# Digital-Based Integrative Learning Strategies At Madrasah Ibtidaiyah: Forming Holistic Muslim Students In The Digital Era

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**Abstract:** Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) plays a strategic role in shaping holistic Muslim individuals from an early age through the integration of general education with Islamic values. Facing digital transformation and global challenges, MI is required to implement innovative, engaging, and contextual learning approaches. One effective strategy is the use of simple digital media such as interactive PowerPoint presentations, learning videos, educational Islamic apps, and audio materials. These media have been proven to increase learning motivation, support visual-auditory learning styles, and instill Islamic values in an engaging manner. MI also emphasizes integrated thematic learning and a play-while-learning approach that is appropriate to children's developmental stages. Teachers play a crucial role as educators, character builders, and moral role models, shaping students holistically. While challenges such as limited technological resources and a lack of teacher training remain, these can be addressed through continuous professional development and optimal utilization of available resources. With the right strategy, MI can produce a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also morally and spiritually strong and ready to face the challenges of the times.

**Keywords:** Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, digital media, Islamic education, character building, play-based learning, integrated thematic learning, early childhood education, role of teachers, educational innovation

## INTRODUCTION

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) is one of the formal elementary education institutions under the auspices of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia. As a basic educational institution with Islamic characteristics, MI not only aims to develop students' academic aspects, but also instills strong Islamic values from an early age. This is where the role of MI education becomes very strategic, namely forming Muslim individuals who have noble morals, strong basic knowledge and a high enthusiasm for learning.

As time goes by, the world of education is faced with complex challenges. Social changes, digital technology, cultural globalization, and shifts in values in society also influence the views and behavior of elementary school-aged children. The current generation is growing up in an environment that is very different from previous generations, both in terms of

access to information, social interactions and their learning styles. According to Mulyasa, E. (2013), this requires innovation in learning strategies so that the educational process remains relevant, interesting and meaningful for students.

Unfortunately, there are still many learning practices at MI level that are conventional, namely relying on lecture methods, memorization and cognitive mastery alone. In fact, according to Piaget, J. (1977) early childhood children have unique learning characteristics: they tend to be active, curious, and learn better through direct experience and fun activities. If teachers are unable to adapt their teaching methods to the characteristics of students, then the learning process can become boring and lose meaning. Apart from that, demands for the implementation of the Independent Curriculum which are being introduced in madrasas emphasize the importance of student-centred learning, as well as emphasizing strengthening the character and profile of Pancasila students. In the MI context, this needs to be translated into learning strategies that not only educate intellectually, but also emotionally and spiritually. MI is expected to be able to become an educational institution that produces a generation that is intelligent, moral, independent and has integrity.

The importance of innovative strategies is also driven by the fact that MI children are in a very critical developmental period. The age period of 7–12 years is a phase where children very easily absorb the values taught by their environment, either through words or example. Therefore, according to Zuhairini, et al. (1995) education at MI must be designed holistically to shape students' character from an early age, through methods that are fun, contextual and have transformative value.

Learning innovations can take the form of integrated thematic approaches, project-based learning, the use of interactive digital media, or activities that combine elements of art, games and religious practices. MI teachers need to be equipped with pedagogical skills and creativity to create a classroom atmosphere that is inspiring, religious and conducive to children's growth and development. Collaboration between teachers, parents and the community is also an important factor that determines the success of education at the basic level (Majid, A., 2014).

With this background, this article will examine various innovative strategies that can be applied in the educational process at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. The main focus will be on approaches that are able to combine academic achievement and the formation of student character in a balanced manner, within the framework of Islamic values and the needs of the times.

## METHODS

The method used in writing this article is the descriptive analysis method. According to Sugiyono (2018), this method aims to describe or depict an ongoing phenomenon or event, without intervening or manipulating the research object. In other words, this research is intended to provide an objective and in-depth description of the characteristics or condition of an object at a certain time.

The main steps in applying the descriptive analysis method include:
1. Identify the phenomenon or condition that is the focus of the research.
2. Data collection was carried out through literature study, namely by reviewing various relevant literature sources.
3. The data that has been collected is then analyzed qualitatively by grouping the information into appropriate themes or categories.
4. The results of the analysis are interpreted to provide a complete and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

Through this approach, researchers obtain a clearer picture of the phenomenon being studied. In the context of this article, researchers gain a better understanding

regarding Innovative Strategies in Educating MI Students: Building Character and Achievement Early in the learning process
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The Challenges of Educating Early Childhood in the Modern Era

Early childhood education is a crucial foundation for holistic human development. During this golden age, children experience rapid growth and development, physically, cognitively, socially, emotionally, and morally. Therefore, the quality of early childhood education is crucial for a child's future. However, in the context of the modern era, which is constantly changing and developing rapidly, educating early childhood faces various complex and multidimensional challenges.

1. The Dominance of Technology and the Digital World

One of the biggest challenges is the massive use of digital technology. Today's children grow up amidst an onslaught of gadgets, television, and social media. Research shows that young children who are exposed to excessive screen time without supervision are at risk of speech delays, attention deficit disorders, and poor social interaction skills (Wijaya, Y., 2020). Furthermore, exposure to age-inappropriate content can impact a child's value development and behavior.

Ideally, early childhood development involves more direct interaction, motor play, and exploration of the real environment. The instant and passive digital world can hinder the active and enjoyable learning process (Papalia D. E., Olds, S. W., & Feldman, R. D., 2008).

2. Lack of Time and Parental Involvement

Modern lifestyles, especially in urban environments, mean many parents lack quality time with their children due to busy work schedules. Children are often left in the care of caregivers or primary education institutions without any continuity between home and school education (Yusuf, S., & Sugandhi, N., 2013). This emotional parental absence can hinder the formation of attachment, which is essential for a child's sense of security and self-confidence (Bowlby, John, 1969). However, according to Hurlock, parental presence and responsiveness are crucial aspects of early childhood social and emotional development (Hurlock, E. B., 2003).

3. Exposure to Unfiltered Information

The digital age is also marked by an explosion of information. Many parents and educators access information about parenting and education via the internet, but not all of this information is scientifically based. In fact, it's not uncommon for circulating information to be misleading or cause excessive anxiety (parenting anxiety) (Santrock, J.W., 2011).

The lack of digital literacy and critical thinking leaves some parents confused about determining the most appropriate parenting style or educational strategy.

4. Crisis of Values and Cultural Identity

Globalization brings with it new values that often conflict with local norms and wisdom. Entertainment programs, celebrity lifestyles, and consumer culture introduced through mass media can easily be imitated by children. This leads to a crisis of values and the erosion of local culture, ultimately hindering efforts to build character from an early age (UNICEF Indonesia, 2018).

Early childhood education should be a means of instilling noble national values such as mutual cooperation, respect for parents, and honesty. However, the reality of the media and the environment sometimes suggests otherwise.

5. The Need for Higher Competency for Early Childhood Education Teachers

Another challenge is the continued lack of adequate pedagogical and professional competencies among early childhood education teachers. In the modern era, teachers in these educational institutions are required not only to be able to care for children but also

to design creative, enjoyable, and developmentally appropriate learning (Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, 2020). Mastery of technology, an understanding of developmental psychology, and communication skills are essential prerequisites for educating the digital generation. Other potential problems include a lack of ongoing training and inadequate welfare, which impact motivation and teaching quality.

6. Excessive Demands in Early Education

There is also a growing tendency to place excessive academic pressure on young children, such as reading, writing, and arithmetic, in order to achieve entry into certain popular secondary schools. This practice contradicts the principles of early childhood education, which should emphasize stimulating holistic development, rather than pursuing formal academic achievement. This leads to children becoming stressed and losing interest in learning (Roopnarine, J. L., & Johnson, J. E., 2013).

Basic Concepts of Education in Islamic Elementary Schools

Basic Concepts of Education in Islamic Elementary Schools (MI)

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) is a formal basic education level in the Indonesian Islamic education system, equivalent to elementary school (SD). MI is organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs with the primary goal of developing students who balance mastery of general knowledge with an understanding of Islamic values from an early age. The basic concept of education in MI rests on three main pillars: religious education, general academic education, and character building (akhlakul karimah).

1. Integration of Islamic Values and Science

Education in MI focuses not only on mastering general subject matter such as mathematics, science, and language, but also integrates Islamic values into the learning process. The MI curriculum teaches religious subjects such as the Quran and Hadith, Islamic Jurisprudence, Aqidah (Faith), and Islamic Cultural History, which form the foundation of students' faith and morals from an early age (Directorate General of Islamic Education, 2020).

2. Character Development and Noble Morals

One important aspect of the Islamic Elementary School (MI) education concept is the instilling of Islamic moral values and character. This aligns with the national education goal of developing students' potential to become individuals who are faithful, pious, and possess noble morals (Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003). Character education in MI is carried out through teacher role models, habituation, and religious activities such as congregational prayer, reading the Quran, and practicing religious practices.

3. Competency-Based Curriculum

MI implements the Independent Curriculum or Curriculum 2013 (K-13) with adjustments in the religious field. This curriculum is designed to build students' basic competencies in knowledge, skills, and attitudes. An integrative thematic approach is used in lower grades to support children's holistic development (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017).

4. Balance between the Worldly and the Hereafter

Education at Islamic Elementary Schools (MI) emphasizes a balance between academics and preparation for the afterlife. This reflects the vision of Islam as a comprehensive religion, encompassing both worldly and afterlife aspects, as stated in the Quran: "Rabbana aatina fi al-dunya hasanah wa fi al-akhirati hasanah..." (Quran, Al-Baqarah: 201).

Distinctive Characteristics of Islamic Elementary Schools (MI) Compared to General Elementary Schools (SD)

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) serves a similar function to elementary schools (SD) in the national education system, namely as the first level of formal basic education. However, MI has its own unique characteristics that distinguish it from general elementary schools. These differences lie primarily in its educational orientation, curriculum, learning

environment, and the values it fosters. The following are some of the distinctive characteristics of MI:

1. Integration of General and Islamic Religious Education

MI teaches all general subjects like those found in elementary schools, such as mathematics, Indonesian, science, social studies, and others. However, it also includes Islamic religious subjects such as the Quran and Hadith, Aqidah and Akhlak (Islamic Creed), Jurisprudence (Fiqh), Islamic Cultural History (SKI), and Arabic. This makes MI an educational institution that integrates general and religious knowledge in a balanced manner (Directorate General of Islamic Education, Republic of Indonesia, 2020).

2. Habituating Religious Practices in Daily Life

MI not only teaches religious theory but also accustoms students to practice Islamic teachings in their daily lives. These include congregational Dhuha and Dzuhur prayers, memorization of short surahs (chapters), daily prayers, and religious activities such as the commemoration of the Prophet's birthday, Isra' Mi'raj, and the Ramadan short-term Islamic boarding school (pesantren kilat). This habituation aims to form a religious character and accustom children to living in an Islamic atmosphere (Mulyasa, E., 2015).

3. Islamic School Environment and Culture

MI (Islamic elementary school) environments are generally more religious than regular elementary schools. This is evident in the use of Muslim attire (long uniforms, headscarves for girls), respect for teachers as part of Islamic etiquette, and interactions between students that are limited by Islamic norms.

This culture supports the development of character and noble morals, which is one of the main missions of Islamic education (Zamroni, A., 2018).

4. Strengthening Character Education Through Islamic Values

MI instills character education based on Islamic values such as honesty (ṣidq), discipline, responsibility, respect for parents and teachers, and social awareness. This is an advantage MI has over elementary schools, which are more focused on academics alone.

5. Institutional Undertakings Under the Ministry of Religious Affairs

Structurally, MI falls under the auspices of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, rather than the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, as elementary schools do. This has implications for: a stronger religious curriculum, specially recruited and trained Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, and more systematic supervision of religious education.

The Role of Teachers as Educators and Character Builders

Teachers play a highly strategic role in education. Not only do they serve as transmitters of knowledge (transfer of knowledge), but they are also central figures in shaping the character and personality of students. This role is becoming increasingly important in the modern era, which is full of moral and social challenges.

1. Teachers as Instructors

The primary role of teachers is to educate, not simply to teach. Educating means developing students' full potential, including cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills. Teachers help students understand life values, think critically, and develop responsible attitudes. Law No. 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers states that teachers are professional educators with the primary task of educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students (Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005).

2. Teachers as Character Builders

Teachers also play a role as character builders, serving as role models for morals and positive behavior for students. Character is not simply taught; it must be exemplified and instilled. In this context, teachers play the following roles:

a. Models: Students will imitate their teachers' behavior. Teachers' honesty, responsibility, discipline, and empathy have a strong impact on the development of students' character.

b. Motivators: Teachers encourage students to become good individuals with noble morals.

c. Mentors: Teachers provide direction and guidance to students in facing life's challenges and daily interactions (Tilaar, H.A.R., 2012).

3. Integration of Character Education in Learning

The teacher's role in character building is not limited to outside the classroom but is integrated into every learning process. For example, the value of cooperation can be instilled through group work; honesty through tests without cheating; and responsibility through completing assignments on time. According to the Ministry of National Education, character education must be integrated into all school activities through an integrative approach, including subject-based learning, habit-building activities, exemplary behavior by teachers and other educational staff, and a conducive school culture (Ministry of National Education, 2010).

4. Teachers as Agents of Social Change

In society, teachers are recognized as figures who play a crucial role in shaping civilization and social values. Teachers not only produce an intelligent generation but are also responsible for creating a moral, tolerant, and cultured society.

Integration Between Subjects

1. Definition of Integration Between Subjects

Integration between subjects is an approach to learning that integrates competencies, themes, or concepts from various subjects so that they are interrelated and supportive. The main goal is to provide a holistic, meaningful, and contextual learning experience for students (Fogarty, R. 1991).

In the 2013 Curriculum and the Independent Curriculum, the integrative thematic approach is one strategy for achieving integration between subjects, particularly for elementary education (grades I–III). Thematic learning combines several subjects into one central theme, so students can understand the material holistically, not in isolation.

2. Benefits of Integration Between Subjects

Some of the benefits of implementing integration between subjects include:

• Improving students' understanding of the concepts learned because they are presented in a broader, more concrete context.

• Avoiding repetition of the same concepts in different subjects.

• Developing critical and interdisciplinary thinking skills, because students are required to connect various knowledge within a single theme.

• Increasing learning motivation, because learning becomes more engaging, relevant, and less monotonous (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017).

3. Classroom Implementation Strategies

Some strategies for implementing integration between subjects include:

• Thematic approach: Combining several subjects (e.g., Indonesian, Science, and Mathematics) under one overarching theme, such as "The Environment," "My Family," or "The Universe."

• Cross-subject projects (project-based learning): Students undertake projects that incorporate skills from several subjects, such as creating a wall magazine (involving language, art, and social studies).

• Contextual learning: Presenting subject matter in real-life contexts that require an understanding of various aspects of science.

4. Challenges and Solutions

Although beneficial, integration between subjects also presents challenges, such as:

• Teachers' difficulty in designing integrated lesson plans/modules

• Differences in the depth of material between subjects

• Limited time and resources

The solution is to strengthen teacher training, use integrative learning media, and collaborate between subject teachers in developing teaching materials and learning activities.

Thematic/Integrated Approach

The thematic/integrated approach is a learning model used in the basic education curriculum in Indonesia, particularly at the elementary school (SD) and Islamic elementary school (MI) levels. This approach aims to integrate various subjects into a specific theme so that learning becomes more meaningful and contextual for students.

Conceptually, the integrated thematic approach is a learning model that combines several core competencies from various subjects into a single theme. With this approach, students can understand the relationships between subject matter as a whole, not separately, thereby strengthening the connection between learning experiences and real life (Majid, A., 2014).

This approach is based on the principle that elementary school-aged children are in a concrete thinking development stage, making it easier for them to understand concepts through direct experience and relevant contexts. The themes typically come from the students' immediate environment, such as family, school, community, nature, and culture. Thus, this approach can increase students' interest in learning, active engagement, and develop critical and creative thinking skills (Kunandar, 2011).

One of the advantages of the integrated thematic approach is its ability to develop students' holistic abilities, across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. Teachers act not only as transmitters of material but also as facilitators, helping students discover and connect new knowledge with their own experiences. This encourages meaningful learning and strengthens the internalization of values in students' daily lives (Trianto, 2010).

However, the implementation of the integrated thematic approach also faces several challenges. These include teachers' limited understanding of the principles of integration between subject matter, limited thematic learning resources, and difficulties in designing integrated learning evaluations. Therefore, improving teacher competency through training, providing modules, and developing theme-based learning media is crucial to support the success of this approach (Suyanto, M., & Asep Jihad, 2013).

Overall, the integrated thematic approach is a relevant learning strategy for creating a holistic, contextual, and meaningful learning experience for students in elementary education. When implemented appropriately, this approach can serve as an important foundation for character development, thinking skills, and student readiness to face the challenges of the 21st century.

Playing While Learning Method in Elementary Schools

The playing while learning method is a learning approach that positions play activities as a means to achieve educational goals, particularly in the context of elementary and early childhood education. In Elementary Schools (MI), this method is highly relevant because it aligns with the developmental characteristics of students who are still in the concrete thinking stage and enjoy exploratory activities.

1. The Nature of Play in Learning

Play is not merely a recreational activity, but also an active and enjoyable learning process. In the context of learning, play allows students to explore, experiment, and construct their own knowledge through real-life experiences and social interactions. Through pedagogically designed games, children can develop cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills, as well as character values such as cooperation, honesty, and sportsmanship (Isjoni, 2009).

2. Implementation in Islamic Elementary Schools

In Islamic Elementary Schools, the play-while-learning method can be integrated into various subjects such as Indonesian, Mathematics, Science, and Islamic Religious Education. Examples of its application include letter card games for learning to read, number board games for counting, market simulations in simple economics lessons, or role-playing games to instill Islamic and social values.

The teacher acts as a facilitator, creating a fun and challenging learning environment while directing the game toward the learning objectives. Well-designed play activities

foster curiosity, improve concentration, and encourage active interaction among students (Jalaluddin & Abdullah Idi, 2007).

3. Benefits of Playing While Learning

This method has several benefits, including:

• Increasing student motivation because the learning environment is not boring;

• Encouraging active and collaborative involvement among students in learning activities;

• Developing multiple intelligences such as kinesthetic, linguistic, interpersonal, and logical-mathematical intelligence;

• Forming positive character through the social and emotional experiences involved in play (Suyadi, 2015).

Challenges and Solutions

Despite its many advantages, this method also faces challenges, such as the perception that play is not serious, time constraints within the curriculum, and a lack of teacher creativity in designing play media. Therefore, teacher training and the provision of learning resources that support active and enjoyable learning are necessary, as well as support from the madrasah (Islamic board) and parents (Hasanah, U., 2021).

The play-while-learning method is an effective strategy for creating meaningful, contextual, and enjoyable learning in Islamic elementary schools (MI). With this approach, students not only acquire knowledge but also social skills, character values, and in-depth learning experiences. Implementing this method requires the active role of teachers as creative learning designers who integrate curriculum objectives with the world of children's play.

Small Group Discussion Method and Project-Based Learning in MI

1. Small Group Discussion

The small group discussion method is a learning strategy that involves students in small groups (usually consisting of 3-5 people) to discuss a topic or solve a problem together. The main objective of this method is to develop critical thinking skills, communication skills, and collaboration among students (Sanjaya, Wina, 2006).

At the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) level, small group discussions are very effective in thematic learning, especially on themes related to social life, Islamic values, or simple issues in the students' environment. The teacher acts as a facilitator, providing discussion topics appropriate to the children's developmental level and guiding them to actively discuss and respect the opinions of others.

The steps for implementing the small group discussion method in MI include:

• The teacher divides students into small, heterogeneous groups;

• Provides a topic or simple problem to be discussed;

• Provides sufficient discussion time and encourages the involvement of all members;

• Each group presents the results of its discussion;

• The teacher provides feedback and reinforces the material (Majid, Abdul, 2014).

Small group discussions not only train academic skills but also foster character values such as tolerance, responsibility, and empathy (Zaini, M., et al., 2008).

2. Project-Based Learning

Project-based learning (PjBL) is a learning approach that positions students as active participants in completing a specific project related to real life and relevant to the subject being studied. This model encourages students to research, design, and present their work, often involving higher-order thinking skills, collaboration, and creativity (Thomas, J.W., (2000).

In Islamic elementary schools (MI), project-based learning can be implemented flexibly, such as creating environmental posters, building miniature traditional houses, writing Islamic story books, or engaging in simple entrepreneurial activities. The implementation stages include:

• The teacher determines the theme and learning objectives;

• Students are divided into groups and assigned a project;

• Students design, implement, and compile a project report;

• Project results are presented to the class;

• The teacher and other students provide evaluation and reflection (Mulyasa, E., 2013).

The advantages of this model are its ability to integrate various competencies into one activity, foster a sense of responsibility and leadership, and provide space for students to explore their interests and talents. Small group discussions and project-based learning are innovative strategies that are highly suitable for implementation in MI because they support the development of 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and and creativity. The implementation of these two methods requires the active role of teachers as facilitators capable of creating a participatory, enjoyable, and meaningful learning environment.

Integration of Islamic Values in Learning at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI)

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), as Islamic primary educational institutions, have the responsibility not only to educate students intellectually but also to shape their character and spirituality. Therefore, one strategic approach that must be consistently implemented is the integration of Islamic values into the learning process, both in religious and general subjects (Zuhairini, et al. 1997).

1. The Concept of Integration of Islamic Values

The integration of Islamic values into learning at MI is not simply the addition of religious material, but rather the process of internalizing Islamic teachings into the curriculum, strategies, teaching materials, and teacher-student interactions. The Islamic values in question include faith, worship, morals, and social interactions, which are instilled through a contextual approach and exemplary behavior (Mujib, A., 2019).

2. Implementation of Integration in Learning

a. Islamic Planning

Teachers design lesson plans (RPP) by linking general subject matter to verses from the Quran, hadiths, or stories of Islamic figures. For example, a science lesson about water can be linked to Q.S. Al-Anbiya: 30.

b. Islamic Contextual Learning

The learning process connects material to everyday life. For example, when teaching mathematics, teachers can instill honesty in measurements and calculations (Sauri, S., 2015).

c. Teacher Role Model

Teachers serve as a source of moral inspiration for students, through their words, actions, and daily attitudes (Muslich, M., 2011).

d. Integrative Evaluation

Evaluation focuses not only on cognitive aspects but also encompasses students' affective and spiritual aspects, such as honesty, responsibility, and cooperation (Zuhairini et al., 1997).

d. Islamic Madrasah Culture

Practices such as congregational Dhuha prayer, reading the Quran before lessons, and sharing activities are part of the instillation of Islamic values (Zuhairini et al., 1997).

3. Benefits of Integrating Islamic Values

The benefits of integrating Islamic values include shaping the Muslim personality from an early age, instilling a comprehensive religious awareness, enhancing the integration of general and religious knowledge, and producing MI graduates who are knowledgeable and possess noble character (Hasan, R., 2020).

4. Implementation Challenges

The implementation of Islamic values integration faces several obstacles, such as a lack of teacher training, a limited availability of integrative learning resources, and teachers' limited understanding that Islamic values can be integrated into general education (Sauri, S., 2015). Therefore, strengthening teachers' pedagogical competencies

and supporting a conducive madrasah environment are necessary. Integrating Islamic values into Islamic elementary school (MI) learning is a strategic step in developing a generation of academically intelligent and spiritually strong Muslims. This can only be achieved if teachers design and implement learning holistically, prioritizing role models, values, and the context of everyday life.

Strengthening Islamic Character in Learning at MI

Character education is one of the primary goals of the national education system, particularly in Islamic elementary schools (MI). Strengthening Islamic character in Islamic elementary schools (MI) is crucial for developing students who are not only intellectually intelligent but also possess noble morals and behavior in accordance with Islamic teachings from an early age (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2013). Character values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, caring, and religiosity are the core of Islamic education and must be embedded in all learning activities.

Strategies for Strengthening Islamic Character in Learning Activities

1. Integrating Character Values in Lesson Plans

MI teachers need to explicitly incorporate Islamic character values into learning objectives and learning activities. For example, in Indonesian language lessons, teachers can emphasize honesty in expressing opinions or when telling stories (Muslich, Masnur, 2011).

2. Contextual Learning with Islamic Values

Every subject can be connected to Islamic teachings. For example, when learning about environmental preservation in science, teachers can relate it to the Prophet's hadith about cleanliness as part of faith (Zuhairini, et al., 1997). This approach makes Islamic values easier for students to understand and apply.

3. Teacher Role Models in Behavior Daily Activities

Teachers are the primary role models for Islamic elementary school students. Therefore, their attitudes, words, and actions must reflect Islamic morals. This exemplary behavior indirectly strengthens students' character values, such as respect, patience, and trustworthiness (Hasan, R., 2020).

4. Habitualization in Routine Activities

Daily activities such as praying before and after lessons, performing the Dhuha prayer, reciting the Quran, greeting others, and maintaining a clean school environment are highly effective ways to strengthen character. Through these habits, values such as discipline, togetherness, and responsibility are naturally instilled (Sauri, S., 2015).

5. Post-Learning Value Reflection

At the end of the learning activity, teachers can invite students to reflect on their values, discussing the moral and spiritual lessons learned from the material they have learned. This helps students realize the importance of applying Islamic values in their daily lives (Mulyasa, E., 2012).

6. Attitude and Character Assessment

Character strengthening is incomplete without evaluation. Islamic elementary school teachers can use daily attitude assessment instruments. This assessment assesses students' behavior in terms of honesty, discipline, caring, and cooperation. This assessment is formative and used as material for further character development (Majid, A., 2014). Strengthening Islamic character in Islamic elementary schools (MI) is not an additional task, but an integral part of the entire learning process. Through the integration of values, role models, habituation, and character evaluation, students will grow into Muslim individuals who excel spiritually, morally, and socially. The active role of teachers as spiritual guides and academic educators is key to the success of this strategy.

Teacher and Parent Collaboration in Educating Children at Elementary School (MI)

Children's education is not solely the responsibility of the school, but also a shared responsibility between teachers and parents. Especially at elementary school (MI) age, children are in a growth phase that significantly determines the direction of their character, morals, and intelligence development. Therefore, synergy between home and

school is crucial to creating a consistent learning environment that supports optimal child growth and development (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2013).

1. The Urgency of Teacher and Parent Collaboration

MI-age children are in the concrete-operational stage of Piaget's developmental theory, where they begin to think logically but are still highly dependent on environmental influences and role models (Papalia, Diane E. et al., 2009). Teachers at school and parents at home are important figures with a strong influence on the formation of children's attitudes, values, and habits. Without collaboration, educational messages can conflict and confuse children (Hurlock, Elizabeth B., 1980).

2. Forms of Effective Collaboration

a. Open and Regular Communication

Teachers and parents need to maintain active communication, both formally (parent-teacher meetings, learning outcome reports) and informally (messages, home visits). This communication helps teachers understand students' home conditions, and parents understand their children's progress at school (Epstein, Joyce L., 2001).

b. Parental Participation in School Activities

Parental involvement in school activities such as Islamic holiday celebrations, literacy activities, or parenting classes can strengthen the emotional bond between parents and the school. It also demonstrates to children that education is a shared priority (Desmita, 2009).

c. Alignment of Values and Rules

It is important for teachers and parents to agree on the values they want to instill in their children, such as honesty, discipline, and responsibility. With consistent rules at home and school, children will not experience behavioral confusion (Hasan, R., 2020).

d. Collaboration in Addressing Children's Problems When children face problems in learning, behavior, or social relationships, teachers and parents should work together to find solutions. This two-way approach is usually more successful because it considers the child's entire environment (Sauri, S., 2015).

e. Continuous Development at Home and School

The Islamic values and character taught in school will be stronger if supported by habits at home. For example, the habit of praying, reading the Quran, and speaking politely must be continuously practiced within the family (Zuhairini, et al., 1997).

f. Challenges in Collaboration

While ideal, this collaboration often faces obstacles such as lack of parental time, low educational awareness, and differences in cultural and economic backgrounds. Therefore, schools must proactively establish inclusive communication and facilitate activities that encourage the active participation of all parents (Mulyasa, E., 2012). Collaboration between teachers and parents is key to the success of children's education in elementary school. A harmonious and mutually supportive relationship will create a conducive learning environment, strengthen Islamic character formation, and improve overall student learning outcomes. Therefore, strengthening synergy between school and home must be an integral part of the Islamic elementary school (MI) education system.

Using Simple Digital Media for MI Children

In today's digital era, the use of information technology in education has become an unavoidable necessity, including at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) level. Elementary school-aged MI children are a generation that has grown up with technology. Therefore, the use of simple digital media can be an effective tool for delivering learning materials in a more engaging, interactive, and enjoyable way.

Types of Simple Digital Media Suitable for MI Children

1. Interactive PowerPoint

PowerPoint is more than just a presentation tool. With a little creativity, teachers can create interactive slides complete with animations, moving images, and practice questions. MI children will be more focused and engaged with the material presented visually and dynamically.

2. Short Learning Videos

Educational videos lasting 5-10 minutes can help explain abstract concepts in a concrete way. For example, science or religious studies lessons can be explained through animated Islamic cartoons or simple video-based experiments.

3. Free Educational Apps

Teachers can use apps like Wordwall, Kahoot, or Quizizz to create interactive quizzes that can be played with students. This activity increases student participation and motivates them to learn in a fun way.

4. Audio Islamic Stories and Educational Songs

For lower grades (grades I-III), Islamic stories or children's songs with moral values can be used as learning media for character, language, and morals. The audio can be played in class as part of literacy or reflection activities.

5. Cell Phone Cameras and Simple Video Recordings

Teachers can create simple learning videos using their cell phone cameras and then share them via WhatsApp or Google Drive. This is especially helpful during distance learning or for reinforcing material at home.

6. 6. Benefits of Using Simple Digital Media

It increases students' interest in learning, especially in subjects they find difficult. It helps them understand abstract concepts, as MI students tend to learn more effectively visually and audibly. It facilitates project-based learning, such as assignments such as creating presentations or short videos with their parents at home. It instills digital literacy from an early age, so that children become not just passive users but also digital creators within an Islamic framework.

7. Challenges and Solutions

Limited access to technology, especially in rural areas. One solution is for teachers to use simple tools such as active speakers, school laptops, or even classroom TVs. There is a lack of teacher training in information technology. Therefore, gradual teacher training is needed on the use of simple and applicable digital media. Simple digital media, when used appropriately and creatively, can be an effective learning tool in MI. Teachers don't need sophisticated technology to create meaningful learning. Simply with interactive PowerPoint presentations, educational videos, online quizzes, or Islamic audio stories, students can learn in a fun and meaningful way.

## CONCLUSION

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) plays a crucial role in shaping holistic Muslim individuals through the integration of general education and Islamic values. In the digital and globalized era, innovative approaches are needed to ensure learning remains relevant and engaging. One effective strategy is the use of simple digital media, such as interactive PowerPoint presentations, educational videos, Islamic apps, and audio lessons. These media increase learning motivation, support visual-auditory understanding, and instill Islamic values from an early age, provided they are accompanied by competent teachers and supported by parental involvement. Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) has unique characteristics compared to general elementary schools, particularly in religious instruction and the instillation of Islamic practices. Learning at MI uses a thematic approach deemed appropriate to children's developmental stages, along with a play-while-learning method that makes the learning process more active and enjoyable. Teachers at MI serve as character educators and moral role models, shaping students holistically. While challenges such as limited media and teacher training exist, these can be overcome through ongoing training and the use of available tools. With the right strategies, MI can produce a generation that is intelligent, moral, and capable of facing the challenges of the times

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