

Transnational Perspectives on Character Education in Islamic Schools: A Comparative Study of Indonesia and Thailand

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Article info	Abstract
<p>Article History</p> <p>Received: 19/04/2025</p> <p>Recived: 24/04/2025</p> <p>Accepted: 27/04/2025</p> <p>✉ Corresponding author</p>	<p><i>Character education is designed to counteract the low moral ethics and weak character of students. In its implementation, continuous improvement and development are necessary. This study aims to compare the enhancement of character education in Islamic schools in Indonesia, with the sample of MI Muhammadiyah 5 Surabaya and in Thailand, with the sample of Phatnawitya School Yala. These two schools represent different yet complementary approaches in integrating character values into their respective education systems. This study adopts a qualitative method with a multi-case study design. The data is analysed with in-depth individual case analysis to understand the specific context of each school. Then, a constant comparative method is carried out to compare the results of each case to find the main patterns, differences, and themes. This study uses Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory as a theoretical framework, which views the development of individuals as influenced by the interaction between individuals and the various layers of the social environment that exist around them. The results of the study show that strengthening character education not only emphasizes cognitive aspects, but also integrates affective and psychomotor aspects harmoniously. At MI Muhammadiyah 5, character education focuses on Islamic values through habituation, character-based learning, and teacher role example. Meanwhile, Phatnawitya School Yala emphasises a religious attitude, empathy, and discipline in Islamic lessons, academic lessons, and the development of students' specialist skills. Despite being in different educational contexts, both schools managed to develop character education models that were relevant to their respective cultures and systems.</i></p> <p>Keywords: Character Education, Islamic School, Indonesia, Thailand.</p> <p>Abstrak</p> <p>Pendidikan karakter dirancang untuk menangkal rendahnya etika moral dan lemahnya karakter peserta didik. Dalam implementasinya, diperlukan perbaikan dan pengembangan secara terus-menerus. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk membandingkan penguatan pendidikan karakter pada sekolah Islam yang ada di Indonesia, dengan sampel MI Muhammadiyah 5 Surabaya dan di Thailand, dengan sampel Phatnawitya School Yala. Kedua sekolah ini merepresentasikan pendekatan yang berbeda namun saling melengkapi dalam mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai karakter ke dalam sistem pendidikan masing-masing. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan desain studi multi-kasus. Data dianalisis dengan analisis kasus individual yang mendalam untuk memahami konteks spesifik setiap sekolah. Kemudian, dilakukan metode komparatif konstan untuk</p>

membandingkan hasil dari tiap kasus guna menemukan pola, perbedaan, dan tema utama. Penelitian ini menggunakan Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory sebagai kerangka teoretis, yang memandang perkembangan individu dipengaruhi oleh interaksi antara individu dengan berbagai lapisan lingkungan sosial yang ada di sekitar mereka. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa penguatan pendidikan karakter tidak hanya menekankan aspek kognitif, tetapi juga mengintegrasikan aspek afektif dan psikomotorik secara harmonis. Di MI Muhammadiyah 5, pendidikan karakter berfokus pada nilai-nilai Islam melalui pembiasaan, pembelajaran berbasis karakter, dan keteladanan guru. Sementara itu, Phatnawitya School Yala menekankan sikap religius, empati, dan disiplin dalam pelajaran Islam, pelajaran akademik, dan pengembangan keahlian spesialis siswa. Meskipun berada dalam konteks pendidikan yang berbeda, kedua sekolah berhasil mengembangkan model pendidikan karakter yang relevan dengan budaya dan sistem masing-masing.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Karakter, Sekolah Islam, Indonesia, Thailand

INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, social dynamics in the Southeast Asian region have shown increasing complexity, especially related to the issue of societal values and character. In the midst of the challenges of globalization and modernisation, various social problems such as intolerance, bullying, and moral crises among adolescents have emerged, which threaten social stability and the quality of the younger generation (Nuruzzaman, Darussalam, et al., 2023; Sittichai & Smith, 2015). This phenomenon does not only occur in a general context, but also touches on the dimension of formal education, including religious-based institutions such as Islamic schools.

In Indonesia, one of the social challenges that has emerged is the increasing practice of intolerance between religious and ethnic groups. Although Indonesia is known as a country with high cultural and religious diversity, the phenomenon of intolerance is increasingly widespread, especially in the digital space. Latipah and Nawawi (2023) noted that the phenomenon of religious intolerance emerged as one of the impacts of the use of social media. Recently, content related to religious issues, discriminatory treatment of minority groups, and various forms of religious fanaticism and intolerance has increasingly circulated and received widespread attention on social media platforms in Indonesia.

Meanwhile, Thailand faces a different but similar social problem, namely the value crisis among adolescents, particularly in the form of bullying in the school environment and increasing deviant behaviour. The study of Sokantat et al. (2021) revealed that the bullying behaviour of students in Thailand is partly influenced by the foundation of Thai culture itself, namely bullying is often considered a form of greeting or joke. Statistics show bullying among students ranks second highest in the world, with around 600,000 students being victims. Not only physical and verbal, now bullying has penetrated the digital world through social media. Around 13% of students feel depressed by this bullying, which is now present in various forms as technology advances.

These two social problems, although they have different forms, actually have a common point in the weak internalisation of character values in individuals. Therefore, character education is an urgent need in both formal and non-formal education systems, because character is not something genetically inherited, but is the result of continuous coaching and habituation every day through thoughts and actions taken (Lestari & Aryanti, 2024). Based on the Aprillionita study (2024), it is important to pay attention to character education from an early age so that character can be firmly formed in individuals, as well as prepare them to face the various challenges of the 21st century through the right mindset, attitude, and action.

Character education according to Fadilah et al. (2021) is a collective effort by all elements of education to instill moral values in students. Megawangi, as quoted by Munjiatun (2018), emphasises the importance of accustoming children to take responsibility for their actions and decisions, as well as being able to practise them in real life. In various countries, the approach to character education is greatly influenced by social, cultural, and ideological factors. Therefore, comparing cross-border character education strategies can enrich insights while opening up opportunities for more contextual and effective policy adoption (Hartono, 2022).

This study specifically compares the strengthening of character education in Islamic schools in Indonesia and Thailand. The two schools that are the focus of this study are MI Muhammadiyah 5 Surabaya and Phatnawitya School Yala. Both represent two different socio-religious contexts, but both carry Islamic values as the basis for character formation. This study aims to analyse the approaches, implementation strategies, and effectiveness of character education in each school, paying attention to aspects such as the main values taught, the role of teachers, learning models, and the influence of national culture and policies.

Cross-country comparisons in the context of character education are important because differences in local policies, curricula, and values can result in strategies that are contextual and can be adopted more widely. A number of comparative studies have examined the practice of character education in various countries. One of them is research by Mahmudi and Fauzi (2024), which compares the practice of character education in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Indonesia. The study shows that although all three countries recognise the importance of character education, they use different methods and strategies. The UK emphasises the core values of schools, while the US integrates character education in the academic curriculum, and Indonesia adopts elements of both approaches.

Handayani and Kholis (2024) in *"Moral Education: Comparative Analysis of Character Education Framework in Indonesia and China"* underline the top-down approach applied by the two countries, albeit with different ideologies. Although character education is an important instrument in Indonesia and China, its implementation depends on the respective national policies. In the context of character education in Southeast Asia, Rizna et al. (2019) in *"Strengthening School Culture-Based*

Character Education to Increase Student Competitiveness" compared the development of character values at SDN 037 Tarakan, Indonesia, and Chiang Rai Municipality School 2, Thailand. This study shows that although there are similarities in the values taught, differences in school culture and beliefs of each country influence the form of character development.

Although the above studies have made a major contribution to the cross-border understanding of character education, there is still a gap in studies that specifically compare the strengthening of character education in Islamic schools, especially between Indonesia and Thailand. Most previous research has focused more on the context of general education, without delving into the religious dimension inherent in character education in religious-based institutions. In fact, Islamic education has its own characteristics and approaches in the formation of morals and manners of students, which have not been widely reviewed in cross-country comparative studies.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative method with a multi-case study design (Anggito & Setiawan, 2018), which allows an in-depth exploration of character education practices in two different contexts. The selection of this method is based on the need to explore meaning, understand dynamics, and reveal social realities in the field through the direct experience of education actors. This study involved two Islamic schools as an analysis unit: 1) MI Muhammadiyah 5 Surabaya (Indonesia), which is known as one of the leading Islamic schools in the city of Surabaya with the title of excellent school. 2) Phatnawitya School Yala (Thailand), a school with the status of "Satit" or demonstration school, which makes it a pilot institution in the implementation of education policies in Yala Province.

Data collection was carried out through three main techniques, namely participatory observation of daily school activities related to character strengthening. Then in-depth interviews with teachers, principals, and related staff, using a semi-structured interview guide. The researcher also conducted a document analysis of school policies, curriculum, and programmes and activities that support character education. To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, the researcher used source and method triangulation techniques. Data from interviews, observations, and documents are not only collected in parallel, but also cross-referenced. For example, findings from teacher interviews are confirmed through direct observation in the classroom as well as from school policy documents. This step helps establish the integrity of the information and strengthens the validity of the researcher's interpretation.

Data analysis was carried out in two stages: 1) Individual case analysis, where each school was analysed in depth based on the local social, cultural, and policy contexts that influenced the implementation of character education. The data was analysed using open coding techniques, then grouped into larger categories to find key themes. 2) Constant comparative analysis, i.e. comparing the results of each case

continuously to find patterns, striking differences, and slices of the same value or strategy. The researcher chose this technique to identify elements of character education that are universal as well as contextual in both countries. The results of this research are expected to contribute, both theoretically and practically, to the development of adaptive character education models based on cultural contexts, especially in Islamic school environments in Indonesia and Thailand.

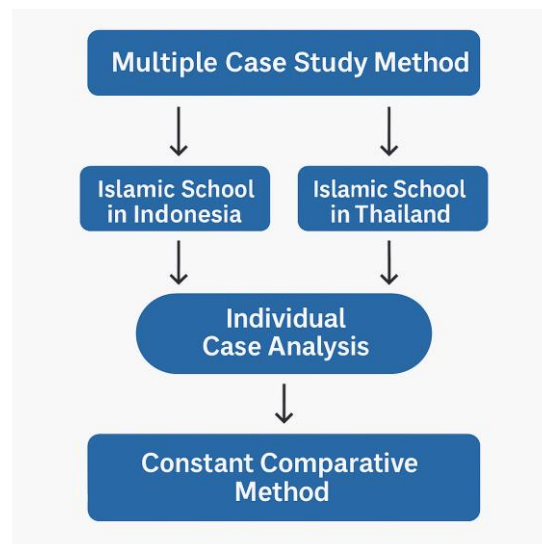


Figure 1. Research Methods

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Strengthening Character Education at MI Muhammadiyah 5 Surabaya

Character education is not new in the Indonesian education system. Since the beginning of the 20th century, educational figures such as R.A. Kartini and Ki Hajar Dewantara have emphasised the importance of integrating moral and personality values in education. They view education as a means to form national character and identity in accordance with the social and cultural conditions of Indonesian society (Muthoifin et al., 2017; Zulfiati, 2018).

Character education in Indonesia aims to develop the personality of students through the integration of aspects of thinking, emotion, sense, and physical activity. Strengthening Character Education aims to create a young generation that is intellectually proficient and possesses high moral integrity, in accordance with the principles of Pancasila (Aprilia et al., 2024; Supriadi et al., 2020). Strengthening Character Education focuses on instilling virtue and ethical values in every aspect of the curriculum, where educators not only impart knowledge but also prepare students to act according to moral and social values. The main values of Strengthening Character Education include religiousness, nationalism, independence, cooperation, and integrity (Tim Penyusun, 2016).

In line with this goal, MI Muhammadiyah 5 Surabaya, as one of the leading Islamic schools in Surabaya, East Java, applies the principles of PPK in its learning activities. Under the auspices of the Muhammadiyah Gubeng Branch Executive, this school has a vision to become a quality madrasah that prioritises knowledge and morals. The mission of MI Muhammadiyah 5 is to create an educational environment that is child-friendly and based on good examples, which is in line with efforts to strengthen the character of students.

Strengthening character education at MI Muhammadiyah 5 Surabaya is part of the development of education based on Islamic and national values. This school makes character education a school culture that is internalised in various learning, extracurricular, and daily activities of students. As Mochammad Izzul Haq said:

The strengthening of character education in MI Muhammadiyah 5 refers to Islamic values and Muhammadiyah ideology which is based on Surah al-Ma'un, amar ma'ruf nahi munkar, and the development of progressive people (Haq, 2025)

Character education is understood not only as the cultivation of moral values, but as the process of forming a whole Muslim personality, which combines spiritual, social, and intellectual aspects. Conceptually, character education is carried out through three main approaches, namely: (1) integration in subjects, (2) habituation in school culture, and (3) co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. In classroom learning, teachers explicitly associate teaching materials with character values, such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, and respect for others. The cultivation of these values is carried out through a dialogical and reflective approach, which is adjusted to the level of student development (observation, 2025).

To strengthen religion-based character education, MI Muhammadiyah 5 Surabaya also integrates religious activities into its daily routine. One of the main activities carried out is the tadarus of the Qur'an every morning before learning begins, which aims to familiarise students with the teachings of Islam. In addition, congregational prayers at school are part of efforts to strengthen students' spiritual character. The tahfidz programme is also held to provide opportunities for students to memorise the Qur'an in a structured manner, which is expected to help them deepen the teachings of Islam and practise its values in their daily lives.

MI Muhammadiyah 5 Surabaya has three class programmes designed to answer the needs and potentials of diverse students, namely the Academic Class, the Tahfidz Class, and the CIP Class (Cambridge International Program). All three reflect the commitment of MI Muhammadiyah 5 Surabaya in creating an inclusive learning environment, excelling academically, religiously, and globally.

Academic Class

This class is the main program that integrates the national curriculum with character values based on Islamic teachings. Its primary focus is on academic strengthening as well as the development of good morals through daily activities such as reciting the Quran (tadarus), congregational prayers (salat berjamaah), and fostering positive attitudes in the school environment.

Tahfidz Class

This program is intended for students who have an interest and talent in memorizing the Quran. In addition to following the national curriculum, Tahfidz students receive additional time and special guidance to memorize and understand the Quran intensively, with a target of memorizing 4 Juz of the Quran. This class also instills strong values of discipline and spirituality.

CIP Class (Cambridge International Program)

CIP Class is an outstanding program that integrates the Cambridge International curriculum with Islamic values, aiming to equip students with strong academic skills and character. In this class, learning is delivered with a bilingual approach. Students are also trained to think critically, creatively, and adapt in an international context, while still maintaining Islamic values as the foundation of their character.

Furthermore, MI Muhammadiyah 5 Surabaya also organises various project-based thematic activities that are integrated with character values. One of the activities that is routinely held is an art and cultural performance, which is a forum for students to express their creativity. Each year, students are given the opportunity to demonstrate talent in dance, drama, music, and exhibitions of scientific works. This activity not only aims to increase students' confidence, but also to introduce them to the importance of appreciation for art and culture.

This school also carries out the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5), which functions as a contextual medium to internalise character values in accordance with the principles of Pancasila-based education and Islamic teachings. For example, in project activities that raise local wisdom in the form of traditional culinary and folk games, students not only learn cultural values, but are also invited to reflect on Islamic values such as manners, gratitude, and concern for others.

In terms of activities outside the classroom, MI Muhammadiyah 5 Surabaya provides a variety of extracurricular programme options, as stated by Azmi Fakhruddin:

Our school provides a wide range of extracurricular activities that students can participate in, such as Tapak Suci, Hizbul Wathan, scouting, choir, theatre, basketball, futsal, and robotics. Through active participation in these activities, students are expected to develop their potential to the maximum and become individuals with noble character and ready to face future challenges (Fakhruddin, 2025).

Social activities are also highly emphasised at MI Muhammadiyah 5 Surabaya. One of them is social and caring programmes that are carried out ahead of the holy month of Ramadan. In this programme, the school held a happiness sharing activity by distributing food packages to students in need. This activity aims to instil a sense of care and togetherness, as well as strengthen social ties between students and school residents.

All character strengthening activities at MI Muhammadiyah 5 Surabaya are carried out with an exemplary approach and are actively facilitated by teachers. Teachers do not only function as a conveyor of teaching materials, but also appear as exemplary figures who reflect character values in daily life. In its implementation, teachers are given the flexibility to develop curricula and learning strategies that are tailored to the needs of students. This approach allows for the integration of character values in various subjects and activities, both explicitly and implicitly. As Mochammad Izzul Haq said:

We strongly emphasize the importance of setting an example for our students. Ustadz/ustadzah as educators at school also recite when students recite (Haq, 2025).

In addition, parental participation is also an important element in strengthening character education. Schools actively involve parents in parenting seminar forums and collaborative social activities between schools and parents (Observation, 2025). This approach supports the creation of a synergistic character education ecosystem between the school and home environment. MI Muhammadiyah 5 Surabaya has succeeded in building an educational ecosystem that supports the growth of students who are knowledgeable, faithful, and have noble character, in accordance with the goals of Islamic education.

Strengthening Character Education at Phatnawitya School Yala

Character education in Thailand is based on the 2008 Core Curriculum of Basic Education, which aims to form students who develop in a balanced manner, covering physical, intellectual, and moral aspects. The hope is that students will not only become responsible Thai citizens, but also part of a global community that cares and has social awareness. Character education focuses on instilling values such as honesty, discipline, and love for the homeland, all of which are seen as important to prepare students to face life's challenges (Art-in, 2015).

The core curriculum of basic education focuses on instilling strong character in learners so that they can enjoy a harmonious life. There are 7 character values to be achieved, namely: (1) love for the homeland, religion, and the king (2) honesty and integrity (3) self-discipline (4) enthusiasm for learning (5) adherence to the principles of the philosophy of economic independence (6) dedication and commitment to work (7) respect for the values that apply in Thailand (Yunardi, 2014).

Phatnawitya School Yala is one of the private Islamic educational institutions located in Yala Province, southern Thailand. This school is an important representation of the model of character education based on Islamic values in Muslim minority countries. Efforts to strengthen character education in schools are carried out through an integrated approach between Thailand's national curriculum and Islamic religious education (Nuruzzaman, Ridwan, et al., 2023).

Character education at Phatnawitya School Yala is based on the principles of *adab* and *akhlakul karimah*, as taught in Islamic teachings. Values such as honesty (*sidq*), responsibility (*amanah*), discipline (*intizam*), and respect for parents and teachers are the main foundations in shaping students' character (Observation, 2023). Phatnawitya School Yala focuses on three aspects of learning, namely: 1) Islamic subjects, 2) Academic subjects, and 3) Development of students' specialist skills.

Islamic education includes lessons such as the Qur'an, Fiqh, Dates, and Arabic, alongside academic subjects such as Mathematics, Science, Thai, and English. Meanwhile, the development of students' specialist skills includes cooking, painting, photography, and drama. Strengthening character education is carried out by integrating moral values across these three aspects. For example, in the Qur'an lessons, students are encouraged to understand its meaning and implementation in daily life. In learning Thai, students are invited to explore folklore that contains moral messages. Meanwhile, in the development of cooking specialist skills, students are taught to work in teams, respect one another, and listen to others' opinions, all of which contribute to good character formation (Observation, 2023).

In class grouping, Phatnawitya School Yala implements a system of grouping students based on academic ability. This class division system consists of four groups that are adjusted to the level of academic ability of students, namely grades 1, 2, 3, and 4. Grade 1 is a collection of students whose abilities are still lacking so they need more intensive guidance, then grade 2 includes students who have good academic abilities but need more guidance, grade 3 is a collection of students who have good academic abilities and grade 4 is filled with students whose academic abilities are very good and are commonly referred to as superior classes. This system is designed to support the development of students' academic potential, also plays an important role in strengthening character education, as each class is given attention that is appropriate to the needs of students, fostering a sense of responsibility, discipline, and motivation to develop according to their abilities (Observation, 2023).

Teachers at Phatnawitya School Yala act as mentors for students, guiding them to adhere to rules that reflect Islamic values. In addition to their role in the classroom, teachers at this school also actively play a role in religious and social activities, such as leading congregational prayers, reciting the Qur'an, and social service activities that instill the values of empathy, solidarity, and social concern. As Abdullah Malik Ibrahim said:

Teachers always try to be role models for students, teaching them to be disciplined and responsible in all things (Ibrahim, 2023).

Phatnawitya School Yala implements a full day school system, which provides an opportunity for teachers to more intensively assist students in the learning process and character development. As expressed by Wan-anita Ha'sa:

With a longer time, we can be more optimal in guiding students and monitoring their character development (Ha'sa, 2023).

Before starting the learning activities, students together with all educators carried out morning gymnastics sessions, singing the national anthem, and praying together. Morning gymnastics provides an opportunity for students to release energy and start the day with enthusiasm, while singing the national anthem is a moment to foster a sense of love for the homeland. Meanwhile, joint prayer is a moment to ask for blessings and guidance from Allah SWT. in undergoing learning activities. After that, the first lesson hour is filled with Qur'an learning, where students are divided into several groups based on their level of ability to read the Qur'an (Observation, 2023).

In addition, the school provides nutrition programmes that support student health. During break hours, students are given the opportunity to drink milk that has been provided in each class. While during the day, students have lunch together. This programme is facilitated by the Ministry of Education of Thailand with the aim of supporting the nutritional needs of students so that they can receive optimal learning. In addition to meeting the nutritional needs of students, this programme is also an opportunity to increase social interaction between teachers and students. As stated by Ahmad Ghulam Zaidirrohman:

I was able to interact more with the students during lunch, it made us feel closer (Zaidirrohman, 2023).

In monthly activities at school, students are invited to visit various places such as markets, parks, mosques, and museums. This outside learning activity aims to introduce students to the diversity that exists in the surrounding environment, as well as build their understanding of social, cultural, and religious diversity. Through direct experience interacting with the surrounding community, students are invited to greet, communicate, and observe the patterns of life in the community. Values such as empathy, tolerance, and respect for differences can be formed with these activities. As Wan-anita Ha'sa put it:

These activities encourage students to engage directly with society, which can open their horizons to differences and strengthen relationships

between individuals. This activity is part of our efforts to develop students' character through real experience (Ha'sa, 2023).

In developing the values of learning spirit, discipline, and dedication, the school holds a science and technology week every year which is held in August. The students were invited to conduct experiments and simulations with simple materials in the surrounding environment to the development of robotics technology. Students' critical reasoning is honed by observation, data analysis, and evaluation of results in the experiments conducted (Observation, 2023).

These programmes are all held to form students who have social skills and concern for the environment. Character education in this school develops an educational pattern based on the competencies of students by paying attention to intellectual, physical, and emotional aspects so that in the future they can contribute well to community life.

Comparative Analysis of Strengthening Character Education in Islamic Schools in Indonesia and Thailand

The The implementation of character education at MI Muhammadiyah 5 Surabaya and Phatnawitya School Yala shows that there is a common vision in forming students who are not only intellectually superior, but also have high moral and spiritual qualities. Although these two schools operate in different social, cultural, and educational system contexts, the approach applied shows that there is harmony in developing Islamic values in character education. This approach can be analysed through Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which emphasises the importance of a social environment that supports individual development (Perron, 2017).

According to Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecology, the development of individuals is influenced by the interaction between individuals and the various layers of the social environment that surround them. At MI Muhammadiyah 5 Surabaya, the micro environment consisting of family, school, and peers plays an important role in shaping the character of students. Character education is carried out through learning that contains character values, habituation of attitudes through daily activities, and the example of teachers as role models creates an environment that supports character development as a whole.

MI Muhammadiyah 5 Surabaya emphasises an integrative approach, where character values such as religiosity, honesty, responsibility, and social concern are internalised into all learning activities and daily life in schools. The character strengthening strategy is carried out through three main paths: learning that contains character values, habituating attitudes through daily activities, and the example of teachers as role models. Activities such as tadarus and congregational prayers are not only ceremonial, but are designed to form character through a consistent habituation

process, which is an important element in forming a supportive social environment (microenvironment).

Meanwhile, Phatnawitya School Yala applies an equally comprehensive approach, which can also be analysed through Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecology. The school blends Thailand's national curriculum with Islamic education, which is embodied in daily activities and special programmes. Values such as honesty, discipline, hard work, and manners towards others and teachers are an important part of the school culture. The implementation of the full day school system allows a wide enough space for schools to instil character values through various activities, ranging from morning gymnastics, singing the national anthem, and praying together, to nutrition programmes and Science Week. Project-based and contextual learning activities reinforce the application of character values in real-life situations, which connect individual interactions with the school environment (meso environment).

In terms of strategic approach, MI Muhammadiyah 5 Surabaya emphasises character strengthening through a humanist-religious approach based on Muhammadiyah ideology, with a strong influence from progressive Islamic values that prioritise real charity to foster social awareness and empathy from an early age. On the other hand, Phatnawitya School Yala adopts a religious-cultural approach that is in harmony with the local Malay culture, and still maintains the roots of Islamic identity through the integration of moral values in students' daily lives. This approach can be seen as an interaction between the macro system (national education policy) and the micro system (the values taught in schools).

Table 1. Comparison of Strengthening Character Education

Aspects	MI Muhammadiyah 5 Surabaya Indonesia	Phatnawitya School Yala Thailand
Character Education Curriculum	Using the Independent Curriculum with the integration of Islamic values through al-Islam, Muhammadiyah, and Arabic language education (ISMUBA)	Integrating Thailand's national curriculum with Islamic education. Combining religious and general subjects in one learning system.
Character Values Emphasized	Religiosity, responsibility, social concern, discipline, and the spirit of healthy competition.	Discipline, respect for teachers, togetherness, and local Malay Islamic values.
Character Strengthening Methods	Through activities such as tasmi' Al-Qur'an, literacy programs based on Qur'anic values, noble morals, and social concern.	Habituation of character values through routine activities and school culture, such as five-time congregational prayers, halaqah (religious learning groups), and

		social activities.
The Role of Teachers in Character Education	As a facilitator and role model, and free to develop the curriculum according to the needs of students.	As a director and guardian of discipline, as well as a supervisor in religious and social activities.
The Role of Parents	Be active through school committees and supervision at home, and be involved in school activities.	Support through involvement in school activities, as well as acting as a student behaviour controller at home.
School Environment	It has religious and nationalist nuances, with an emphasis on Islamic values and Indonesian culture.	Thick with Malay-Thai-Islamic cultural values, it creates an environment that supports the formation of Islamic character.
Implementation Challenges	Lack of supervision outside schools and challenges in dealing with digitalization.	The limitations of Islamic teachers and the influence of outside cultures that can affect the values taught.

In terms of the role of teachers, in MI Muhammadiyah 5 Surabaya, teachers are positioned as facilitators and role models of character values through behaviour and speech. Similarly, at Phatnawitya School Yala, the role of the teacher as a mentor for students, with an approach that emphasises the aspect of spiritual development and personal closeness between the teacher and the student, serves to strengthen the relationship in the microsocial system. Both schools also have a unique approach to building a school climate that supports character building. MI Muhammadiyah 5 creates a learning ecosystem that is full of religious, participatory, and egalitarian values, which play a role in shaping the social context of students. Meanwhile, Phatnawitya School Yala establishes a conducive learning environment through time discipline, structured routines, and activities that stimulate positive habits.

However, there are fundamental differences in the national policy framework that overshadows the two. MI Muhammadiyah 5 operates in an Indonesian education system that places character education as part of the Independent Curriculum and the Strengthening Character Education (PPK) programme, which creates influence in the meso system. Meanwhile, Phatnawitya School Yala is in the Thai education system that prioritises morality as one of the main domains in the 2008 Core Curriculum of Basic Education.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that although MI Muhammadiyah 5 Surabaya and Phatnawitya School Yala operate in different social and cultural contexts, both schools have succeeded in developing a character education model based on Islamic values. MI Muhammadiyah 5 succeeds in building students' character through transformative and contextual Islamic values, while Phatnawitya School Yala integrates religious and cultural values, with an emphasis on discipline, social responsibility, and student welfare. Based on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, these two schools create an educational ecosystem that supports the formation of students' character through the interaction between various social systems (micro, meso, and macro) that play a role in the learning process.

These findings provide new insights into how character education can be adapted according to local values, national education policies, and existing cultural traditions. As a practical recommendation, school leaders and policymakers should adopt a more flexible, Islamic values-based approach to character education, and strengthen collaboration between schools and communities to support the overall development of students' character.

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