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INTEGRATING ISLAMIC AND INDONESIAN VALUES INTO CHARACTER EDUCATION WITHIN THE MERDEKA CURRICULUM IN MADRASAHs

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pendidikan karakter berbasis nilai-nilai Islam dan Nilai Keindonesia serta mengidentifikasi titik temu di antara keduanya. Pendidikan karakter dalam Kurikulum Merdeka yang tidak hanya berorientasi pada capaian kognitif, tetapi juga pada pembentukan peserta didik yang beriman, berakhlak mulia, berkebinekaan global, bergotong royong, mandiri, bernalar kritis, dan kreatif. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis pendidikan karakter berbasis keislaman dan keindonesiaan dalam dimensi profil lulusan Kurikulum Merdeka serta mengidentifikasi titik temu nilai keduanya dalam pembentukan karakter peserta didik. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi pustaka melalui analisis artikel ilmiah, dokumen kebijakan, dan sumber konseptual yang relevan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa nilai-nilai keislaman, seperti tauhid, amanah, adil, rahmah, ihsan, akhlakul karimah, moderasi beragama, dan rahmatan lil 'alamin, memiliki keselarasan substantif dengan nilai-nilai keindonesiaan, seperti Pancasila, kebinekaan, gotong royong, cinta tanah air, dan tanggung jawab sosial. Integrasi nilai tersebut dapat dilakukan melalui pembelajaran intrakurikuler, proyek penguatan profil pelajar, budaya sekolah atau madrasah, pembiasaan ibadah, keteladanan guru, asesmen autentik, serta kolaborasi antara sekolah, keluarga, dan masyarakat. Dengan demikian, profil lulusan Kurikulum Merdeka idealnya tidak hanya unggul secara akademik, tetapi juga religius, moderat, nasionalis, adaptif, kritis, kreatif, dan berkeadaban.

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Character Education, Islamic Values, Indonesian Values, Merdeka Curriculum, Pancasila Student Profile.

ABSTRACTS

This study aims to analyze character education based on Islamic values and Indonesian national values, while identifying the points of convergence between the two value systems. Character education within the Kurikulum Merdeka (Independent Curriculum) is not solely oriented toward cognitive achievement but also emphasizes the development of students who possess faith, noble character, global diversity awareness, cooperation, independence, critical thinking skills, and creativity. This research seeks to examine the implementation of Islamic-based and Indonesian-based character education within the dimensions of the Kurikulum Merdeka graduate profile and to identify the integration of these values in shaping students' character. This study employs a qualitative approach using a literature review method through the analysis of relevant scientific articles, educational policy documents, and conceptual references. The findings indicate that Islamic values, including tauhid (faith in the oneness of God), trustworthiness (amanah), justice ('adl), compassion (rahmah), excellence (ihsan), noble character (akhlaqul karimah), religious moderation, and the concept of rahmatan lil 'alamin (a blessing for all creation), are substantively aligned with Indonesian values such as Pancasila, diversity, mutual cooperation (gotong royong), patriotism, and social responsibility. The integration of these values can be implemented through intracurricular learning activities, projects aimed at strengthening the student profile, school or madrasah culture, habituation of religious practices, teacher role modeling, authentic assessment, and collaboration among schools, families, and communities. Therefore, the ideal graduate profile of the Kurikulum Merdeka should not only demonstrate academic excellence but also embody religiosity, moderation, nationalism, adaptability, critical thinking, creativity, and civilized character.

A. INTRODUCTION

Character education in the Indonesian context has gained renewed significance in response to rapid social changes, technological advancement, and the growing moral challenges faced by students. Rapid social transformations have accelerated the circulation of values and lifestyles that may sometimes contradict the nation's fundamental virtues, such as mutual cooperation, respect for others, and social responsibility (Nurhadi, 2015). Technological development has also generated both opportunities and challenges: while providing broader access to information and knowledge, it may simultaneously contribute to value disorientation and fragmented identities among students when not accompanied by strong ethical and moral guidance (Suryani, 2018). In this context, education can no longer be understood merely as a process of knowledge transmission; rather, it must be directed toward the formation of individuals who possess strong spiritual integrity, moral awareness, social responsibility, and national identity (Lickona, 1991; Berkowitz & Bier, 2005).

The emergence of the Kurikulum Merdeka (Independent Curriculum) represents a policy response to these challenges by introducing an educational framework that emphasizes learning flexibility, differentiation based on students' needs, and character strengthening through meaningful learning experiences (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2022). This framework shifts the orientation of education from a predominantly cognitive achievement-based approach toward the holistic development of students' character, creativity, and independence (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). Such flexibility also creates opportunities for schools and teachers to

incorporate religious and local values into learning according to their educational contexts. Amiq et al. (2025) emphasize that the flexibility provided by the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum enables Islamic character values to be incorporated into the educational process and that successful implementation requires collaboration among educators, the curriculum, and the wider community. Thus, character education under the Kurikulum Merdeka should be understood not as an additional component of learning but as an integral dimension of holistic education.

The graduate profile dimensions within the Kurikulum Merdeka are substantively reflected in the Profil Pelajar Pancasila (Pancasila Student Profile), which represents the ideal vision for developing Indonesian learners. This profile portrays Indonesian students as lifelong learners who not only possess global competencies but also demonstrate behaviors grounded in Pancasila values as the philosophical foundation of the nation (Latif, 2011). The six core dimensions include: (1) faith, devotion to God Almighty, and noble character; (2) global diversity; (3) mutual cooperation; (4) independence; (5) critical reasoning; and (6) creativity. These dimensions are not independent components but interconnected elements that should be developed comprehensively through school culture, intracurricular learning, extracurricular activities, and projects designed to strengthen the student profile (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2022; Latif, 2011). In this regard, Muslimin (2025) argues that character education within the Kurikulum Merdeka, particularly in madrasahs, should be integrated across subjects, self-development activities, and institutional culture. Character development consequently involves both spiritual and social dimensions, including religious commitment, honesty, discipline, responsibility, courtesy, environmental awareness, and self-confidence, which are internalized progressively through knowledge, implementation, and habituation.

The first dimension, namely faith, devotion to God Almighty, and noble character, indicates that students are expected not only to possess religious knowledge but also to internalize moral and ethical values that guide their daily behavior. The global diversity dimension emphasizes students' ability to live harmoniously within diverse ethnic, religious, cultural, and social backgrounds, which is an essential competency in the era of globalization (Banks, 2015). The mutual cooperation dimension reflects the values of collaboration and social solidarity; independence represents students' ability to make decisions and take responsibility for their learning processes; critical reasoning refers to analytical and reflective thinking abilities; while creativity refers to the capacity to generate innovative ideas relevant to contemporary challenges (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2022). The comprehensive development of these dimensions therefore requires educational practices that connect cognitive competence with moral, social, and spiritual formation.

Within the framework of Islamic education, these graduate profile dimensions demonstrate strong relevance to Islamic ethical and spiritual values. Islamic principles such as tauhid (belief in the oneness of God), amanah (trustworthiness), 'adl (justice), rahmah (compassion), and ihsan (excellence in worship and conduct) serve as spiritual and moral foundations that shape not only individual piety but also students' social responsibility and integrity (Akhmadi, 2019; Al-Ghazali, 2000). These values correspond with several dimensions of the Profil Pelajar Pancasila, particularly faith, noble character, mutual cooperation, critical reasoning, and respect for diversity (Akhmadi,

2019). For example, the value of amanah encourages students to demonstrate responsibility toward their duties and obligations; the value of justice promotes fairness in social interactions; while rahmah strengthens empathy, tolerance, and openness toward differences. Madya et al. (2026) further demonstrate that curriculum integration in Islamic educational institutions can be conceptualized through a tawhid-based perspective that unifies scientific and Islamic knowledge. Their findings indicate that teachers promote character education through role modeling, habituation, religious practices, moral integrity, and the integration of Islamic perspectives into different subjects, thereby connecting intellectual development with ethical and spiritual formation.

In this framework, Islamic education plays a strategic role as a source of profound moral and ethical values while simultaneously strengthening a moderate national identity. Hasan (2017) argues that inclusive and moderate Islamic education can harmonize religious and national values by providing students with opportunities to understand religious and cultural diversity as a shared social asset. Islamic values do not merely cultivate individual religious commitment but also foster social responsibility and student integrity, which are aligned with the dimensions of the Profil Pelajar Pancasila, particularly faith, noble character, and mutual cooperation (Azra, 1999). This argument is reinforced by Ihsanudin et al. (2026), who found that an integrated Islamic school curriculum combining the national curriculum, Integrated Islamic School competency standards, and the pesantren curriculum can foster Islamic character values such as shidiq, amanah, tabligh, fathanah, and istiqamah. These values are strengthened through formal instruction, non-formal educational activities, teacher role modeling, and school culture, indicating that character formation requires consistency across the entire educational environment.

The integration of Islamic character education and Indonesian national values is therefore essential in developing a generation that is not only religiously committed but also dedicated to national identity and Indonesian pluralism. Islamic and Indonesian values should be understood as complementary dimensions rather than opposing forces. Islamic values provide a transcendental, ethical, and spiritual foundation, while Indonesian values provide direction in terms of nationalism, diversity, and civic responsibility (Amin, 2020). In this regard, Islamic Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam/PAI) occupies a strategic position as a moral and spiritual foundation that can serve as the theological spirit of Pancasila values, ensuring that religious commitment develops alongside national consciousness. The integration of these two value systems therefore provides a foundation for developing students whose religious identities reinforce, rather than diminish, their commitment to social responsibility, national unity, tolerance, and citizenship.

Empirical evidence further confirms the importance of integrating moral and religious values within the Kurikulum Merdeka. Misbah and Saleh (2025), in a quantitative study involving 330 senior high school students in Batam, found that the integration of character education and Islamic educational values had positive and significant effects on students' learning discipline. Character education integration ($\beta = 0.476$, $p < 0.001$) and Islamic educational values ($\beta = 0.316$, $p < 0.001$) jointly explained 47.5% of the variance in learning discipline ($R^2 = 0.475$). These findings suggest that the internalization of universal moral values and Islamic principles within school culture can work synergistically in shaping disciplined student behavior. Consequently, the

effectiveness of the Kurikulum Merdeka cannot be evaluated exclusively through academic outcomes but should also be assessed through its ability to cultivate students' moral and spiritual qualities.

Recent studies, however, reveal that the existing literature remains fragmented in terms of focus and methodology. Muslimin (2025) primarily conceptualizes character education development in madrasahs through integration across learning, self-development, and school culture, whereas Amiq et al. (2025) emphasize implementation strategies and collaboration among educators, curriculum structures, and communities. Misbah and Saleh (2025) provide quantitative evidence regarding the simultaneous influence of character education and Islamic values on learning discipline, while Ihsanudin et al. (2026) examine the implementation of an integrated Islamic school curriculum and its contribution to Islamic personality formation. Meanwhile, Madya et al. (2026) focus on teachers' understandings and practices in integrating Islamic traditions and modern education within a pesantren-based Madrasah Aliyah curriculum. Collectively, these studies demonstrate the importance of curriculum integration for character formation, yet they have not sufficiently synthesized how Islamic ethical values and Indonesian national values intersect systematically across all six dimensions of the Profil Pelajar Pancasila and how this intersection can inform curriculum implementation and character assessment.

Accordingly, previous studies have examined Islamic character education, the Profil Pelajar Pancasila, religious moderation, curriculum integration, and the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka from different perspectives. However, limited attention has been devoted to systematically synthesizing the intersection between Islamic values and Indonesian national values within the six dimensions of the Profil Pelajar Pancasila, including their implications for curriculum implementation and character assessment. This study addresses this research gap by analyzing the conceptual relationship between Islamic and Indonesian values as foundations for student character development within the framework of the Kurikulum Merdeka. The study not only identifies the compatibility between Islamic teachings and Indonesian national principles but also explains how their integration can be implemented through classroom learning, school or madrasah culture, student profile strengthening projects, and character assessment mechanisms. Therefore, this research contributes theoretically to the development of value-based character education studies and practically provides insights for educators and policymakers in developing graduates who achieve a balance between academic excellence, spirituality, nationalism, and twenty-first-century competencies.

Practically, the implementation of Islamic and Indonesian character education cannot be separated from the role of teachers and the broader school ecosystem. Teachers function not only as transmitters of knowledge but also as role models who demonstrate values through their daily actions (Shulman, 2004). Teachers' examples of trustworthiness, fairness, and compassion provide concrete social learning experiences for students. This role is consistent with the findings of Ihsanudin et al. (2026) and Madya et al. (2026), which highlight teacher role modeling, habituation, learning contexts, and school culture as essential mechanisms for translating Islamic values into students' everyday behavior. Nevertheless, both studies also indicate implementation challenges, including limited teacher readiness, inconsistencies in assessment,

insufficient individual initiative, and the absence of systematic institutional frameworks for curriculum integration. These findings suggest that value integration requires not only conceptual compatibility but also adequate teacher competence, institutional commitment, consistent assessment, and supportive school governance.

Furthermore, family and community involvement represents a crucial factor in establishing character education holistically. Putra (2019) highlights that parental involvement in character education strengthens the consistency of value internalization between school and home environments, allowing character formation to become more sustainable. Communities also provide social spaces where students can develop tolerance, mutual cooperation, and national awareness through real-life interactions. Similarly, Amiq et al. (2025) emphasize that the successful integration of Islamic character education requires collaboration among educators, curriculum structures, and society. Character development should therefore be understood as an ecosystem-based process in which schools, families, and communities collectively reinforce religious, ethical, social, and national values.

Thus, Islamic and Indonesian character education within the context of the Kurikulum Merdeka should not merely be viewed as a theoretical requirement but as an educational praxis that responds to contemporary challenges. The integration of religious and national values has the potential to produce graduates who are not only academically competent but also religious, moderate, nationalistic, adaptive, critically minded, creative, and civilized. Such an educational vision positions the Profil Pelajar Pancasila as a multidimensional framework through which Islamic ethical principles and Indonesian national values can be mutually reinforcing. By systematically connecting these value systems with classroom learning, school culture, character-strengthening projects, teacher role modeling, and assessment, the Kurikulum Merdeka can provide a more coherent foundation for developing students who possess academic competence together with spiritual integrity, ethical responsibility, social awareness, and commitment to Indonesian pluralism.

B. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a library research method based on a systematic literature review (SLR). This approach was selected because the study focuses on a conceptual analysis of the integration of Islamic and Indonesian values in strengthening character education within the dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum. Library research enables researchers to explore theoretical perspectives, educational policies, empirical research findings, and scholarly ideas related to character education, Islamic education, religious moderation, and graduate profile development (Lickona, 1991; Azra, 1999).

The literature review process was conducted through systematic searches of academic databases, including Google Scholar, Garuda (Garba Rujukan Digital), DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals), Dimensions, and ERIC. These databases were selected because they provide access to scientific publications relevant to education, Islamic education, curriculum policy, and character development studies. In addition, official policy documents issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemendikbudristek) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia were utilized as primary sources to

examine the concepts of the Merdeka Curriculum, Pancasila Student Profile, and Rahmatan lil 'Alamin Student Profile.

The literature search strategy was conducted by applying combinations of keywords in both Indonesian and English to obtain comprehensive and relevant sources. The main keywords included: "Islamic character education," "pendidikan karakter Islami," "Islamic values," "nilai-nilai Islam," "Pancasila Student Profile," "Profil Pelajar Pancasila," "Rahmatan lil 'Alamin Student Profile," "Profil Pelajar Rahmatan lil 'Alamin," "Merdeka Curriculum," "Kurikulum Merdeka," "religious moderation in education," "moderasi beragama dalam pendidikan," and "Indonesian character education." These keywords were combined using Boolean operators (AND and OR) to identify publications that had direct relevance to the research focus.

The publication period included in this study covered literature published between 2015 and 2025. This timeframe was selected because it represents a significant period in the development of character education policies in Indonesia, the strengthening of religious moderation discourse, and the implementation and development of the Merdeka Curriculum. Nevertheless, several classical theoretical works published before this period were also included as conceptual foundations, particularly Lickona's framework on character education, Azra's perspectives on Indonesian Islamic education, and other philosophical works that provide fundamental contributions to the study of values and character formation.

The literature selection process was conducted through several stages. The first stage was identification, which involved collecting all relevant journal articles, academic books, and policy documents obtained through the keyword-based search process. The initial search generated 156 documents from various databases. The second stage involved screening, where documents were examined based on titles, abstracts, publication years, and thematic relevance. At this stage, 63 documents were excluded because they did not directly address character education, Islamic values, the Pancasila Student Profile, or the Merdeka Curriculum. The third stage was the eligibility assessment, conducted through full-text evaluation, resulting in 48 sources that met the predetermined criteria. Subsequently, 32 key sources were selected for in-depth analysis due to their strong relevance to the research objectives.

The inclusion criteria applied in this study consisted of: (1) academic articles or documents discussing character education, Islamic education, national values, the Pancasila Student Profile, the Rahmatan lil 'Alamin Student Profile, or the Merdeka Curriculum; (2) publications available in full-text format; (3) articles published in scholarly journals, academic proceedings, scientific reference books, or official government documents; (4) studies related to the Indonesian educational context; and (5) publications employing relevant theoretical or empirical approaches.

Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria included: (1) articles discussing character education in general without a specific connection to Islamic values or the Indonesian context; (2) popular writings, opinion articles, or non-academic publications; (3) documents lacking clear methodological information; and (4) publications with limited relevance to the research focus.

The collected data were analyzed using content analysis and thematic synthesis approaches. The first stage involved data reduction, referring to the process of selecting, organizing, and focusing information related to Islamic and Indonesian value-based character education. The second stage involved thematic categorization, in which

findings from the literature were classified into several major themes, including: (1) Islamic values such as tauhid (faith in the oneness of God), amanah (trustworthiness), 'adl (justice), rahmah (compassion), ihsan (excellence), and akhlakul karimah (noble character); (2) Indonesian national values, including Pancasila, diversity, mutual cooperation (gotong royong), nationalism, and social responsibility; (3) dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile; (4) integration of the Rahmatan lil 'Alamin Student Profile; (5) implementation strategies within the Merdeka Curriculum; and (6) character assessment approaches.

The third stage involved conceptual synthesis, which aimed to connect various thematic categories in order to construct an integrated understanding of the relationship between Islamic values and Indonesian national values in shaping students' character. This synthesis process was conducted through comparison, interpretation, and integration of previous research findings to develop a conceptual framework for Islamic and Indonesian value-based character education within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum.

To enhance the validity and reliability of the study, the research applied the principle of source triangulation by comparing information obtained from journal articles, academic books, and official policy documents. Furthermore, repeated readings and critical evaluations of the selected sources were conducted to ensure consistency of interpretation and minimize potential researcher bias.

Through this methodological framework, the study is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of character education studies based on Islamic and Indonesian values, while also offering practical implications for teachers, schools, madrasahs, and policymakers in implementing character education within the graduate profile dimensions of the Merdeka Curriculum.

The literature search was conducted systematically through several national and international academic databases, including Google Scholar, Garuda (Garba Rujukan Digital), DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals), Dimensions, ERIC, Scopus, and Web of Science. These databases were selected based on their extensive literature coverage, academic credibility, and relevance to the fields of education, Islamic education, and character studies. In addition to peer-reviewed journal articles, this study also utilized official policy documents issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemendikbudristek) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia as primary sources to examine and contextualize the concepts of the Merdeka Curriculum, the Pancasila Student Profile, and the Rahmatan lil 'Alamin Student Profile.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Islamic and Indonesian Character Education as the Foundation of Graduate Profiles

The findings indicate that Islamic- and Indonesian-based character education share overlapping value foundations. Islamic character education is grounded in principles such as tawhid (monotheism), worship, noble character (akhlakul karimah), trustworthiness (amanah), justice, compassion (rahmah), excellence (ihsan), and human responsibility as both servant and vicegerent of God. From an Islamic educational perspective, the aim of education is not merely the acquisition of knowledge but the holistic formation of manners, ethics,

spirituality, and personality. Recent studies confirm that Islamic character education within contemporary curriculum reform should integrate moral, spiritual, intellectual, and social dimensions rather than treating religious education merely as the transmission of religious knowledge (Amiq et al., 2025; Madya et al., 2026).

In contrast, Indonesian character education is rooted in Pancasila, cultural diversity, mutual cooperation, humanity, unity, democracy, and social justice. These values provide a civic and ideological framework for developing Indonesian citizens who possess moral integrity and social responsibility. Alhamuddin (2025) demonstrates that the Merdeka Curriculum explicitly incorporates values such as faith, discipline, nationalism, integrity, independence, collaboration, and critical thinking into the framework of student character development. Therefore, Islamic and Indonesian character education converge in their concern for producing individuals who are morally responsible while remaining socially and nationally engaged.

Within the Merdeka Curriculum, the integration of Islamic and Indonesian values can be understood as an effort to cultivate graduates who demonstrate both individual and social piety. Individual piety is reflected in religious observance, honesty, discipline, trustworthiness, and personal accountability, whereas social piety is manifested in tolerance, cooperation, environmental responsibility, respect for diversity, and commitment to collective welfare. This interpretation is supported by Masripah and Mohammad (2025), whose review indicates that the integration of moderate Islamic values into curriculum reform can strengthen moral development, social tolerance, and holistic student character. Thus, Islamic character formation in contemporary Indonesian education should be oriented not only toward religious devotion but also toward constructive participation in a pluralistic society.

Empirical evidence also demonstrates that the integration of universal character values and Islamic educational values produces measurable educational outcomes. Misbah and Saleh (2025) found that character education integration and Islamic educational values both had positive and significant effects on students' learning discipline. Together, the two variables explained 47.5% of the variance in learning discipline. This finding strengthens the argument that the desired graduate profile cannot be achieved solely through academic instruction; it requires the systematic integration of ethical habituation, spiritual values, and school culture.

The relationship between the Pancasila Student Profile and Islamic Religious Education further reinforces this orientation. Falahain and Santosa (2026) conclude that PAI can function as a strategic medium for strengthening the dimensions of faith and piety, moral integrity, global diversity, cooperation, independence, critical thinking, and creativity. Their review indicates that contextualized PAI instruction, project-based learning, reflective discussion, and community-based religious activities provide practical mechanisms through which Pancasila values can be internalized.

Consequently, graduates of the Merdeka Curriculum cannot be defined solely by academic achievement. Their graduate profiles should represent holistic development: religious in faith, ethical in conduct, moderate in religiosity, nationalistic in civic commitment, respectful of diversity, collaborative, independent, critical in reasoning, and creative in problem-solving. The integration of Islamic and Indonesian values therefore provides a complementary framework in which spiritual morality strengthens civic responsibility, while national values provide a social context for the expression of religious ethics.

2. Relevance of Islamic Values to the Dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile

The first dimension, faith, piety to God Almighty, and noble character, represents the most explicit convergence between Islamic and Indonesian values. Tawhid fosters the awareness that human activities and learning should be conducted responsibly before God, while Islamic moral values encourage honesty, humility, trustworthiness, responsibility, and compassion. Empirical research conducted by Ihsanudin et al. (2026) shows that an integrated Islamic curriculum grounded in tawhid and reinforced through Qur'anic memorization, religious habituation, leadership development, teacher role modeling, and school culture contributes to the formation of shidiq, amanah, tabligh, fathanah, and istiqamah. These characteristics demonstrate how theological values can be transformed into observable student behavior.

The second dimension, global diversity, is compatible with Islamic values such as tasamuh (tolerance), rahmah (compassion), ukhuwah basyariyah (human brotherhood), and rahmatan lil 'alamin. Islamic education in a pluralistic society should strengthen religious identity without producing exclusivism toward individuals with different religious, cultural, or social backgrounds. Masripah and Mohammad (2025) emphasize that the integration of moderate Islamic values into character education can enhance tolerance and socially inclusive character. This suggests that Islamic religious identity and respect for diversity should be regarded as mutually reinforcing dimensions rather than contradictory orientations.

The third dimension, mutual cooperation, corresponds to the Islamic concept of ta'awun, social solidarity, collective responsibility, and concern for others. This value can be developed through group projects, community service, environmental activities, charitable initiatives, and other collaborative learning experiences. Khaerunnisa et al. (2025) argue that contextual, collaborative, and project-oriented learning within the Merdeka Curriculum creates important opportunities for connecting Islamic Religious Education values with students' everyday social experiences. In this way, cooperation is learned not merely as an abstract moral concept but through direct participation.

The fourth dimension, independence, resonates with Islamic concepts of mujahadah, discipline, responsibility, self-regulation, and perseverance. Independent learners should be capable of regulating their learning processes, making responsible decisions, and maintaining positive behavior without continuous external supervision. The quantitative findings of Misbah and Saleh

(2025) are relevant in this context because they demonstrate that Islamic educational values, when integrated with character education, significantly contribute to students' learning discipline. Discipline can therefore be interpreted not only as conformity to institutional rules but also as internalized moral and spiritual responsibility.

The fifth dimension, critical reasoning, is consistent with the Islamic intellectual traditions of tafakkur (reflection), tadabbur (contemplation), ijihad (reasoned judgment), dialogue, and knowledge seeking. However, developing critical reasoning requires pedagogical strategies that move beyond one-directional moral instruction. Alhamuddin (2025) criticizes curriculum implementation that remains overly normative, top-down, and dependent on vague notions of "value internalization." He argues for clearer pedagogical strategies that create greater opportunities for dialogical, reflective, and participatory student engagement. Thus, the integration of Islamic values into critical reasoning should enable students to interpret ethical questions, evaluate social realities, and develop reasoned moral judgments.

The sixth dimension, creativity, relates to the ability to develop ideas, create meaningful works, and formulate solutions that generate benefit (maslahah). In Islamic education, creativity is compatible with ihsan, innovation, and the responsible use of knowledge. Falahain and Santosa (2026) identify project-based learning, digital tools, and student-centered projects as important strategies for simultaneously fostering creativity, critical thinking, and spiritual awareness. Therefore, creativity in character education should not be separated from moral responsibility; innovative products and solutions should also demonstrate social relevance and ethical consideration.

Overall, the correspondence between Islamic values and the dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile should be interpreted as value compatibility rather than complete conceptual identity. Islamic values are grounded in theological and religious traditions, whereas Pancasila values also possess historical, civic, cultural, and political foundations. Their educational relevance lies in the areas where both frameworks mutually reinforce students' spiritual, moral, intellectual, and social development.

3. Implementation Strategies in the Merdeka Curriculum

The implementation of Islamic- and Indonesian-based character education within the Merdeka Curriculum requires a systematic and contextual approach. The first strategy is integration within intracurricular learning. Teachers should connect subject content with moral and religious values according to the characteristics of each discipline. Science, for example, can be linked to environmental stewardship and human responsibility as khalifah; mathematics can incorporate honesty, fairness, and accuracy; language education can develop communication ethics; and social sciences can strengthen civic responsibility and respect for diversity. Amiq et al. (2025) argue that the flexibility of the Merdeka Curriculum provides significant opportunities for educators to connect religious values with general subjects and contextual learning experiences.

A similar conclusion is presented by Madya et al. (2026), who found that teachers in pesantren-based Madrasah Aliyah conceptualize curriculum integration as the unification of scientific and Islamic knowledge through a tawhid-based perspective. Their study shows that character development can be strengthened through teacher exemplification, religious habituation, learning contexts, worship practices, and the integration of Islamic perspectives into various subjects. However, the researchers also identify inconsistency in implementation resulting from limited individual initiative, insufficient institutional frameworks, and the absence of systematic curriculum integration. Thus, integration should be institutionally designed rather than being dependent solely on individual teacher commitment.

The second strategy involves project-based and experiential learning. The Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project and other contextual projects provide opportunities for students to experience values directly. Falahain and Santosa (2026) report that project-based learning, reflective discussions, digital learning, and community-based religious activities are effective mechanisms for connecting PAI with the Pancasila Student Profile. Similarly, Khaerunnisa et al. (2025) highlight the potential of value-oriented projects and contextual learning to strengthen religious and moral values within the Merdeka Curriculum. Projects addressing environmental protection, social solidarity, cultural diversity, responsible digital behavior, and community service are therefore particularly relevant.

The third strategy is the development of school or madrasah culture. Character education cannot be effectively developed through formal instruction alone. Daily routines, institutional norms, religious practices, interpersonal communication, discipline, cleanliness, social activities, and teacher behavior form an important hidden curriculum. Ihsanudin et al. (2026) found that Islamic character traits were cultivated not only through formal classroom instruction but also through non-formal activities, teacher role modeling, religious programs, and school culture. This suggests that consistency between the values taught in the classroom and those practiced within the institutional environment is essential.

This argument is further strengthened by Misbah and Saleh (2025), whose quantitative study demonstrates that the synergistic internalization of general character values and Islamic educational values within school culture significantly strengthens students' learning discipline. Therefore, school culture should not function merely as a supporting environment but as an integral component of the character curriculum.

The fourth strategy concerns teachers as value mediators and role models. Teachers do not function solely as transmitters of subject knowledge. They also serve as moral exemplars, facilitators of reflection, designers of meaningful learning experiences, and mediators between religious principles and contemporary social realities. Madya et al. (2026) demonstrate that teachers from different educational backgrounds may emphasize different aspects of curriculum integration, but both contribute to student character formation through exemplification, habituation, and contextual learning. Teacher

competence is therefore a decisive factor in determining whether curriculum ideals are transformed into educational practice.

Nevertheless, teacher readiness remains a substantial challenge. Khaerunnisa et al. (2025) identify limitations in teachers' understanding of value-integration models, disparities in educational facilities, and insufficient continuous professional training. Falahain and Santosa (2026) similarly identify inadequate teacher training, inconsistent policy implementation, infrastructure limitations, and weak stakeholder coordination as major barriers to effective PAI implementation within the Merdeka Curriculum. Continuous professional development must therefore accompany curriculum reform.

The fifth strategy involves family and community participation. Character development extends beyond the physical boundaries of the school because students interact continuously with families, peer groups, religious communities, and wider society. Khaerunnisa et al. (2025) emphasize that synergy among schools, teachers, parents, government, and communities is essential if Islamic values are to become actual educational practices rather than remain theoretical concepts. Likewise, Masripah and Mohammad (2025) underscore the importance of educator, parent, and community involvement in sustaining contextually relevant character education.

Accordingly, effective implementation depends upon an educational ecosystem that connects curriculum, pedagogy, teacher competence, institutional culture, family practices, and community participation.

4. Conceptual Model of Islamic and Indonesian Character Education

Based on the synthesis of the literature, the conceptual model of Islamic and Indonesian character education within the graduate profile dimensions of the Merdeka Curriculum can be formulated as follows:

Table 1. Conceptual Model of Islamic and Indonesian Character Education within the Graduate Profile Dimensions of the Merdeka Curriculum

No.	Pancasila Student Profile Dimension	Relevant Islamic Values	Indonesian Values	Educational Implementation Practices
1	Faith, Piety to God Almighty, and Noble Character	Tawhid, amanah, ihsan, and akhlakul karimah emphasize the relationship between humans, God, and moral responsibility. Islamic character education	Religiosity, moral responsibility, integrity, and respect for human dignity represent the national character values embedded in Indonesian education policies,	Religious habituation, teacher role modeling, moral reflection, Islamic learning activities, and religious school culture are important strategies for internalizing character values (Ihsanudin et al., 2026; Madya et al., 2026).

		places spiritual awareness and noble character as the foundation of student personality development (Madya et al., 2026; Ihsanudin et al., 2026).	including the Merdeka Curriculum (Alhamuddin, 2025).	
2	Global Diversity	Rahmah, tasamuh, ukhuwah basyariyah, and rahmatan lil 'alamin encourage compassion, tolerance, and respect for humanity. These values support the development of moderate Islamic character in multicultural environments (Masripah & Mohammad, 2025).	Diversity, unity, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence reflect Indonesian multicultural values and the social dimension of the Pancasila Student Profile (Falahain & Santosa, 2026).	Intercultural dialogue, religious moderation learning, diversity projects, and reflective discussions enable students to understand differences through contextual learning experiences (Falahain & Santosa, 2026; Masripah & Mohammad, 2025).
3	Mutual Cooperation (Gotong Royong)	Ta'awun, solidarity, social concern, and collective responsibility reflect Islamic teachings regarding cooperation and helping others in social life (Amiq et al., 2025).	Gotong royong, solidarity, social responsibility, and community participation represent important Indonesian cultural values that support collective character development	Community service projects, collaborative learning, environmental activities, and social initiatives provide opportunities for students to practice cooperation in real-life contexts (Khaerunnisa et al., 2025; Falahain & Santosa, 2026).

			(Khaerunnisa et al., 2025).	
4	Independence	Mujahadah, discipline, responsibility, and self-control encourage students to regulate themselves and act based on moral awareness (Misbah & Saleh, 2025).	Independence, work ethic, accountability, and responsible decision-making are essential characteristics of Indonesian learners in the Merdeka Curriculum framework (Alhamuddin, 2025).	Self-reflection, learning portfolios, project-based learning, personal learning targets, and discipline habituation support students' ability to manage their learning processes (Falahain & Santosa, 2026; Misbah & Saleh, 2025).
5	Critical Reasoning	Tafakkur, tadabbur, ijtihad, and knowledge seeking encourage reflection, reasoning, and intellectual responsibility within Islamic educational traditions (Falahain & Santosa, 2026).	Rationality, democratic thinking, openness, and problem-solving ability represent important elements of critical citizenship development (Alhamuddin, 2025).	Academic discussion, case studies, problem-based learning, ethical dilemmas, and analysis of social issues encourage students to develop reflective and critical thinking abilities (Falahain & Santosa, 2026; Alhamuddin, 2025).
6	Creativity	Ihsan, innovation, and maslahah encourage students to produce beneficial ideas and solutions for society (Amiq et al., 2025).	Innovation, productivity, adaptability, and social creativity represent competencies required for students to respond to contemporary challenges (Falahain & Santosa, 2026).	Project-based learning, educational technology, arts and cultural activities, entrepreneurship projects, and creative problem-solving provide spaces for students to transform ideas into meaningful products (Falahain & Santosa, 2026; Khaerunnisa et al., 2025).

The model demonstrates that the integration process occurs at several interconnected levels. At the normative level, Islamic values provide theological and ethical orientation. At the civic level, Indonesian and Pancasila values provide a framework for responsible participation in national and pluralistic social life. At the pedagogical level, these values are translated into contextual, reflective, collaborative, and project-based learning. Finally, at the institutional level, values are reinforced through school culture, teacher exemplification, leadership, assessment, and community participation.

This multilayered structure is consistent with Madya et al. (2026), who emphasize the importance of epistemological and curricular integration between Islamic and modern knowledge, and with Falahain and Santosa (2026), who highlight contextual pedagogy, school leadership, professional development, and community involvement as conditions for successful value integration.

5. Character Assessment in Graduate Profiles

Character education assessment needs to be authentic, continuous, contextual, and based on observable behavior. It should not be restricted to written tests because character development encompasses cognitive understanding, affective commitment, and behavioral practice. Relevant instruments therefore include systematic observation, reflective journals, portfolios, project assessments, peer and self-assessment, student-development records, and teacher deliberation.

Empirical findings from Ihsanudin et al. (2026) support this multidimensional approach. Their study shows that character evaluation in an Integrated Islamic School curriculum involved observation, self-assessment, and active participation from teachers and parents. At the same time, the study identified inconsistency in assessment as one of the challenges in implementing an integrated curriculum. This finding indicates that character assessment requires clearly formulated indicators and shared standards among educators.

Assessment should determine whether students not only know moral and religious values but are also able to internalize and practice those values. For example, understanding tolerance conceptually does not automatically demonstrate tolerant character; assessment must also examine how students respond to differences in authentic social interactions. Similarly, learning about responsibility should be accompanied by evidence of responsibility in completing tasks, maintaining commitments, cooperating with peers, and participating in social projects.

Project-based activities are particularly relevant because they allow teachers to evaluate the application of values in concrete situations. Falahain and Santosa (2026) demonstrate that student-centered projects can simultaneously foster critical thinking, creativity, cooperation, and spiritual awareness. Masripah and Mohammad (2025) likewise emphasize experiential and participatory approaches as important mechanisms for internalizing moral values. Therefore, character assessment should integrate learning processes and real-world performance rather than separating evaluation from students' actual social experiences.

However, assessment systems should avoid reducing character formation to numerical scoring alone. Alhamuddin (2025) warns that overly normative and

administrative approaches may limit meaningful character education. Assessment should therefore function primarily as formative feedback that helps students reflect on their development while enabling teachers to improve pedagogical strategies.

6. Analysis/Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the relationship between Islamic values and Pancasila values cannot be interpreted as an identity-based relationship claiming that all Pancasila values are directly derived from Islamic teachings. Pancasila represents a historical and national construction formed through interactions among religious traditions, cultural values, social experiences, and political agreements within Indonesian society. Therefore, the relationship between Islamic character values and Pancasila is more appropriately interpreted as value compatibility and constructive interaction.

From the perspective of Islamic education, several Pancasila values have clear areas of compatibility with Islamic moral principles. Belief in God can interact with the concept of tawhid; humanity is compatible with recognition of human dignity; social justice intersects with the Islamic concept of 'adl; mutual cooperation corresponds with ta'awun; and respect for diversity can be supported through tasamuh, rahmah, and ukhuwah basyariyah. Nevertheless, these similarities should not be interpreted as evidence that the complete civic and political structure of Pancasila originates from a single theological tradition.

This distinction is important because character education in a pluralistic country must prevent both religious reductionism and secular reductionism. Religious reductionism occurs when one particular religious interpretation is presented as the sole foundation of national morality, whereas secular reductionism may occur when the spiritual and transcendental motivations that shape learners' moral commitments are neglected. A balanced educational framework therefore requires interaction between religious ethics and civic values.

Recent studies support this integrative but non-reductive perspective. Misbah and Saleh (2025) provide quantitative evidence that the simultaneous integration of universal character education and Islamic educational values significantly influences students' learning discipline. Their findings are particularly important because they demonstrate that the two value domains can operate synergistically instead of functioning as competing educational frameworks. Character values provide behavioral and social orientation, while Islamic values can strengthen the spiritual motivation underlying responsible behavior.

Similarly, Madya et al. (2026) show that teachers in pesantren-based education interpret curriculum integration through the unification of scientific and Islamic knowledge under a tawhid-based epistemology. However, their study also demonstrates that successful integration is not automatic. Inconsistent implementation may emerge when curriculum integration lacks systematic institutional frameworks and depends excessively on individual initiative. Thus, philosophical compatibility must be translated into clear curricular structures and pedagogical practices.

A critical interpretation is particularly necessary because policy statements about character formation do not automatically result in effective educational practice. Alhamuddin (2025) identifies an important gap between policy ideals and classroom implementation. Although the Merdeka Curriculum explicitly emphasizes faith, integrity, discipline, nationalism, critical thinking, independence, and collaboration, practical guidance for character education often remains broad and normative. The use of abstract concepts such as “value internalization” without concrete pedagogical mechanisms can lead to character education that is rhetorical rather than transformative.

This finding has significant implications for the integration of Islamic and Indonesian values. The educational process should not merely instruct students that Islamic teachings and Pancasila values are compatible. Students should be encouraged to critically examine how, why, and under what social conditions these values interact. Dialogical learning, case studies, ethical dilemmas, project-based learning, community activities, and reflective discussions can provide opportunities for learners to relate religious commitments to actual civic and social problems.

Moderate Islamic education provides an important framework for this process. Masripah and Mohammad (2025) show that integrating moderate Islamic values into curriculum reform contributes to moral development, social tolerance, and holistic character. Their findings also emphasize the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy and teacher agency. Religious moderation in this context does not require weakening religious commitment. Instead, it encourages students to practice religious values while developing the ability to interact respectfully within a diverse social environment.

Within the Merdeka Curriculum, Islamic Religious Education has particular strategic relevance. Falahain and Santosa (2026) find that PAI can facilitate the internalization of the Pancasila Student Profile through project-based learning, reflective discussion, contextual pedagogy, and community-based religious practices. The significance of this finding lies in transforming PAI from a subject primarily associated with religious knowledge transmission into a broader platform for moral reasoning, civic responsibility, creativity, cooperation, and social reflection.

However, the success of this transformation depends heavily on teachers. Teachers function as value mediators, helping students interpret relationships among religious teachings, national identity, cultural diversity, and contemporary social realities. They are not merely knowledge transmitters but also moral exemplars, reflection facilitators, and designers of meaningful learning experiences. Madya et al. (2026) and Ihsanudin et al. (2026) consistently demonstrate that teacher exemplification and habituation play central roles in character formation.

At the institutional level, character development must also be reinforced through school culture. Ihsanudin et al. (2026) found that formal learning, non-formal activities, teacher exemplification, religious habituation, and school culture collectively contribute to the development of Islamic character. This finding is consistent with Misbah and Saleh (2025), who demonstrate that the integration of character and Islamic educational values within school practices

significantly contributes to learning discipline. Thus, character development is most effective when classroom instruction and institutional culture communicate consistent moral expectations.

Nevertheless, several structural barriers must be acknowledged. Khaerunnisa et al. (2025) identify limited teacher understanding, disparities in learning facilities, administrative burdens, and the lack of continuous pedagogical training as obstacles to effective PAI integration. Falahain and Santosa (2026) similarly identify inadequate teacher preparation, inconsistent policy implementation, infrastructure limitations, and weak stakeholder coordination. These findings indicate that successful character education cannot be attributed solely to teacher commitment; it also requires institutional leadership, resources, professional development, and policy coherence.

The analysis therefore suggests that the integration of Islamic and Indonesian character education within the Merdeka Curriculum should not be interpreted as an attempt to make one value system dominant over another. Instead, it represents an educational process aimed at developing a balanced relationship among the spiritual, moral, intellectual, civic, and social dimensions of student development. Islamic values can provide transcendental moral motivation, while Pancasila and Indonesian national values provide a civic framework for living responsibly in a democratic and pluralistic nation.

Consequently, the ideal graduate profile is not merely that of a religious student or an academically competent student. It is the profile of a learner who possesses religious commitment, moral integrity, learning discipline, social responsibility, tolerance, independence, critical reasoning, creativity, and the ability to collaborate across differences. Such an outcome requires not only curriculum statements but also contextual pedagogy, teacher competence, authentic assessment, supportive school culture, strong leadership, and sustained collaboration among schools, families, and communities.

The synthesis of the reviewed journals therefore confirms that the central challenge of the Merdeka Curriculum is no longer whether Islamic values and Indonesian character values can conceptually coexist, but how their compatibility can be translated into systematic, reflective, inclusive, and measurable educational practices. This shift from conceptual compatibility to pedagogical operationalization represents an important direction for strengthening character education and graduate profiles in Indonesian education.

CONCLUSION

Character education based on Islamic and Indonesian values serves as an essential foundation for developing graduate profiles within the Merdeka Curriculum. The integration of these two value systems demonstrates that Islamic values and national values share significant points of convergence in shaping students who are faithful, morally upright, tolerant, collaborative, independent, critical, and creative. Islamic values provide a spiritual and ethical foundation through principles such as tawhid (monotheism), amanah (trustworthiness), ihsan (excellence in conduct), justice, compassion, and moral responsibility. Meanwhile, Indonesian values provide a national

orientation through Pancasila, respect for diversity, democracy, mutual cooperation, and social responsibility.

Based on the synthesis of literature, this study identifies six major areas of convergence between Islamic values and the six dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile: (1) the relationship between tawhid, noble character, and the dimension of faith, devotion to God Almighty, and moral integrity; (2) the relationship between rahmah (compassion), tasamuh (tolerance), and ukhuwah (human brotherhood) with the dimension of global diversity; (3) the relationship between ta'awun (cooperation) and social solidarity with the dimension of mutual cooperation; (4) the relationship between mujahadah (self-discipline and perseverance), discipline, and responsibility with the dimension of independence; (5) the relationship between Islamic intellectual traditions, such as tafakkur (reflection), tadabbur (contemplation), and ijtihad (independent reasoning), with the dimension of critical thinking; and (6) the relationship between ihsan, innovation, and public benefit with the dimension of creativity. These findings indicate that the integration of Islamic and Indonesian values can serve as a strategic approach for developing graduate character that balances spirituality, intellectual capacity, and social responsibility.

Theoretically, this study contributes a conceptual framework for integrating Islamic and Indonesian character education values within the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. This framework emphasizes that the relationship between Islamic values and Pancasila values should not be understood as an identity relationship in which one system of values is entirely derived from the other. Instead, the relationship is better understood as dialogical and complementary. Islamic values function as a source of moral and spiritual orientation, while Indonesian values provide a civic framework that enables students to participate harmoniously within a pluralistic society. Therefore, character education should not only aim to develop religious individuals but also responsible, inclusive, and democratic citizens.

The implementation of character education requires a comprehensive approach through intracurricular learning, student profile strengthening projects, school or madrasah culture, value habituation, teacher role modeling, authentic assessment, and collaboration among schools, families, and communities. Teachers hold a strategic role as value mediators who assist students in understanding the relationship between religious teachings and civic life through reflective, contextual, and moderate learning approaches.

Nevertheless, this study has limitations because it remains conceptual in nature and employs a library research method, meaning that it does not yet provide empirical evidence regarding how the integration of Islamic and Indonesian values is implemented in actual school or madrasah settings. Therefore, future research should employ field-based approaches to examine teachers' practices in integrating these values, students' experiences in character education, and the challenges encountered during implementation within diverse educational contexts.

In conclusion, graduates of the Merdeka Curriculum are expected not only to achieve academic excellence but also to demonstrate religious, moderate, nationalistic, humanistic, critical, creative, and adaptive character in responding to contemporary challenges. Character education based on Islamic and Indonesian values represents a relevant approach for developing graduate profiles capable of integrating spiritual

commitment, intellectual competence, and social awareness in community and national life.

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