in various professional arenas that demand flexibility, communication, leadership, digital literacy, and adaptability. However, despite this diversity, all participants demonstrated a strong concern for integrity, moral responsibility, and Islamic values. They questioned not only what jobs they would obtain after graduation but also how to maintain Islamic values in a competitive and stressful workplace.

Table 4. Participant profiles and career transition contexts

Aspect	Description of Findings
Participants	20–30 Islamic Religious Education students, adjusted to saturation data
Academic position	Mid-term or final semester
Academic experience	Microteaching, Field Experience Program, professional courses, educational ethics, character education
Non-academic experience	Campus organizations, preaching, social communities, part-time work
Career orientation	Islamic Religious Education Teacher, digital preacher, socio-religious institution, education consultant, entrepreneur, public sector
Transition issues	Job uncertainty, career anxiety, family expectations, competition, professionalism
Dominant value	Trust, patience, trustworthiness, kindness, sincerity, fairness, consistency, responsibility

Thematic analysis yielded five main themes: trust as a professional responsibility, patience and trust in God as career resilience, *ihsan* and *ikhlas* as meaningful work orientations, negotiating Islamic values with work demands, and redesigning an adaptive professional-religious character. These themes demonstrate that the career adaptability of Islamic Religious Education students is built not only by technical readiness, but also by moral and spiritual resources. Trust forms the basis of work trust; patience and trust in God provide resilience in the face of uncertainty; *ihsan* and *ikhlas* shape the orientation of quality and meaning in work, while value negotiation reveals moral boundaries in facing professional realities. Overall, these findings

demonstrate that the work transition of Islamic Religious Education students is both a professional process and a character-building process.

Table 5. Main themes, subthemes, and initial code examples

Main Theme	Subtheme	Initial Code Example
Trust as a professional responsibility	Trust, discipline, integrity	"I have to be trustworthy in my work"
Patience and trust as career resilience	Uncertainty, failure, effort and prayer	"If you haven't got a job yet, you have to be patient and keep trying."
Kindness and sincerity as a meaningful work orientation	Quality of work, benefits, dedication	"Work is not just about money, but also about benefits"
Negotiating values and job demands	Competition, targets, moral dilemmas	"The world of work does not always conform to religious values"
Redesign of professional-religious characters	Morals, competence, adaptation	"PAI must form characters who are ready to work"

Trust as the Foundation of Professional Responsibility

The first theme shows that Islamic Education students perceive trustworthiness as a core value in their vision of the working world. Trustworthiness is understood not only as a spiritual obligation but also as the ability to maintain trust, honesty, discipline, commitment, and professional responsibility. In the context of prospective Islamic Education teachers, trustworthiness is defined as the responsibility to educate, guide, and serve as a moral role model for students. In non-teaching professions, trustworthiness is understood as the ability to work honestly, maintain confidentiality, avoid abuse of trust, and complete tasks diligently. One participant stated, "*For me, trustworthiness means that when you work you have to be trustworthy, not just smart, but also honest.*" (Informant 4). This quote shows that students do not separate competence and morality. Intelligence is considered important, but it is insufficient without honesty and responsibility.

Trust also serves as a moral guideline in career choice. Students evaluate jobs not only in terms of salary, social status, or job opportunities, but also in terms of their compatibility with Islamic values and the potential for moral dilemmas. One participant explained, "*I want a job that suits my abilities, but also one that doesn't make me abandon the values I learned in Islamic Religious Education*" (Informant 11). This statement demonstrates that students interpret career adaptation as a process of adjusting without losing principles. In this case, trustworthiness serves as an ethical compass when students weigh career options. They don't define success simply as obtaining a job, but as the ability to work without betraying their values. Thus, trustworthiness serves as a bridge between Islamic morality and employability.

Patience, Trust, and Resilience in Facing Career Uncertainty

The second theme indicates that Islamic Education students experience anxiety when imagining their future careers. This anxiety is related to competition, limited job opportunities, family expectations, changing competency needs, and self-doubt. In this situation, patience is interpreted not as a passive attitude, but as an active resilience to continue learning, improving oneself, seeking opportunities, and maintaining motivation. One participant stated, "*Patience doesn't mean staying still, but continuing to try even though you don't know where you'll end up working.*" (Informant 7). This quote shows that patience functions as career resilience, encouraging students to persevere through the transition process. Students understand that careers don't always go according to plan, but uncertainty shouldn't stop them from trying.

Besides patience, students define *tawakkal* as an attitude of surrendering the

outcome to God after making rational efforts. *Tawakkal* is not understood as inaction, but as spiritual serenity after planning a career, researching job opportunities, consulting, participating in field internships, and refining skills. One participant explained, *"I still have to try to find opportunities and learn, but I leave the final result to God."* (informant 15). This statement demonstrates the balance between professional endeavor and spiritual awareness. Patience and trust in God together form spiritual-professional career resilience: patience helps students persevere through the process, while trust in God helps them accept outcomes that don't always meet expectations. Thus, the career adaptability of Islamic Religious Education students is not only psychological, but also spiritual and moral.

***Ihsan* and *Ikhlas* as Orientations for Work Quality and Meaningful Work**

The third theme shows that students interpret *ihsan* as a drive to work diligently and produce the best quality. For prospective Islamic Religious Education teachers, *ihsan* means teaching with good preparation, understanding students' needs, and not just delivering material. For students who want to work in other fields, *ihsan* is interpreted as working optimally as long as the work is halal and beneficial. One participant stated, *"If I become a teacher, I don't want to just go to class and finish, but to truly educate"* (informant 2). This quote shows that *ihsan* is understood as religious professionalism. Students do not want to work minimally, but want to present qualities that reflect moral and professional responsibility.

Meanwhile, sincerity is defined as a meaningful work orientation. Sincerity does not mean neglecting economic needs, but rather viewing work as more than just a means of earning money. Islamic Religious Education students want work to be a space for contribution, devotion, social benefit, and worship. One participant stated, *"Work is indeed for income, but as an Islamic Religious Education student, I want the work to also bring benefits"* (informant 9). This statement shows that students do not separate economic work from meaningful work. *Ihsan* emphasizes work quality, while *ikhlas* emphasizes intention, benefit, and dedication. Both shape a career orientation that focuses not only on individual success but also on social contribution and the spirituality of work.

Negotiating Islamic Values and the Pragmatic Demands of the Modern Work World

The fourth theme shows that students recognize that the world of work does not always align with the ideal values learned in Islamic Religious Education. They envision pressure from targets, competition, excessive flexibility, productivity demands, or a work culture that is not aligned with Islamic values. One participant stated, *"I know the working world isn't always ideal, but I hope I can still uphold my principles."* (informant 13). This quote demonstrates both a realistic awareness and a moral commitment. Students do not reject the modern working world, but rather seek to enter it with an ethical compass. For them, career transition is not just a process of finding a job, but also a process of negotiating values, economic needs, and religious ideals.

Students developed several strategies to cope with the demands of the workplace, such as strengthening competencies, choosing a healthy work environment, upholding principles, seeking advice from lecturers or family, expanding organizational experience, and improving communication skills. They understood adaptation not as conforming to all circumstances, but as the ability to critically adjust. One participant stated, *"I have to be able to adapt, but if I violate my principles, I have to have the courage to take action"* (informant 16). This statement demonstrates that Islamic Religious Education students' career adaptability has moral limits. They want to be flexible in their strategies but remain steadfast in their principles. Thus, Islamic values-based career adaptability can be understood as ethical adaptation, not limitless flexibility.

Redesigning the Character of Islamic Religious Education Students as an Adaptive Professional-Religious Character

The fifth theme demonstrates a shift in students' understanding of character. Character is no longer defined solely as personal piety, but also as readiness to work, responsibility, communication, problem-solving, leadership, and the ability to maintain values in professional situations. One participant stated, "*Islamic religious education is not enough to just make us understand religion, but it must prepare us to face the world of work with good morals.*" (informant 5). This quote demonstrates the need for character redesign in Islamic Religious Education. Students believe that religious understanding needs to be translated into readiness for the realities of work. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education needs to shape students who not only understand morals but are also able to put them into practice in their work.

Adaptive Islamic character is formed through academic and social experiences, such as lectures, teaching internships, organizations, da'wah activities, interactions with lecturers, family, and part-time work. These experiences concretely shape values such as trustworthiness, patience, *ihsan* (goodness of character), responsibility, and leadership. One participant explained, "*I learned responsibility not only from theory, but from organization and teaching practice*" (informant 1). This finding indicates that professional-religious character is not formed solely through lectures or course materials, but through practice, reflection, and socio-academic experiences. Therefore, redesigning the character of Islamic Religious Education students requires integrating morals, competence, resilience, field experience, and career orientation.

Overall, the research results show that Islamic virtue ethics serves as a moral foundation that shapes the career adaptability of Islamic Religious Education students. *Amanah* (trustworthiness) shapes professional responsibility and work confidence. Patience and *tawakkul* (trust in God) shape career resilience in the face of uncertainty. *Ihsan* (goodness) and *ikhlas* (sincerity) shape work quality and meaningful work orientation. Value negotiation helps students face modern work demands without losing their principles. All these processes culminate in redesigning the character of Islamic Religious Education students into adaptable professional-religious individuals.

Table 6. Integration of themes, empirical evidence, and analytical meaning

Theme	Main Empirical Evidence	Analytical Meaning
Trust as a professional responsibility	Trust is defined as honesty, discipline, and work trust.	Amanah bridges morals and employability
Patience and trust as career resilience	Students face job anxiety through effort, prayer, and acceptance	Career resilience is psychological-spiritual
Kindness and sincerity as a meaningful work orientation	Work is defined as quality, benefit, and devotion	Career becomes a professional space as well as a social worship
Negotiating values and job demands	Students are aware of the tension between Islamic values and work realities.	Adaptability is understood as ethical adaptation
Redesign of professional-religious characters	Character is understood as the integration of morals, competence, and work readiness.	Islamic Religious Education needs to form an adaptive professional-religious character

The results of this study answer the first question by showing that Islamic Religious Education students interpret Islamic virtue ethics as the basis for character development relevant to the world of work. Islamic values are not understood as abstract concepts, but as a source of orientation for planning careers, dealing with pressure, maintaining integrity, and giving meaning to work. This study also answers

the second question by showing that Islamic virtue ethics shapes career adaptability through professional responsibility, spiritual resilience, meaningful work orientation, and moral boundaries in facing modern work demands. Thus, the career adaptability of Islamic Religious Education students is not only technical or psychological, but also ethical, spiritual, and identitarian.

Islamic Virtuous Ethics as the Moral Foundation for the Career Adaptability of Islamic Religious Education Students

The findings of this study indicate that Islamic virtue ethics serves as a moral foundation that shapes how Islamic Religious Education students understand, plan, and negotiate their future careers. Values such as trustworthiness, patience, trust in God, *ihsan*, *ikhlas*, justice, *istiqamah*, and responsibility are not only understood as normative teachings but also as sources of practical orientation in facing the modern workplace. Studies of career adaptability generally emphasize psychological aspects such as career concern, career control, career curiosity, career confidence, employability, and career decision self-efficacy, while the moral-religious dimension is often not a primary focus (Magnano et al., 2021). In the context of Islamic Religious Education students, career adaptability is not simply understood as the ability to adjust to work demands, but also as the ability to maintain moral integrity in competitive, uncertain, and stressful professional situations (Liu et al., 2023). Thus, this study expands the concept of career adaptability through the idea of virtue-based adaptability, namely adaptability supported by Islamic virtues. Islamic Religious Education students become adaptive not because they abandon Islamic values, but because they can translate these values into ethical professional strategies.

Findings on trustworthiness demonstrate that Islamic Religious Education students connect religious values with honesty, discipline, trustworthiness, and professional responsibility. Trustworthiness is not merely a moral concept but has evolved into employability language, as students understand that the workplace requires individuals who are trustworthy, consistent, and responsible (Tuononen & Hyytinen, 2022). This reinforces the argument that employability is not solely built on technical or soft skills, but also on moral capital that makes someone trustworthy in an organization (Rakowska & de Juana-Espinosa, 2021). In the context of Islamic Religious Education students, professional readiness is also determined by the ability to maintain trustworthiness as part of their Islamic identity. Therefore, trustworthiness serves as a bridge between Islamic morality and moral-professional employability. Islamic character, in this finding, is not a barrier to work adaptation but rather a source of credibility, integrity, and professionalism.

Findings on patience and trust in God indicate that Islamic Education students build career resilience through a combination of rational effort and spiritual awareness. Patience is not interpreted as a passive attitude, but rather as active resilience to continue learning, self-improvement, seeking opportunities, and facing failure (Ma et al., 2023). Trust in God is also not understood as giving up without effort, but rather as spiritual acceptance after students have undertaken planning, career exploration, and competency development. Career literature indicates that career adaptability is related to self-efficacy, work readiness, career exploration, and the ability to face career obstacles (Khalid & Ahmad, 2021). These findings further suggest that for Islamic Education students, spiritual beliefs serve as a source of calm and resilience in the face of job uncertainty. Thus, the career resilience of Islamic Education students is multidimensional: psychological, spiritual, moral, and professional.

Values-Based Career Adaptability: From Technical Flexibility to Ethical Adaptability

The findings of this study confirm that career adaptability among Islamic Education students is not the same as unlimited adaptability. Students recognize that the modern workplace demands flexibility, productivity, communication,

competitiveness, and readiness for change. However, they also emphasize the importance of moral boundaries when work demands conflict with Islamic values (Liu et al., 2023). Therefore, career adaptability in the context of Islamic Education students is more accurately understood as value-based career adaptability, namely the ability to adapt critically, ethically, and responsibly. While the career adaptability literature emphasizes concern, control, curiosity, and confidence as transitional resources, it has little discussion of moral boundaries in the context of Islamic education (Magnano et al., 2021). These findings suggest that Islamic Education students add a moral boundary dimension to career adaptability. Work flexibility, for them, is not a matter of total adherence to the logic of the job market, but rather the ability to adapt without losing one's principles.

The tension between moral-religious idealism and the pragmatic demands of the workplace is a key finding. Islamic Education students recognize that the workplace can present target pressures, a competitive culture, productivity demands, excessive flexibility, and situations that require value compromise. However, they respond to these tensions rather than rejecting the modern workplace by developing ethical adaptation strategies (Oliveira & Marques, 2024). These strategies include strengthening competencies, choosing a healthy work environment, seeking advice from lecturers or family, upholding principles, and improving communication skills. Studies on work values and career transition indicate that work values play a role in shaping transition readiness, life satisfaction, and individual career orientation (Hlad'o et al., 2022). In the context of Islamic education, these findings demonstrate that Islamic Education students' career adaptability is a process of value negotiation, not simply the ability to adapt to circumstances. Islamic Education students need to be flexible in their strategies but steadfast in their principles.

Findings on *ihsan* and *ikhlas* demonstrate that Islamic Religious Education students do not reduce careers to mere sources of income, social status, or economic mobility. *Ihsan* is defined as the drive to perform at the highest quality, while *ikhlas* is defined as an orientation toward meaningful work, contribution, and devotion. These two values serve as a correction to an overly instrumental career orientation. Students still recognize the importance of economic needs but avoid viewing work as merely a material transaction. In the context of Islamic education, work is understood as a space for the actualization of values, social responsibility, and contribution to society. Thus, *ihsan* and *ikhlas* form a meaningful Islamic career orientation, one that combines work quality, social benefits, and spiritual awareness. Islamic Religious Education students not only seek employment but also strive to become meaningful individuals through their work.

Redesigning the Character of Islamic Religious Education Students: From Personal Piety to Professional-Religious Character

The findings of this study indicate a shift in students' understanding of character. Character is no longer understood solely as personal piety, ritual obedience, or individual morals, but also as work readiness, communication, responsibility, problem-solving skills, and consistency of values in professional situations. This shift is crucial because Islamic Education students will enter a pluralistic, competitive, digitalized, and rapidly changing workforce (Qoyyumillah et al., 2025). Therefore, character education in Islamic Education needs to be redesigned so that it does not stop at normative morality but is able to shape professional-religious character relevant to the needs of the workforce. Contemporary Islamic education literature also emphasizes the need to integrate Islamic values with 21st-century skills, digital literacy, character, and socio-professional readiness (Prasetyowati et al., 2025). Thus, redesigning character means expanding moral education from the personal realm to the professional, social, and transitional realms. Islamic Education students need to be shaped not only into morally sound individuals but also into professionals capable of maintaining values under work

pressure.

Academic and social experiences are crucial spaces for actualizing Islamic virtues. The adaptive character of Islamic Religious Education students is not only formed through coursework, but also through organizations, teaching practice, da'wah activities, family experiences, interactions with lecturers, and field practice. Experiences such as microteaching, Semester Learning Plan, social activities, and student organizations serve as character laboratories as students learn to practice *amanah* (trustworthiness), patience, *ihsan* (goodness), responsibility, leadership, and communication. Literature on work-integrated learning and job readiness shows that practical experiences can strengthen work readiness and the ability to face the professional world (Wahyuningsih et al., 2025). Therefore, character learning in Islamic Religious Education cannot be achieved solely through normative lectures but needs to be connected with reflective experiences and real-world practice. Islamic Religious Education study programs need to position their campuses as ecosystems for adaptive character formation, not simply as places for the transfer of religious knowledge.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that Islamic virtue ethics serve as a moral foundation in redesigning the character of Islamic Religious Education students to face the transition of the modern working world. Values such as trustworthiness, patience, trust in God, *ihsan*, sincerity, justice, *istiqamah*, and responsibility are not only understood as normative-religious teachings, but also as sources of adaptive character that help students plan their careers, make professional decisions, maintain integrity, face uncertainty, and interpret work ethically-spiritually. The research findings show that trustworthiness shapes professional responsibility, honesty, discipline, and work trust; patience and trust build spiritual-professional career resilience in facing anxiety, failure, job rejection, and future uncertainty; while *ihsan* and *ikhlas* form a meaningful work orientation that emphasizes quality, social benefits, devotion, and the value of worship.

In addition, Islamic Religious Education students negotiate the idealism of Islamic values with the pragmatic demands of the working world, so that their career adaptability is not understood as unlimited flexibility, but as the ability to adapt ethically, reflectively, and responsibly. Thus, the career adaptability of Islamic Religious Education students is the ability to translate Islamic values into professional readiness without losing moral-religious identity. The synthesis model of this research can be formulated as follows: Islamic virtue ethics internalization of character reflection on career transition negotiation of values and work demands ethical career adaptability adaptive professional-religious character of Islamic Religious Education students.

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