How Madrasahs Build Students' Character in Indonesia's Society 5.0 Era: Emerging Challenges

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze how madrasas develop students' character in the Society 5.0 era and to identify the various challenges and strategies implemented to strengthen moral values amid technological disruption. Using a qualitative case study approach, the research was conducted across three levels of madrasah education: Ibtidaiyyah, Tsanawiyah, and Aliyah. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with three madrasah principals, three deputy heads of curriculum who also serve as teachers, students, and parents, complemented by participant observation and document analysis. Data analysis followed the stages of data reduction, data display, and verification. The findings reveal that character education challenges in madrasahs are multidimensional, encompassing technological, social, cultural, and institutional factors. In response, madrasahs implement holistic and integrative strategies, including strengthening religious foundations, transforming Islamic values into social ethics, integrating local wisdom, developing character-based digital literacy, and fostering synergy among teachers, families, and communities. These strategies demonstrate that madrasahs operationalize SDG 4.7 by promoting ethical digital citizenship, moral responsibility, and humanistic values within a technology-driven learning environment. This study contributes to theory by expanding the understanding of how Islamic educational institutions contextualize global frameworks such as Society 5.0 and SDG 4 within local religious and cultural settings. In practice, the findings provide policy-relevant insights for educators and policymakers in designing adaptive, values-based character education models that support sustainable, inclusive, and high-quality education in the digital age.

Keywords: Madrasah, Character education, Society 5.0, Indonesia, Islamic Education

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana madrasah mengembangkan karakter peserta didik di era Society 5.0 serta mengidentifikasi berbagai tantangan dan strategi yang diterapkan untuk memperkuat nilai-nilai moral di tengah disrupsi teknologi. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus yang dilaksanakan pada tiga jenjang pendidikan madrasah, yaitu Ibtidaiyyah, Tsanawiyah, dan Aliyah. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan tiga kepala madrasah, tiga wakil kepala bidang kurikulum yang juga berperan sebagai guru, peserta didik,

serta orang tua, yang dilengkapi dengan observasi partisipan dan analisis dokumen. Analisis data dilakukan melalui tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan verifikasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tantangan pendidikan karakter di madrasah bersifat multidimensional, mencakup aspek teknologi, sosial, budaya, dan kelembagaan. Sebagai respons terhadap tantangan tersebut, madrasah menerapkan strategi yang bersifat holistik dan integratif, antara lain melalui penguatan pondasi keagamaan, transformasi nilai-nilai Islam menjadi etika sosial, integrasi kearifan lokal, pengembangan literasi digital berbasis karakter, serta penguatan sinergi antara guru, keluarga, dan masyarakat. Strategi-strategi ini menunjukkan bahwa madrasah mengoperasionalkan target SDG 4.7 dengan menumbuhkan kewargaan digital yang etis, tanggung jawab moral, dan nilai-nilai kemanusiaan dalam lingkungan pembelajaran yang berbasis teknologi. Secara teoretis, penelitian ini memperluas pemahaman mengenai bagaimana lembaga pendidikan Islam mengontekstualisasikan kerangka pendidikan global seperti Society 5.0 dan SDG 4 ke dalam setting keagamaan dan budaya lokal. Secara praktis, temuan penelitian ini memberikan implikasi kebijakan yang relevan bagi pendidik dan pembuat kebijakan dalam merancang model pendidikan karakter yang adaptif dan berbasis nilai guna mendukung pendidikan yang berkelanjutan, inklusif, dan berkualitas di era digital.

Kata Kunci: *Madrasah, Pendidikan karakter, Society 5.0, Indonesia, Pendidikan Islam*

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the challenges in character formation are increasingly complex (Vos, 2018). Rapid technological developments, globalization, and social change have had a significant impact on the mindset and behavior of society, especially the younger generation (Wahono et al., 2023). Cases of moral deviation such as increasing individualism (Sari et al., 2023), declining respect for social norms (Zuhri et al., 2025), the rise of deviant behavior such as bullying (Arifianto, 2023), drug abuse (Muthahar et al., 2025), and intolerance (Aprilianto et al., 2025; Sholihan & Muawanah, 2024). provide evidence that character education still faces various obstacles. In the context of Indonesia's education system, madrasahs constitute a substantial segment of Islamic formal education, with tens of thousands of institutions across the country, including Madrasah Ibtidaiyyah (MI), Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs), and Madrasah Aliyah (MA), collectively numbering more than 80,000 institutions serving millions of students at different levels of basic and secondary education (Farhanillah et al., 2025; Musdalifa et al., 2025) This is evidence that character education still faces various obstacles. Although various policies have been implemented to strengthen character education in schools, implementation in the field is still less than optimal, both in terms of curriculum (Astra et al., 2024; Hakim et al., 2024; Jaelani & Asvio, 2019; Salamah et al., 2025), teaching methods, as well as support from the social and family environment (Rachmawaty & Bahiroh, 2025; Syaifulloh, 2024; Wiliyanti, 2023). In theoretical studies, many studies emphasize the importance of character education in shaping individual morals and personality. However, there is a theoretical gap in the approaches used, particularly regarding how character education can be effectively adapted amidst technological disruption and social change. Most research still focuses on conventional approaches, without considering the new challenges arising from digitalization, shifting social values, and cultural changes among the younger generation. Therefore, a more in-depth study is needed regarding the concept and implementation strategies of character education that are relevant to the dynamics of contemporary life.

The concept of Society 5.0 is the result of the long evolution of human civilization, starting from Society 1.0 (hunting and gathering society), followed by Society 2.0 (agricultural society), Society 3.0 (industrial society), and Society 4.0 (information society) (Humaidy et al., 2025; Mumtahana et al., 2025). Society 4.0 also raises various new issues, such as job disruption, the digital divide, and an identity crisis due to technological dependence. This is where Society 5.0 comes in as a solution, by placing humans back at the center of progress. One of the main characteristics of Society 5.0 is its emphasis on a human-centered approach. This means that all technological innovations and developments are directed at responding to the real needs of society, not merely fulfilling technological ambitions (Faris, 2024; Khairi et al., 2022; Suraijiah et al., 2025). The concept of Society 5.0 is highly relevant to discuss as a framework for developing character education. Society 5.0 emphasizes the integration of technological advancements and humanitarian values (Syafrizal et al., 2024), where technology not only plays a role as a tool, but as a partner in improving the quality of human life as a whole ((Rohman, 2023), this includes the field of education. Therefore, character education in the Society 5.0 era must be innovatively designed to meet the challenges of the digital age while maintaining the moral and ethical essence of student personality development.

Previous research has shown that character education has a positive impact on shaping students' morals and ethics, starting with integrated character education within subjects by combining several subjects that contain desired values (Adiyono et al., 2025; Aslihah & Wasehudin, 2023; Kuncorowati et al., 2025; Madkan et al., 2025). The goal is for students to develop insights and attitudes that reflect character and universal values of goodness ((Mustaqim, 2015)). Instilling character education through habituation (Alnashr et al., 2022), instilling character values in students based on religious education (Ma'rifataini, 2015). Strengthening local wisdom-based character education by integrating local wisdom values into the learning process and providing role models for students by applying local wisdom values (Hartiwisidi et al., 2022). There is also a lot of literature research that reveals the thoughts of a figure in implementing character education, such as character education in the concept of Ki Hajar Dewantara's educational thinking with his Tripusat Pendidikan and his leadership trilogy (Fatah et al., 2025; Febrianti et al., 2025; Jaedun et al., 2024; Miftahuddin et al., 2024). In addition, there is also the concept of character education that is oriented towards the figure of a religious scholar by offering a model of character possessed by the religious scholar, such as the concept of character education from the perspective of KH. Ahmad Dahlan by providing guidelines on how to form Muslims who have noble character, broad views and understand worldly knowledge issues and are willing to fight for the progress of society at large (Rz. Ricky Satria Wiranata, 2019). Then the concept of character education from the perspective of KH. Hasyim Asy'ari by exploring his thoughts on how to become a figure who can purify intentions, act humble, respect teachers, behave patiently, be content, ascetic, wara', and avoid dirty and sinful things (Arifin & Ghofur, 2022).

However, existing studies on character education in Islamic educational institutions have largely emphasized normative values and moral transmission, without sufficiently examining how character education must adapt to rapid social and technological transformations. This limitation is critical, as the Society 5.0 era introduces complex challenges such as digital disruption, algorithmic influence, and shifting social interactions that directly

affect students' moral reasoning, identity formation, and ethical behavior. Without an adaptive framework, character education risks becoming disconnected from students' lived realities in digital environments. This gap indicates the need for a new paradigm of character education that not only preserves moral and spiritual values but also actively engages with technological change. Thus, the specific objective of this study is to address the shortcomings of previous research by providing a comprehensive analysis of how madrasas conceptualize, implement, and institutionalize character education in the Society 5.0 era. This study contributes to the field by proposing an adaptive model of character education in madrasas that integrates digital literacy with moral and spiritual intelligence within the Society 5.0 framework, highlighting strategies that distinguish it from conventional character education approaches.

Building upon the limitations of previous studies that have insufficiently addressed the need for character education to adapt to technological transformation, this study argues that madrasahs possess the capacity to function as adaptive educational institutions amid rapid technological change without losing the core of Islamic and humanitarian values. It posits that the integration of religious values with digital literacy is not merely complementary, but constitutive in strengthening students' character formation in the Society 5.0 era. Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the conceptual foundations of character education within the Society 5.0 context, identify the multidimensional challenges faced by madrasahs, and explore the strategic responses developed to address these challenges. This article contributes to the discourse on Islamic education by offering a conceptual and practical model of adaptive, relevant, and transformative character education that aligns with the evolving demands of the Society 5.0 era. This study is aligned with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, particularly target 4.7, by highlighting the role of madrasahs in promoting ethical digital citizenship, moral responsibility, and values-based education. This research addresses a gap in the literature regarding how madrasahs adapt character education to digital transformation and global cultural change, which has not been adequately explored in previous studies. The findings are significant for the quality education discourse, as they offer practical and theoretical insights into developing sustainable, context-sensitive character education models in the digital era.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to enable an in-depth and contextual understanding of character-building strategies and practices within madrasah environments in the Society 5.0 era. The qualitative case study approach was deliberately chosen because character education is a complex, value-laden, and socially constructed process that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measurement alone (Achjar et al., 2023). By focusing on case studies, this research allows for a detailed exploration of institutional dynamics, pedagogical practices, and socio-cultural contexts that shape character education in madrasas. This approach enables researchers to examine how educational actors such as madrasah principals, teachers, parents, and students interpret, negotiate, and implement character education in response to technological and social change. The study was conducted over a six-month period, from January to June 2025, allowing sufficient time for sustained engagement, participant observation, and data triangulation to ensure the credibility and depth of the findings.

The research was conducted at Madrasah Qudsiyyah Kudus, which consists of three levels of education: Ibtidaiyyah, Tsanawiyyah, and Aliyah. These three levels were chosen because they represent the continuity of the character education process from elementary to high school. This location was chosen purposively because the madrasah is known to have a strong commitment to character education integrated with Islamic values and is adaptive to technological and social developments in the Society 5.0 era. The research subjects consisted of three madrasah principals from each level (Ibtidaiyyah, Tsanawiyyah, and Aliyah), three deputy heads of curriculum who also serve as teachers, two students, and parents of students. The informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique based on their direct involvement in the character education process at the madrasah.

Data collection techniques were carried out through three main methods, namely: Participatory observation, to understand the actual practice of character education in the madrasa environment, both in intracurricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities. In-depth interviews with informants (madrasa principals, teachers, students, and parents) to explore perceptions, strategies, and challenges faced in building character in the Society 5.0 era. And documentation, in the form of a review of supporting documents such as the madrasa's vision and mission, curriculum, regulations, activity programs, and the results of student character evaluations (Nurhayati et al., 2024).

Table 1: Informant Profile

No	Initial	Position	Agency
1	Q1	Head of Madrasah	Ibtidaiyyah
2	Q2	Teacher	Ibtidaiyyah
3	Q3	Head of Madrasah	Tsanawiyyah
4	Q4	Teacher	Tsanawiyyah
5	Q5	Student	Tsanawiyyah
6	Q6	Head of Madrasah	Aliyah
7	Q7	Student	Aliyah
8	Q8	Santri Madrasah	Aliyah
9	Q9	Student Guardian	

Data analysis was carried out descriptively and qualitatively using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions or verification (Qomaruddin & Sa'diyah, 2024). This process is interactive and iterative from the beginning of data collection to the final stage of the research. Data reduction is carried out by selecting, focusing, and simplifying relevant data. The reduced data is then presented in narrative form to identify patterns, relationships, and meaning. Conclusions are drawn gradually based on interpretations of the overall data, which have been verified with field findings. To maintain data validity (the validity of research results), several validation techniques are used, namely source triangulation, technical triangulation, and member checking (Dewi & SH, 2025). Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from the principal, teachers, students, and parents. Technical triangulation involved comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. Member checking involved confirming

the findings with informants to ensure the researcher's interpretations aligned with their experiences and perspectives.

RESULTS

The Challenges of Character Education in the Era of Society 5.0

One of the main challenges of character education is the dominance of digital technology in everyday life (Barokah & Sari, 2024). Children and adolescents grow up in an environment saturated with gadgets and social media, which often displays content that conflicts with moral values. An interview with one teacher revealed that *"Children today are more busy with cellphones than opening books. If they are not reminded, they often play TikTok between lessons."* (Q7, 2025)

Classroom observations show that some students do carry cell phones and use them secretly, especially when teachers are not closely supervising. This situation indicates that students' self-control over digital media use is still low. This data is also supported by the madrasah's disciplinary documents, which prohibit the use of cell phones, but their implementation has not been effective. This phenomenon indicates that digital technology, which should be a learning tool, has the potential to become a distraction, shifting students' focus away from learning activities and eroding the values of discipline and responsibility.

Furthermore, changing values in society also pose a serious challenge. Modernity brings a shift in values from communal to individualistic. One teacher said *"If before the children played ball or chatted in groups on the terrace, now they are more quiet, sometimes enjoying themselves even though they don't always look like they are playing on their cell phones"* (Q4, 2025).

Although madrasah regulations prohibit the use of cell phones on school grounds, teachers acknowledge that some students continue to carry and use them secretly. This demonstrates a shift in social interaction patterns, leading to individualistic behavior. Furthermore, observations of classroom activities and teacher notes reveal that students often demonstrate a low sense of caring for others. For example, when a classmate is having difficulty learning or feels isolated, few students take the initiative to help. Only a small number of students actively participate in classroom cleaning activities, while others remain silent or wait for the teacher's instructions.

Another challenge is the education system, which remains cognitive-centric. Interviews with teachers raised concerns that the learning system in madrasas still places too much emphasis on cognitive aspects. The teacher stated *"We're often pressured to cram for exam grades. Moral development is sometimes neglected due to busy schedules."* (Q2, 2025) Analysis of the Lesson Implementation Plan (RPP) documents shows that the assessment focus is still predominantly on the knowledge domain, while the affective domain has not received equal attention. Observations of learning activities also indicate that the instillation of character values has not been fully integrated into academic activities. This underscores the need to reposition the learning paradigm so that character education is not an add-on but rather an integral part of all madrasah activities.

Another challenge is the weak role of the environment, both family and society, in supporting character education (Perdana, 2018). Families preoccupied with economic demands are sometimes unable to devote sufficient attention to their children's moral development. In

this regard, the madrasah principal expressed concern about the declining role of parents in shaping children's character *"Parents are busy working, children learn more values from the internet."* (Q1, 2025). This situation indicates that character education is not solely the responsibility of schools but also requires active support from families and the community. The absence of a social environment as an educational ecosystem results in an uneven character-building process.

There is also a current crisis of role models. Children and teenagers often imitate popular media figures who do not always reflect good values (Gomer, 2024). The lack of public figures who can serve as moral role models presents a unique challenge for character education. Therefore, educators and stakeholders must be able to act as consistent role models between words and actions, so that character education is not merely theoretical. Teacher role models are a central element in character education. However, some students have expressed complaints *"Sometimes teachers also play on their phones during class. So we think it's normal."* (Q8, 2025). This statement demonstrates a crisis of role models in the madrasa environment. Observations revealed that some teachers were seen using devices in class for administrative reasons, but students interpreted this as a lack of discipline. This demonstrates the importance of consistent teacher behavior for effective internalization of character values. Role models should not only be taught but also demonstrated through concrete actions.

The younger generation is faced with the dilemma of upholding their own noble cultural values or following the seemingly more modern global cultural trends. This phenomenon is evident in the changing lifestyles and self-expression of students, who are beginning to be influenced by outside cultures. One parent expressed his concerns *"Now, my child often imitates Korean celebrity styles. His pants are tight, and his clothes sometimes don't comply with school regulations. He says it's to look cool, like on social media."* (Q9, 2025). This statement demonstrates that the influence of global popular culture has penetrated the personal and social spaces of madrasah students. Without critical guidance and value instillation, a consumerist global culture can blur the lines between modern expression and Islamic norms.

The advancement of information also presents challenges in the form of the spread of hoaxes and hate speech which spreads quickly on social media (Tresnawati et al., 2023). The inability to filter correct information can form a character that is reactive, intolerant and easily provoked. One of the teachers who is also the homeroom teacher expressed concern about students' behavior in cyberspace *"Children often debate in WA groups because of news whose source is unclear."* (Q7, 2025).

Several cases of dissemination of false information were also recorded in teacher reports, leading to minor conflicts between students. Observations indicate that some students lack sufficient digital literacy to critically analyze information. Madrasahs already have digital literacy activities, but they are still limited to ceremonial activities. This situation demands strengthening values-based digital literacy education, so that students are not only technologically proficient but also wise in interacting in the digital space.

In addition to cultural and social challenges, madrasas also face structural obstacles stemming from educational policies that do not fully support systematic character building. Interviews with madrasah leaders revealed another obstacle is the lack of teacher training in character education. Most teachers admitted they had never received specific training on character-based learning strategies in the digital age. One teacher stated *"We usually focus on*

curriculum and administration training, there is rarely any specific training on how to instill character values in students amidst today's technological developments." (Q6, 2025).

Furthermore, evaluation of the implementation of character education has not been optimal. Interviews with the deputy head of curriculum revealed that there are no specific instruments or indicators used to assess the success of the student character education program *"So far, evaluations have been limited to academic aspects. Character aspects have not been assessed measurably, usually based solely on teacher observations."* (Q3,2025).

This situation indicates that madrasah policies on character building remain partial and not yet integrated into the education management system. Without strong policy support through teacher training, budgetary support, and a clear evaluation system, character education programs will struggle to develop sustainably and have a real impact on student behavior.

Character Education Strategies in the Society 5.0 Era

Character education in educational institutions is an integral part of the learning process, aimed at shaping the personality, morals, and noble character of students. Its implementation strategy involves not only the transfer of knowledge but also through role models, habituation, and the consistent instilling of values within the school environment.

The madrasah continues to prioritize religious education as the primary foundation for student character development. Observations show that religious activities are carried out routinely. The madrasah principal explained *"We want religious values to become a daily habit, not just lessons in class, we also carry out tadarus, prayers, shalawat regularly, teacher pilgrimage activities and we also regularly carry out Islamic holiday commemorations."* (Q1, 2025).

This strategy plays a crucial role in developing students' spirituality, which serves as a moral foundation amidst the rapid influence of technology and social media. Islamic religious education plays a crucial role in responding to this challenge by strengthening character education, instilling values of religious moderation (Alnashr & Hakim, 2024), and implementing ethics and norms for using social media (Kusumastuti et al., 2024). Islamic values can shape ethical behavior in the digital space by prioritizing media literacy, digital ethics, and critical thinking, so that social media can be used wisely and reflect a moderate religious attitude.

Religious teachings should not stop at the level of doctrine and formal rituals, but should also shape a peaceful, just character, respect diversity, and encourage constructive social action. Madrasas strive to transform ritualistic religious understanding into concrete social behavior. A teacher conveyed *"We emphasize to students that prayer is not only an act of worship, but also an exercise in discipline and social awareness."* (Q7, 2025).

Activity of community service activities show that values such as empathy, solidarity, and social responsibility are instilled through concrete activities. Student activity reports show that the madrasa annually organizes a sacrifice and community service program. This strategy helps students understand that religiosity must foster a grounded social ethic. Students need guidance to internalize spiritual values as a moral foundation for interacting in social and digital spaces.

Madrasas also adopt local wisdom values as a means of character building. In interviews with teachers, it was stated *"We instill the values of good manners, respect for parents, and the culture of mutual cooperation, mutual respect, and mutual respect which have long been the hallmarks of our society."* (Q4, 2025).

Local wisdom has been proven to contribute significantly to shaping students' character in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 and Society 5.0. Values such as mutual cooperation, courtesy, brotherhood, tolerance, solidarity, and unity need to be continuously contextualized to remain relevant and meaningful for the younger generation. Even though understanding has been established, strengthening the meaning of these values is still necessary. This contextualization and reintegration of local culture can strengthen students' character to be more critical, creative, innovative, and collaborative in facing the challenges of the digital age (Kaliongga et al., 2023). Furthermore, local wisdom values, such as wearing traditional Kudus clothing, also demonstrate the importance of building the character of students by respecting the nation's cultural heritage. This effort can be realized through the Local Wisdom-Based Character Education program, which not only strengthens students' character but also preserves the nation's cultural heritage.

Figure 1: Every Thursday the students wear Kudus traditional clothing, with a headband, white shirt and batik sarong.

Digital literacy plays a strategic role in fostering moral, ethical, and emotional values in students in the Society 5.0 era. By using technology responsibly and ethically, students can strengthen character traits such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, cooperation, and problem-solving skills (Nugroho & Nursikin, 2025). One of the teachers said:

"We guide children not only to search for information online, but also to learn to evaluate the truth and learn from what they read. This also teaches them honesty and responsibility in using technology." (Q7, 2025). The integration of digital literacy in character education is very important, and requires collaboration between various parties so that its implementation is effective in forming ethical and competitive individuals in the digital era.

Strengthening Character Education is implemented in an integrated manner across all subjects through an approach that cultivates the heart, feelings, mind, and body. Character values are instilled from lesson planning through implementation, although not yet fully comprehensive. Evaluation is conducted through direct observation of students' spiritual and social character using observation sheets, teacher notes, and portfolios.(La ode Onde et al., 2020). The integration of character values is not only carried out in religious activities, but also in the learning of all subjects. The principal *explained "We direct each teacher to incorporate character*

values into their lesson plans. For example, math teachers emphasize honesty in calculations, and language teachers instill politeness in communication." (Q3, 2025).

Based on observations, several teachers have implemented a character-embedded learning approach, in which values such as discipline, responsibility, and honesty emerge contextually in the learning process. Teacher supervision documents show that most documents include a "character values" column as part of the learning plan.

One important strategy in implementing character education in the Society 5.0 era is creating a peaceful and inclusive school climate, where every student feels valued, accepted, and encouraged to develop without discrimination. Teachers are the frontliners who have a primary role in guiding student behavior so they can internalize and practice a culture of peace and friendship in a pluralistic society. One madrasah principal said: *"We listen more than we scold. Children today need space to be heard."* (Q1, 2025).

The strategy for implementing character education in the Society 5.0 era is not simply based on a curriculum or formal learning modules, but rather requires a more interactive and humanistic approach. Teachers are striving to transform their learning methods from being primarily instructional to more interactive and humanistic. According to an interview with one teacher,*"We try to use a discussion and reflection approach so that students dare to express their opinions and relate them to Islamic values."* (Q7, 2025).

Observations show that teachers frequently use inquiry learning, and problem-solving methods in one subject. This approach fosters students' self-confidence, empathy, and reflective thinking skills. Character development does not occur in a vacuum, but rather in a vibrant relational space between educators and students, built through daily interactions, exemplary behavior, empathetic communication, and ongoing open dialogue. In the digital era, fraught with challenges such as disinformation, individualism, and an empathy crisis, teachers need to develop learning models that encourage active participation, foster self-confidence, and shape students' reflective moral awareness.

Madrasas recognize that character building cannot be effective without the support of families and communities. Therefore, they collaborate through community-based parenting programs As a form of friendship between the school and parents. One parent explained *"We are involved in children's moral development activities, so we can monitor children's development at home."* (Q9, 2025). The role of family and community in character education demonstrates that the formation of children's morals cannot be solely the responsibility of schools. The family serves as the primary environment that shapes basic habits and values, while society provides a space for the actualization and reinforcement of these values through broader social interactions. Parental role models create a foundation for positive behavior, and community involvement through social activities strengthens the internalization of these values. The collaboration between schools, families, and communities creates a complementary educational ecosystem, enabling character values to be learned not only theoretically but also practically practiced in everyday life.

To facilitate readers' comprehensive understanding of the research findings, these findings are visualized in graphical form. These visualizations serve as concise representations of the conceptual framework and analytical results, allowing for a clearer and more systematic

understanding of the relationships between the concepts, stages, and strategies developed before being explained in detail in the following sections.
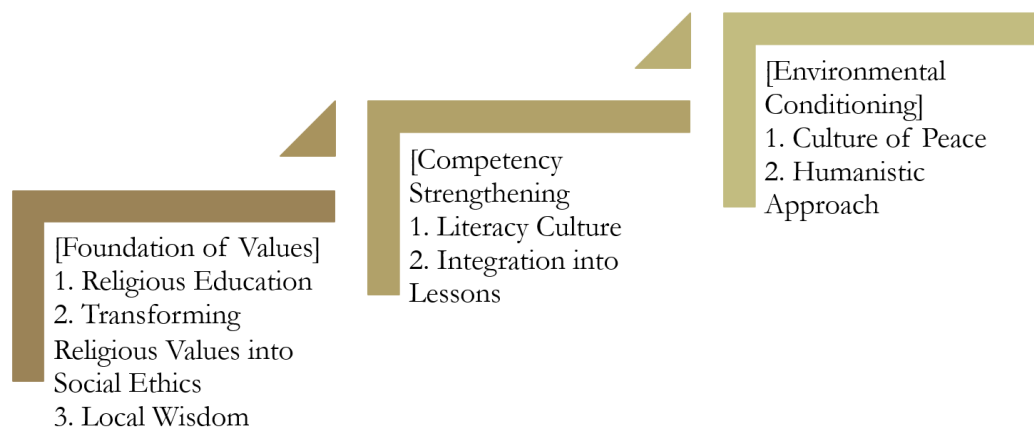
[Foundation of Values]
1. Religious Education
2. Transforming Religious Values into Social Ethics
3. Local Wisdom

[Competency Strengthening
1. Literacy Culture
2. Integration into Lessons

[Environmental Conditioning]
1. Culture of Peace
2. Humanistic Approach

Figure 2: Character Education Strategy in the Society 5.0 era

The image above shows the Character Education Strategy Model in the Society 5.0 era, which is built in stages and is mutually integrated. The first stage is the foundation of values, which emphasizes religious education, the transformation of religious values into social ethics, and the strengthening of local wisdom as the basis for character formation. The second stage focuses on competency strengthening, namely strengthening a culture of literacy and integrating character values into the learning process so that students have critical and contextual thinking skills. The third stage relates to environmental conditioning, namely the creation of a supportive environment through a culture of peace and a humanistic approach. Overall, this model emphasizes that character education in the Society 5.0 era is not only oriented towards aspects of values and knowledge, but also on strengthening competencies and the formation of a conducive and sustainable social ecosystem.

DISCUSSION
Character education strategy design for the Society 5.0 era

Character education in the Society 5.0 era is an educational process that integrates moral, ethical, spiritual, and cultural values with the wise use of digital technology. The goal is not only to shape intellectually intelligent individuals but also to develop noble, adaptive, and humane characters in facing the challenges of a digital world. The Society 5.0 era itself is known as a "super-smart society," a society that combines physical and virtual spaces to create a more advanced, prosperous, and human-centered environment (Maiyanti et al., 2025; Shofiyuddin et al., 2025).

Character education in this era cannot be separated from the need for comprehensive digital literacy (Insani et al., 2024; Triyono et al., 2025). Literacy does not only include the ability to read and write, but also includes the ability to understand, analyze, and evaluate information spread in the digital world (Faizah et al., 2025; Mumtahana et al., 2025; Nirmala et al., 2025).

Character education integrated with comprehensive digital literacy is key to shaping a generation that is not only technologically savvy, but also wise, critical, and responsible in utilizing it.

Character education in the Society 5.0 era relies on instilling universal values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, tolerance, and justice. These values provide a solid moral foundation, especially amidst the rapid flow of digitalization. Studies on culture-based character education emphasize the importance of local cultural values such as mutual cooperation and mutual respect, combined with technology to produce a generation that is both adaptive and virtuous (Lapasere et al., 2025; Sopian et al., 2025).

Educational institutions, especially madrasas, need to create a healthy digital ecosystem, where technology is used as a means of creativity, collaboration, and ethical digital literacy. This approach is crucial for fostering values of fairness, openness, and digital ethics in everyday interactions (Madkan et al., 2025). Teachers play a vital role as role models, not only as transmitters of material but also as moral role models in both the real and digital worlds. Research highlights the crucial role of teachers and parents in adapting character education in the Society 5.0 era, ensuring moral values remain internalized in the educational process(Azizah et al., 2024; Syaifulloh, 2024).

Some of the main character values in the Society 5.0 era include honesty is an attitude of openness and not hiding the truth. In the context of Society 5.0, which is filled with the flow of digital information. Honesty is very important for maintaining trust, especially when disseminating information, creating content, or conducting online transactions. Honest individuals will avoid fraud, data manipulation, and hoaxes. Responsibility, meaning a willingness to bear the consequences of every decision and action, both in the real world and the digital world. In the digital age, this includes awareness of digital footprints, responsibility for shared content, and caution in using technology (Hadiyanto et al., 2022; Lapasere et al., 2025) so as not to harm other people or break the law. Cooperation, Society 5.0 encourages collaboration between humans and technology, as well as between individuals across geographical and cultural boundaries. The value of collaboration is important for creating creative solutions to various social and environmental problems through a collective approach. Social concern is a sense of empathy and concern for the conditions of others and the surrounding environment. In the era of Society 5.0, technology is used to improve people's quality of life (Husnaeni & Burga, 2024). Social care values encourage the inclusive use of technology, help vulnerable groups, and support social welfare. And the last ethical digital literacy, which encompasses the ability to use technology wisely and responsibly. This includes skills in searching for, evaluating, using, and creating digital information while adhering to applicable ethics and laws (Juwaini et al., 2025; Rakhmat, 2023). Individuals who possess ethical digital literacy are not only technologically literate, but also aware of the moral and social impacts of its use.

The results of this study indicate that the character education model in the era of Society 5.0 in madrasas is built through three main pillars, namely strengthening the foundation of Islamic values, strengthening student competencies, and conditioning the educational environment that supports character formation. Character education in the Society 5.0 era demands synergy between technological advancements and human values to produce a digitally savvy, morally upright, and socially empathetic generation (Greene et al., 2004; Permadi et al.,

2025). This integration is crucial because technology without moral guidance has the potential to erode human values, as the success of Society 5.0 depends on the balance between artificial intelligence and human spiritual intelligence (Paesano & Risso, 2024). In the context of madrasas, character education needs to be developed through ethical digital literacy based on Islamic values such as honesty, responsibility, and social awareness, and reinforced with a culture of peace, as conceived by Abdurrahman Mas'ud (2024), where religious values serve as a source of moral strength that rejects violence, fosters tolerance, and upholds humanity. Thus, character education is not merely a complement to digital innovation, but becomes the ethical foundation (Azka et al., 2025) which ensures that technology is used humanely, fairly, and civilized. With a collaborative educational ecosystem and a culture of peace, character education in the Society 5.0 era will produce a generation of adaptive, integrated individuals capable of becoming pioneers of humanity in an increasingly digital and complex world. The findings from Madrasah Qudsiyyah Kudus reflect a broader phenomenon in global Islamic education, where Islamic educational institutions across diverse cultural and geographic contexts face similar challenges in integrating digital transformation with religious and humanitarian values. Therefore, the three-pillar-based character education model generated in this study is not only locally relevant but also has global significance as a conceptual framework that Islamic educational institutions can adapt in responding to the dynamics of Society 5.0.

Globalization brings challenges in the form of cultural clashes. Local values, which have long served as a source of national identity and morality, are often eroded by foreign cultures that enter without any filter (Zuhri, 2024). Research shows that the dominance of digital technology in students' lives has created serious challenges for character formation. Excessive exposure to social media reduces empathy, weakens social communication, and shifts value orientation from morality to popularity. This phenomenon aligns with Miftahul Huda's findings, which assert that the use of technology without moral guidance can diminish the ethical awareness of the younger generation (Huda, 2019). These challenges arise because digital spaces increasingly function as primary socialization arenas for students, often replacing direct interpersonal interaction and weakening the role of teachers and parents as moral role models. In many cases, students tend to emulate online influencers whose values are driven by visibility and popularity rather than ethical integrity. In response to these conditions, madrasas do not merely restrict students' access to technology, but strategically reposition themselves as moral and cultural mediators by integrating Islamic ethical values into digital literacy programs (Huda et al., 2024; Siregar & Sapri, 2025). This response is manifested through teacher role modeling in digital behavior, the incorporation of ethical reflection in technology-based learning, and the establishment of institutional norms that guide responsible and value-oriented digital engagement. In the context of madrasas, this condition demands the integration of Islamic ethical values into digital literacy, so that technology becomes a means of character formation, not a moral threat.

Another finding shows that the crisis of role models weakens the process of internalizing character values in madrasas (Susanto & Syam, 2025). Meanwhile, madrasa teachers are required to be role models who are able to demonstrate integrity, digital ethics, and moral exemplarity in both the real and virtual worlds (Hajar et al., 2024). Likewise, the weak role of the family and society slows down the process of character formation. This strengthens

Lickona's view that character education is only effective if there is synergy between schools, families and society (Lickona, 2013). This causes the character internalization process to not run completely and continuously.

Furthermore, the flow of globalization and advances in information technology have eroded local values and increased the spread of hoaxes and hate speech, which influence the character of the younger generation. According to Timberg, the freedom expanded by global technology actually presents a new paradox: the freer the flow of information, the greater the risk of information distortion, which can threaten the quality of democracy and social integrity (White, 2020). Therefore, globalization and advances in information technology actually increase the risk of misinformation that threatens the moral and social integrity of the younger generation. Comparatively, studies on character education in public schools such as the implementation of the "power of two" learning strategy in Islamic Religious Education (PAI)(Masturin, 2024) highlight collaborative learning and teacher–student synergy as effective means of character formation. In contrast, this study shows that madrasas address similar challenges through a broader integrative approach that combines ethical digital literacy, value-based learning, and institutional culture. This indicates that madrasa-based character education in the Society 5.0 era extends pedagogical strategies into a holistic educational ecosystem.

To address these challenges, a character education strategy must be formulated appropriately. Madrasahs' strategic model for addressing the challenges of character education in the Society 5.0 era demands a holistic and sustainable approach that considers three main dimensions: value foundations, competency strengthening, and environmental conditioning.

First, in the dimension of value foundations, madrasas need to reaffirm the role of religious education as the basis for forming students' personalities (Ashfaq, 2021). Therefore, Islamic values are not only taught cognitively but also internalized in daily behavior through the transformation of religious teachings into social ethics that shape harmonious, honest, and responsible social character. Furthermore, preserving local wisdom is a crucial element in strengthening morality in the digital age (Asror et al., 2024). So that students have a strong cultural identity and are able to appreciate the nation's noble values amidst the currents of globalization. Second, strengthening competencies is an adaptive strategy to meet the demands of the digital era (Mukherjee, 2023). Madrasas must instill a culture of literacy, not only reading and writing, but also digital, data, and moral literacy to equip students with critical, creative, and ethical thinking skills in utilizing technology. Character values also need to be integrated into every subject so that character education is not a partial phenomenon but rather an integral part of the entire learning process. Third, environmental conditioning plays a crucial role in creating an educational ecosystem that supports character development (Apanasyuk et al., 2019). Madrasas need to foster a peaceful, inclusive, and respectful school climate, so students feel safe and able to thrive. An interactive and humanistic approach to learning will strengthen the emotional bond between teachers and students. Furthermore, synergy between the madrasa, families, and the community is key to the success of sustainable character education.

By integrating these three dimensions, the madrasah strategy model in the Society 5.0 era not only focuses on intellectual and technological intelligence, but also fosters moral, emotional, and spiritual intelligence that is capable of producing a generation with superior character, religious, and ready to become ethical agents of social change amidst the development

of the times. From a theoretical perspective, these findings expand the understanding of Islamic character education in the digital age by positioning character formation not merely as a moral transmission process, but as a dynamic integration of values, competencies, and educational environments that respond to technological change. This study contributes to the discourse on Islamic education by offering a conceptual shift from traditional value-centered approaches toward an adaptive character education framework that aligns religious ethics with digital literacy within the Society 5.0 context.

CONCLUSION

This study found that the integration of Islamic values with digital literacy at Madrasah Qudsiyyah Kudus had a greater impact than expected in strengthening character education in the era of Society 5.0. This finding challenges the long-held assumption that digital transformation has the potential to weaken the moral and religious foundations of faith-based educational institutions. Instead, the results show that madrasas are able to progressively adapt to technological developments without losing their moral and humanitarian identity. Character education not only shapes intellectual abilities but also fosters emotional intelligence, digital ethics, and moral integrity in students, thus opening up new discussion about the relevance of Islamic educational institutions in facing the integration of the physical and digital worlds.

Theoretically, this study reinforces previous findings regarding the importance of values-based character education, while also challenging the normative-doctrinal approach that tends to separate moral, spiritual, and digital competency aspects. This study introduces a holistic and integrative model of character education, in which religious values, local wisdom, and digital ethics are operationalized simultaneously within a dynamic educational ecosystem. This contribution enriches the body of knowledge on Islamic education and character education by demonstrating that madrasahs can function as humanistic and adaptive learning spaces, while supporting the SDG 4 agenda, particularly target 4.7, by strengthening ethical digital citizenship, social responsibility, and value sustainability.

However, this study has several limitations. The study was conducted at a single institution with a specific social and cultural context at the MI, MTs, and MA levels, so the findings cannot be generalized to all madrasahs in Indonesia. Data variation based on other factors such as gender, age, and social background of students is also limited. Therefore, further research with a broader sample size, a cross-regional comparative approach, and the development of character education models based on technology and local wisdom are essential to gain a more comprehensive and sustainable understanding of character education in the Society 5.0 era.

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