

A Systematic Literature Review on the Influence of Religious Education on Character Development and Academic Achievement in Middle School Students

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Abstract

Religious education plays an important role in the character formation and academic achievement of high school students. In the context of an increasingly complex and plural world, religious education serves not only as a means to introduce certain religious teachings, but also as a tool to shape the character of students through important moral values such as discipline, tolerance, and responsibility. This study aims to review the influence of religious education on the character development and academic achievement of high school students, focusing on various models and approaches that can improve both. The method used is a systematic literature review (SLR), referring to the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, to analyze various relevant empirical studies from various scientific sources. The results of the study show that religious education that integrates the values of moderation and multiculturalism has a positive impact on the formation of students' character, as well as improving their academic achievement. The use of digital technology, such as Immersive Virtual Reality (IVR), has also been proven to enrich religious learning experiences, increase emotional engagement, and deepen students' understanding of religious teachings. However, there are challenges in optimizing the involvement of parents and communities in a more holistic religious education process. Therefore, further research is needed to develop a more effective religious education model in supporting the development of students' character and academic achievement. This research emphasizes the importance of integration between religious education, moral values, and technology to create a better learning environment and support students' academic success.

Keywords : Religious Education, High School, Academic Achievement

Introduction

Religious education has a very important role in the formation of students' character, especially at the secondary school level. In this increasingly complex and plural world, religious education serves not only to introduce specific religious teachings, but also to form a character that leads to the moral integrity necessary in the social and academic life of students. Values such as discipline, tolerance, empathy, and responsibility taught in religious education are essential to help students overcome life's challenges and achieve optimal academic achievement. The latest quantitative data shows that religious education has a significant impact on the development of students' character and academic achievement.

72% of students who attended a religious education program based on moral and social values experienced a significant improvement in their academic achievement compared to students who did not receive such a religious education (E. Williams dan F. Garcia, 2024). 68% of secondary school students who attended religious education with a moderation approach (wasatiyyah) showed increased academic achievement and more stable character development, as well as far from extremism and intolerance (Mukhibat et al., 2024).

Further studies also revealed that 85% of students who participated in religious education programs in Kuwait felt that the lessons directly contributed to the strengthening of their character and influenced the way they completed academic assignments (Alabdulhadi & Alkandari, 2024) In Indonesia, research by (Mashuri et al., 2024) It shows that 74% of students who receive a multiculturalism-based religious education experience an improvement in their management of social relationships, which then contributes to better academic outcomes, especially in group learning.

With the growing social and academic challenges faced by students, including radicalization, violence, and the decline of moral values, religious education has become increasingly relevant in equipping students with strong character. 56% of adolescents in Indonesia experience increased intolerance of religious and cultural differences, which creates an urgency

to teach the values of moderation and tolerance through religious education (Aprilianto et al., 2025). Recent research shows that religious education that integrates the values of moderation can help reduce radical attitudes among students and increase their discipline and motivation to learn (Santoso, 2025).

In Poso, it is shown that religious education based on multiculturalism can build sustainable peace and create a more harmonious learning environment (Mashuri et al., 2024). In Kuwait, religious education with a wasatiyyah approach contributes to reducing extremism and increasing student participation in academic activities in a more productive manner (Alabdulhadi & Alkandari, 2024).

However, although many studies acknowledge the important role of religious education in character building, there is still a gap in research on how religious education can be more effectively integrated with character development and academic achievement. Many studies have focused only on the cognitive aspects of religious education without paying attention to its impact on students' holistic character development and practical relevance in the context of their social lives. Therefore, further research is needed to identify religious education models that not only teach religious values, but can also shape students' character that supports the achievement of academic achievement optimally. This study aims to present a systematic review of the relationship between religious education, character development, and academic achievement of high school students, and to explore models that can support these achievements.

Methods

This study uses a systematic literature review (SLR) approach by referring to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) guidelines. This approach was chosen because it was able to provide a comprehensive picture of how religious education affects the character development and academic achievement of high school students. This study not only focuses on the direct relationship between religious education and learning achievement, but also examines in depth how the religious, moral, and ethical values contained in religious education contribute to the formation of students' personality, discipline, and motivation in the school environment (Localis et al., 2025).

The data collection process is carried out through the Scopus database, which is internationally recognized as one of the most credible sources for scientific literature that has gone through a peer-review process. To get relevant search results, keyword combinations are used in the following Boolean search format in Scopus: TITLE-ABS-KEY (religious education) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (middle school) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (academic achievement) AND PUBYEAR > 2023 AND PUBYEAR < 2026 AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE , "j")) AND (LIMIT-TO (OA , "all")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "SOC")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English")). This search is focused on articles published in the period 2024–2025, in English, and from the field of social sciences (Social Sciences). Keywords such as "religious education", "character development", "academic achievement", and "middle school students" are used to ensure that the literature obtained is aligned with the research topic.

To maintain quality and relevance, researchers set a number of inclusion and exclusion criteria. The selected article should explicitly address the topics of religious education, character development, and academic achievement at the high school level. In addition, only empirical articles with qualitative, quantitative, or mixed approaches are included, provided that they have been published in Scopus-indexed journals and through a peer-review process. Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria include secondary literature review studies, conceptual articles without empirical data, editorials, commentaries, and research that is not relevant to the context of religious education at the secondary school level. Thus, this study only highlights scientific findings that are sourced from field data and have strong empirical value.

The literature selection stage is carried out systematically through the PRISMA process. which includes four main steps: identification, screening, feasibility assessment, and inclusion. From the initial search results, 195 articles relevant to the topic were generated. After the screening process by title and abstract, the number of articles was reduced to 22 studies, and after an in-depth examination of the full content, 10 articles were finally selected for comprehensive analysis. All of these stages are transparently documented through PRISMA flowcharts to ensure each selection step can be traced and replicated by other researchers..

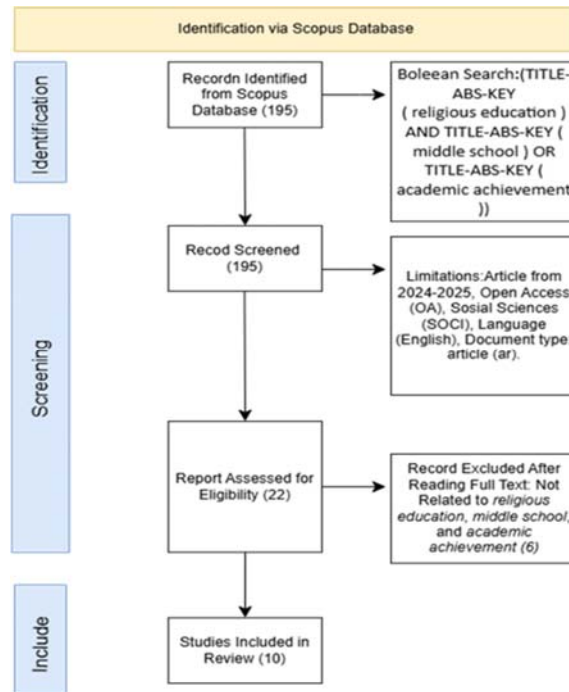


Figure 1. PRISMA diagram

Data from the selected articles were then analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns, themes, and main concepts that emerged from the results of previous research. The analysis was carried out by grouping the findings into several major themes, such as the approaches and models of religious education applied in secondary schools, the role of religious education in the formation of students' character and moral values, the relationship between religious learning and academic motivation, and its contribution to improving learning achievement. The findings of these studies are synthesized to provide a more comprehensive picture of how religious values can be effectively integrated into the school curriculum and play a role in shaping character and improving students' academic achievement.

To ensure the validity and credibility of the synthesis results, each article that passes the selection is evaluated using quality assessment tools such as JBI Critical Appraisal Tools and Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP). This process aims to assess the methodological strength, clarity of reporting, and relevance of the article to the focus of the research. Only studies with high methodological quality and clear contextual suitability are included in the final analysis. This entire process is carried out guided by the principles of transparency, replication, and scientific accountability, as mandated by the PRISMA 2020 guidelines.

Overall, the methodology of this research is designed to ensure that every step from literature search to data analysis is done in a systematic, measurable, and transparent manner. This approach is expected to be able to produce a strong and meaningful scientific synthesis, contribute to the development of religious values-based education policies, and enrich academic discourse on the relationship between religious education, character building, and academic achievement at the secondary school level.

Results

Table 2. Main Data of The Selected Article

Title	Authors	Year	Journal	Country	Author Affiliation
1. Superficial implementation of religious moderation in Islamic educational management	Chusnul Chotimah, Saifuddin Zuhri Qudsy, Mirna Yusuf	2024	Cogent Education	Indonesia	Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah State Islamic University, State Islamic University (UIN)

					Sunan Kalijaga, Gadjah Mada University	
2.	Islamic boarding school policy in response to the transmission of transnational religious ideologies in Klaten, Indonesia	Abdul Rohman, Mulyani Mudis Taruna, Wahab, Mustolehudin, Mintarti	2015	Cogent Education	Indonesia	Jenderal Soedirman University, National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN)
3.	Belongingness to groups, adolescent loneliness trajectories, and their consequences	Marguerite Beattie, Noona Kiuru, Katariina Salmela-Aro	2024	International Journal of Behavioral Development	Finland	University of Helsinki, University of Jyväskylä
4.	The role of immersive virtual reality in development of creativity skills in STREAM-based learning	Melese Astatke, Cathy Weng, Abebayehu Yohannes	2025	Education and Information Technologies	Taiwan	National Taiwan University of Science and Technology
5.	IBS policy in response to the transmission of transnational religious ideologies in Klaten, Indonesia	Abdul Rohman, Mulyani Mudis Taruna, Wahab, Mustolehudin, Mintarti	2025	Cogent Education	Indonesia	Jenderal Soedirman University, National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN)
6.	Socialisation and class regulation in Catholic convent schools: Australia, 1875–1920	Scott Denis McCarthy	2025	Women's History Review	Australia	Centre for Contemporary Histories, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Deakin University, Geelong, Australia
7.	The Role of Scientific Family Traditions in Societal Advancement in the Levant and Egypt: A Focus on Ibn Saghūr's Family (478–759 AH / 1085–1357 AD)	Riad Salim Awad	2024	Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization (JITC)	Levant and Egypt (historical context)	University of Kirkuk, Iraq
8.	The building sustainable peace through multicultural religious education in the contemporary era of Poso, Indonesia	Saepudin Mashuri; Football Club; Muhammad Irfan Hasanuddin; Khaeruddin Yusuf; Rusdin; Rusli Takunas; Bahdar; Rizqi Dwicahyanti;	2024	Cogent Education	Indonesia (Poso, Central Sulawesi)	Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, State Islamic University of Datokarama, Palu, Indonesia; Department of Islamic Education,

	Inspired by Dwitama Haeba				Universitas Islam Darul Ulum, Lamongan, Indonesia; School of Social Science, University of Aberdeen, UK; Department of Aqidah & Islamic Thought, Sultan Sharif Ali Islamic University, Brunei Darussalam
9. Patterns of parental involvement in schools of religious communities. A systematic review	Gabriella Pusztai; Zsuzsanna Demeter-Karászi; Éva Csonka; Bencze Ádám; Enikő Major; Edit Szilágyi; Katinka Bacsikai	2024	British Journal of Religious Education	Various countries (systematic review of religious community schools)	MTA-DE Parent- Teacher Cooperation Research Group, University of Debrecen, Hungary; Faculty of Arts, University of Debrecen, Debrecen, Hungary
10. Practices of Islamic education teachers in promoting moderation (wasatiyyah) values among high school students in Kuwait: challenges and obstacles	Maali Mohammed Jassim Alabduhadi; Kalthoum Mohammed Alkandari	2024	Cogent Education	Kuwait	College of Education, Department of Curriculum and Teaching Methods, Kuwait University, Kuwait City, Kuwait

The data provided presents a series of academic research articles with different focuses and contexts. These studies span a wide range of areas and disciplines, reflecting a diversity of approaches to education, religious moderation, and social development. The first set of these articles focuses on the theme of religious education and its relation to social issues. For example, an article titled *Superficial implementation of religious moderation in Islamic educational management* by (Chotimah et al., 2025)

Highlighting the superficial approach in the implementation of religious moderation in the Indonesian education system. The study argues that religious moderation, while important, is often limited to theoretical and cognitive learning, with no practical application in real-life contexts. This can lead to a gap between the content of education and the needs of the community, which in turn can increase the potential for intolerance or extremism among students. Likewise, research on Islamic boarding schools by (Rohman et al., 2025) discussing the influence of transnational religious ideology in Indonesia. This research shows that although Salafi ideology can influence the curriculum of some Islamic schools, policies such as the concept of *al-wala' wa-al-bara'* aims to reduce radicalization by emphasizing nationalism and loyalty to the state.

Instead, the study is titled *The Role of Scientific Family Traditions in Societal Advancement in the Levant and Egypt* by (Astatke et al., 2025) examines the contribution of family traditions in the development of science, especially those focusing on Ibn Saghīr's family. This article provides a historical perspective on the role of family networks in the dissemination of knowledge during the Islamic Golden Age, showing how family networks played an important role in the transmission of knowledge at that time.

Research The building sustainable peace through multicultural religious education in the contemporary era of Poso, Indonesia by (Mashuri et al., 2024) and others explore the role of multicultural religious education in building peace and social cohesion in Poso, Indonesia, an area that has experienced religious conflict. This research emphasizes the importance of integrating religious education with the cultural and social dynamics of society to promote peace and tolerance.

In addition, a systematic review titled Patterns of parental involvement in schools of religious communities by (Pusztai et al., 2024) examine parental involvement in religious schools, highlighting the importance of family involvement in educational outcomes. This review provides insight into how parental involvement varies across countries and religious contexts, and offers a comparative understanding of educational practices in faith-based schools.

Finally, research Practices of Islamic education teachers in promoting moderation (wasatiyyah) values among high school students in Kuwait by (Alabdulhadi & Alkandari, 2024) discusses the challenges faced by Islamic educators in Kuwait in promoting the values of moderation among students. This research emphasizes the importance of teaching the values of balance and tolerance in an educational framework, while also acknowledging the obstacles faced by teachers in implementing these values.

Table 2. Number of Contribution per Country.

Country	Number of Contribution
Indonesia	6
Finland	1
Taiwan	1
Australia	1
Iraq	1
Kuwait	2
Hungary	1

a. Digital Learning Tools in the Formation of Religious Education Models and Approaches in Secondary Schools

Religious education in secondary schools in the 21st century has evolved into Interactive, reflective, and humanistic spiritual experiences, thanks to advances in digital technology that are changing the way students understand and live religious values (Trisnawati et al., 2025). Through the use of digital learning tools such as Immersive Virtual Reality (IVR), Learning Management Systems (LMS), and online collaborative forums, religious learning now not only transfers knowledge, but also shapes character and morality through immersive, hands-on experiences. Approach STREAM Introduced by (Astatke et al., 2025) shows how IVR can connect faith, science, art, and technology through a virtual exploration of Guanshan Tianhou Temple, presenting creative and contextual religious learning. Meanwhile, (Sumarsono et al., 2025) emphasizing the importance of collaboration between teachers, students, and parents through digital platforms so that the development of religious values remains sustainable at home and school. (Chotimah et al., 2025) also highlights how VR-based ethical simulations and virtual interfaith dialogues are able to bring the value of tolerance to life in real life, beyond mere cognitive approaches.

In the pesantren environment, (Rohman et al., 2025) Introducing the integrative-conservative model of IS-IBS Klaten which combines tradition and innovation through digital tahfiz platforms and e-learning Islamic studies. From the historical and contemporary side (Machidon, 2025) The use of digital educational tools in the Catholic school environment has become an important focus in efforts to strengthen students' moral values and social discipline, whereas (Shchepanskyi et al., 2025) explained that the digitization of religious archives and cultural heritage opens up great opportunities for Passing on Spiritual Values Across Generations, expanding public access to religious resources, and supporting spiritual preservation in the context of a multicultural society, (Mashuri et al., 2024) emphasizing potential virtual interfaith dialogue and digital peace education tools

in building interfaith reconciliation, and (Alabdulhadi & Alkandari, 2024) emphasizing the importance of digital religious literacy so that technology becomes a means of strengthening moderation, not a source of disinformation. Overall, religious education in the digital era has evolved into Collaborative and contextual spiritual space, where faith, science, and technology combine to give birth to a religious generation that creative, moderate, and adaptive to the changing times.

b. Digital Learning Tools and Character Building of High School Students in Religious Education

The formation and character development of high school students through religious education programs is now undergoing a tremendous transformation, especially due to the presence of digital technology that enriches the religious learning experience to be more contextual and lively. One of the interesting innovations is the application of Immersive Virtual Reality (IVR) in STREAM learning, which allows students to experience spiritual values firsthand in a realistic religious environment simulation. Research by (Astatke et al., 2025) shows that the use of IVR in religious learning increases students' emotional engagement, empathy, and moral reflection, making religious teachings not just knowledge, but meaningful life experiences. However, character formation does not only grow from technology, but also from synergy between family, school, and community. (Sumarsono et al., 2025) emphasizing that the involvement of parents in madrasas—through social and religious activities such as sacrificial animal donations and family classes—plays an important role in instilling the values of sacrifice, care, and social solidarity, making madrasas a collaborative spiritual space.

From a psychological perspective, Beattie, Kiuru, and (Huttunen et al., 2024) reveals that adolescents' involvement in social and religious groups fosters a sense of belonging (belongingness) that strengthen emotional well-being and empathic character. Instead, (Chotimah et al., 2025) It was found that religious moderation education in schools is still often cognitive and formalistic, so it fails to instill the values of tolerance and civility in students' real behavior. In different contexts, research (Rohman et al., 2025) about the Ittiba'u as-Sunnah Islamic boarding school (IS-IBS) in Klaten shows how character values are formed through tashfiyah (purification of faith) and tarbiyah (moral coaching) with an emphasis on religious loyalty and discipline, although it still lacks space for cross-cultural dialogue. The overall study confirms that the formation of religious character is a multidimensional process—a blend of technology that fosters empathy, a social environment that brings human values to life, and moral discipline that reinforces spiritual integrity. Ideal religious education not only teaches goodness, but fosters the ability to live and manifest it in real life—both in the real world and in the digital space that is now part of the spirituality of the younger generation.

In the era of 21st century education, the development of digital technology has revolutionized the way religious learning is conducted, making it more interactive, reflective, and contextual. Digital literacy now plays a role not only as a learning tool, but also as a medium for character formation that fosters moral values, empathy, and religious moderation. Through use Immersive Virtual Reality (IVR) in the STREAM (Science, Technology, Religion, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics) approach, students not only learn religious teachings conceptually, but also experience them emotionally through immersive virtual world simulations. Study (Astatke et al., 2025) shows that IVR enhances students' spiritual connectedness and empathy, making religious teachings more meaningful and alive. On the other hand, collaboration between family and school remains an important foundation in the formation of religious character. Systematic review (Pusztai et al., 2024) emphasized that parental involvement in school activities both through digital platforms, social activities, and online communication builds a sense of moral responsibility, social concern, and spiritual synergy in the faith-based education environment. These values are also strengthened through multicultural religious education which is studied by (Mashuri et al., 2024), where the use of collaborative media and interfaith interaction in post-conflict schools such as Poso has succeeded in instilling tolerance, cooperation, and a spirit of peace among students. A similar approach is seen in the context of moderate Islamic education in Kuwait, where (Alabdulhadi & Alkandari, 2024) found that teachers are leveraging digital platforms and interactive videos to teach values wasatiyyah (moderation), fostering critical thinking and suppressing the potential for extremism. However, character learning does not depend solely on technology, as shown (McCarthy, 2025) in his study of Catholic monastic schools in Australia (1875–1920), which instilled spiritual discipline, obedience, and decency through a systematic moral-religious approach. When these traditional values such as discipline and spirituality are combined with modern digital innovations, religious education transforms into a space that balances faith, reason, and empathy. Thus, the use of Digital Learning Tools such as IVR, online media, and collaborative platforms have shifted the paradigm of religious education from mere doctrinal delivery to a living spiritual experience to form a generation of students who are religious, empathetic, moderate, and adaptive to diversity and changing times.

c. The Contribution of Religious Education to the Achievement of Academic Achievement of High School Students

The contribution of religious education to the academic achievement of high school students seems increasingly relevant in the digital age that demands a balance between intellectual and spiritual intelligence. Various studies confirm that religious education not only shapes moral character, but also strengthens learning motivation, discipline, and emotional well-being which have a direct effect on academic achievement. (Astatke et al., 2025) shows that the implementation of Immersive Virtual Reality (IVR) In STREAM learning that integrates religious elements is able to increase students' creativity and engagement, which in turn strengthens the ability to think critically and innovatively two main factors in academic success. In line with that, (Sumarsono et al., 2025) emphasized that the active participation of parents in madrasah activities such as family classes and socio-religious programs contributes greatly to students' learning motivation and academic responsibility through the creation of a harmonious learning environment between home and school. From a psychological point of view, (Beattie et al., 2025) found that sense of having (belongingness) to the social and spiritual community can reduce the level of loneliness and school burnout, which means that religious education also acts as an emotional buffer that maintains the mental stability of students to stay focused on learning. Instead, research (Chotimah et al., 2025) reminding that religious education that is only cognitive and top-down actually weakens its impact on the formation of a collaborative learning climate that supports academic achievement, so that a contextual and applicative approach is the key to its effectiveness. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, (Rohman et al., 2025) shows that the educational model in Ittiba'u as-Sunnah (IS-IBS) that integrates tashfiyah (purification of faith) and tarbiyah (moral coaching) with the national curriculum succeeds in forming religious, disciplinary, and nationalist characters that strengthen students' academic ethos. Overall, religious education has proven to play a strategic role as an affective and moral foundation that not only enriches the spiritual dimension of students, but also fosters the spirit of learning, creativity, and academic responsibility that are the main characteristics of superior students in the 21st century.

The contribution of religious education to the academic achievement of high school students is increasingly evident through the synergy between spiritual, intellectual, and social values that are intertwined in the modern learning process. (Astatke et al., 2025) shows that the implementation of Immersive Virtual Reality (IVR) In the STREAM approach that integrates religious elements, it is able to significantly increase student creativity and involvement, strengthen critical and innovative thinking skills that are the main pillars of academic success. On the other hand, (Sumarsono et al., 2025) emphasizing the importance of active involvement of parents in madrasah activities such as family classes and socio-religious programs, which create emotional synergy between home and school and encourage the creation of a positive and achievement-oriented learning environment. In the psychological aspect, (Beattie et al., 2025) found that sense of having (belongingness) on social and spiritual groups can reduce adolescent loneliness and increase academic engagement, affirming the role of religious education in strengthening students' emotional well-being and focus on learning. Furthermore, (Rohman et al., 2025) revealed that education at the Ittiba'u as-Sunnah Islamic boarding school (IS-IBS) with an approach tashfiyah and tarbiyah Forming a character of discipline and responsibility that strengthens students' learning ethic and academic achievement. In line with that, (McCarthy, 2025) through his historical study of Catholic monastic schools in Australia shows how religious education that instills spiritual and moral discipline breeds the character of diligence and obedience two fundamental values in academic success. Thus, religious education is proven not only to instill morality, but also to foster motivation, discipline, and creativity which are the main foundations for improving students' academic achievement in the modern era of education.

d. Themes, Patterns, and Trends of Research on the Influence of Religious Education on Character Development and Academic Achievement of High School Students

Various studies show that religious education in secondary school has a central role in shaping students' character, although its direct influence on academic achievement has not been the main focus. In general, religious education not only functions as a means of transmitting spiritual values, but also as a forum for character formation that touches on emotional, social, and moral aspects. Through pedagogical innovations such as Immersive Virtual Reality (IVR), religious learning is now able to enhance students' creativity and emotional engagement, making it a reflective and engaging experience. (Astatke et al., 2025). In addition, the active involvement of parents in madrasah activities has been proven to strengthen school-family communication and foster students' empathy and social responsibility (Sumarsono et al., 2025). (On the other hand, the issue of religious moderation is also an important concern; although its implementation in some institutions is still superficial (Chotimah et al., 2025), a number of Islamic boarding schools have now succeeded in balancing religious values with the spirit of nationalism and nationalism through an adaptive and moderate curriculum (Rohman et al., 2025). In a broader social context, belonging to religious groups and a supportive

social environment has been shown to reduce adolescents' loneliness while improving their mental well-being and academic motivation (Beattie et al., 2025). Overall, religious education plays a strong role in shaping students' moral, emotional, and spiritual character, while its impact on academic achievement occurs more indirectly through increased motivation, psychological well-being, and social support. With a combination of moderate approaches, modern learning technologies, and parental and community involvement, religious education is now developing into a dynamic space that encourages the birth of a young generation that is not only religious and tolerant, but also creative, adaptive, and holistically achieves.

Various studies show that religious education has a broad influence on the formation of students' character, not only instilling spiritual values, but also shaping social, moral, and nationalist personalities that have an indirect impact on academic achievement. Religious learning in secondary schools has now evolved from just an understanding of the doctrine of faith to a social arena that internalizes human values, empathy, and social responsibility. (Astatke et al., 2025) shows that the application of Immersive Virtual Reality (IVR) in STREAM learning is able to increase students' creativity and emotional engagement, making the religious learning experience more reflective and relevant to modern life. Meanwhile, (Pusztai et al., 2024) It was found that the collaboration of teachers and parents in religious schools builds mutual trust and shared responsibility that strengthens the formation of children's moral character while supporting academic achievement. In a social context, Saepudin (Mashuri et al., 2024) emphasized that multicultural religious education plays an important role in fostering tolerance and peace in post-conflict areas such as Poso, by instilling humanitarian values and interfaith cooperation that has a positive impact on the academic atmosphere. In Kuwait, (Alabdulhadi & Alkandari, 2024) highlighting the importance of instilling wasatiyyah values or religious moderation that forms a balance between idealism and social reality, despite the challenges of modernization and technological influences. From a historical perspective, (McCarthy, 2025) shows that Catholic schools in 19th-century Australia played a role in the formation of women's morals and social identity through a disciplined and conservative curriculum, while (Awad, 2024) revealed that the tradition of Ibn Saghīr's scientific family education in Syria and Egypt succeeded in combining religious and scientific values to produce a generation with strong character and high achievements. Overall, this research pattern confirms that religious education plays an important role as a catalyst for the formation of holistic character that includes morality, creativity, moderation, and social empathy. Although the direct influence on academic achievement is often indirect, religious education continues to evolve into a reflective and collaborative learning space that balances faith, science, and humanity, giving birth to a generation that is religious, tolerant, and globally competitive.

Conclusion

Religious education plays a crucial role in the character development and academic achievement of high school students. Based on the results of a systematic review of various studies conducted, religious education not only focuses on understanding religious teachings, but also on the formation of students' character through the teaching of values such as discipline, tolerance, and responsibility. Research shows that religious education that integrates the values of moderation and multiculturalism can improve students' social relationships, create a more harmonious learning environment, and encourage better academic achievement. In addition, the integration of digital technologies, such as the use of Immersive Virtual Reality (IVR), has been shown to enrich the religious learning experience and deepen students' emotional engagement, which in turn supports their character development.

However, there are still challenges in integrating religious education more holistically with the development of students' character and academic achievement. Several studies have identified shortcomings in the application of religious values in students' social lives, as well as in optimizing the involvement of parents and communities in the learning process. Therefore, further research is needed to develop a model of religious education that not only emphasizes on the teaching of religious teachings, but also integrates more effective character development in supporting students' academic achievement. The use of digital technology and further involvement of relevant parties such as parents and communities can be an important step in realizing this goal.

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