Socratika: Journal of Progressive Education and Social Inquiry
E-ISSN: 3047-020X
Vol. 3 No. 3 (September–December 2026), pp. 1309-1324
https://doi.org/10.58230/socratika.v3i3.1038
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Teacher Personality Competence and Noble Character Formation within an Integrated Islamic Curriculum

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Abstract

Purpose : Forming noble character (*akhlak karimah*) among junior high school students requires teachers whose conduct students can emulate. This single-case study describes how the personality competence of an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher is manifested and enacted in instruction and character formation, and identifies its supporting and inhibiting factors at SMPIT Mutiara Hikmah Bekasi, an integrated Islamic junior high school.

Method : A descriptive qualitative single-case design was employed. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with one PAI teacher and two eighth-grade students, observation of lessons and religious activities, and analysis of school documents. The data were analysed through reflexive thematic analysis, and themes were checked across sources, methods, and time.

Results : Participants described four forms of personality competence: discipline and responsibility, exemplary behaviour and speech, religious commitment, and the capacity to nurture and guide. This competence was enacted through role modelling in instruction, habituation of discipline and worship, and personal guidance embedded in the school curriculum. A religious climate, institutional support, and teacher–parent collaboration were supporting factors; diverse backgrounds, peer and social media influences, and limited student awareness were inhibiting factors. Accounts also diverged: the students portrayed the teacher as uniformly consistent, whereas the teacher acknowledged that consistency was difficult to sustain.

Conclusion : Within this single case, participants perceived the teacher's personality competence as supporting students' noble character formation, chiefly through consistent role modelling reinforced by the curriculum and school culture. Because students' changes were self-reported, the findings are interpretive rather than causal; they suggest developing teachers' personal qualities and school–family partnerships.

Keywords: personality competence; teacher role modelling; Islamic religious education; character formation; integrated Islamic curriculum

1. Introduction

Education is intended not merely to transmit knowledge but to form whole persons. Indonesia's Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System states that education aims to develop learners' potential so that they become people of faith and piety, of noble character, healthy, knowledgeable, competent, creative, independent, and democratic and responsible citizens (Government of the Republic of Indonesia, 2003). This formulation places noble character among the central goals of national education. In Islamic education, the position of *akhlak* (moral character) is even more fundamental, because moral conduct is regarded as the visible expression of faith. Islamic Religious Education (*Pendidikan Agama Islam*, PAI) teachers therefore carry a particular responsibility: in an era of globalisation that has weakened students' discipline and morality, they

are expected to instil moral values through both classroom instruction and religious activities such as congregational prayer and Qur'anic literacy (Nasrullah et al., 2023).

Teachers occupy a central position in realising these goals. Law Number 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers requires teachers to master four competencies, namely pedagogical, personality, social, and professional competence (Government of the Republic of Indonesia, 2005), and Ministerial Regulation Number 16 of 2007 specifies personality competence as a stable, mature, wise, and authoritative personality of noble character that serves as an example for learners (Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia, 2007). Among these competencies, personality competence is arguably the most fundamental because it is directly visible in the attitudes, speech, and actions that students observe every day. Empirical work supports this view. Hasbiyallah et al. (2023) examined character education in Indonesian high schools in terms of teachers' pedagogical competence and personality and found that religious teachers demonstrated sound competence in both, while Rakhmah et al. (2024) showed that teacher personality competence and parenting styles jointly explained 38.4% of the variance in junior high school students' character formation.

In Islamic education, the teacher is not simply a transmitter of knowledge but an exemplar (*uswah hasanah*) in daily life. The Qur'an places exemplary conduct at the heart of moral education, as indicated in QS. Al-Ahzab [33]: 21, which presents the Prophet as the finest example for believers. Exemplary conduct is considered effective because moral values are internalised more readily through concrete examples than through theoretical explanation. Alongside role modelling, character formation requires habituation, advice, and continuous supervision so that moral values do not remain abstract knowledge but become habits. Alimni et al. (2023), for example, showed that PAI teachers in junior high schools act as educators, guides, and role models who cultivate Islamic character through the habituation of greeting, courtesy, and good manners.

Noble character can be recognised through observable everyday behaviour. This study uses six indicators: courtesy and respect for others, honesty, discipline, responsibility, care for others, and self-control. Because character is expressed in behaviour, its formation requires examples that students can see and imitate rather than explanations of right and wrong alone. This is where the teacher's personality becomes decisive. Teachers with sound personal qualities more easily become role models, whereas weak personality competence deprives students of positive and consistent examples.

The need for teacher role models becomes more pressing at the junior high school level. Students at this stage are in early adolescence, are easily influenced by their environment, and tend to imitate figures they regard as significant. At the same time, schools continue to face moral problems such as weak discipline, declining respect for teachers, and social behaviour that does not reflect moral values. Technological change, peer influences outside school, and diverse family backgrounds intensify these challenges. In a large-scale study of primary school students in China, for instance, problematic smartphone use was associated with poorer sleep quality and lower behavioural engagement in mathematics learning (Zhou et al., 2026). These conditions show that character formation cannot be achieved through subject content alone; it demands teachers whose personalities remain strong and consistent both in the classroom and in everyday interactions at school.

The curriculum provides the structural context in which this teacher influence operates. Under Indonesia's Independent Curriculum (*Kurikulum Merdeka*), PAI instruction is expected to be responsive to students' readiness and needs, and a survey in a senior high school found that differentiated learning accounted for a large share of the variance in students' use of PAI instructional media (Sulthani et al., 2026). Integrated Islamic schools go further by combining the national curriculum with an Islamic curriculum of Qur'anic learning, memorisation, and worship

habituation. In such schools, the teacher's personal conduct is not peripheral to the curriculum but is part of how it is lived out each day.

Several studies have examined this theme. Talibo et al. (2026) found that PAI teachers in an elementary school fostered noble character through role modelling, habituation of discipline and responsibility, persuasive religious advice, and the integration of moral values into instruction, while facing constraints such as the influence of digital media, limited parental supervision, and limited PAI teaching hours. Nasrullah et al. (2023) reported that PAI teachers in a vocational high school instilled discipline through classroom instruction and religious activities such as congregational prayer and Qur'anic literacy sessions, although inconsistent disciplinary standards and limited parental involvement remained obstacles. Alimni et al. (2023) studied junior high schools but focused on habituation rather than on teacher personality competence as a whole, and Rakhmah et al. (2024) measured the effect of personality competence on junior high school students' character through a survey. Zhulaikah (2022) described teachers' strategies for forming prophetic character among tenth-grade students at an international school, and Permatasari and Arianto (2022) argued conceptually for the urgency of teacher personality competence in students' character development. These studies were thus set in elementary or senior secondary schools, examined teachers' roles or strategies in general rather than personality competence as such, relied on survey designs, or were conceptual. Moreover, most drew mainly on the accounts of teachers or school leaders, so students' perspectives on how a teacher's personality is experienced, including where those perspectives diverge from the teacher's own, remain largely unexamined.

Because Nasrullah et al. (2023) also studied a school named Mutiara Hikmah, the distinction from the present study should be made explicit. Their site, SMK Mutiara Hikmah, is a vocational high school in Ciemas District, Sukabumi Regency, which operated under the 2013 Curriculum at the time of their study. The present site, SMPIT Mutiara Hikmah, is an integrated Islamic junior high school in Tambun Selatan District, Bekasi Regency, run by the Mutiara Hikmah Foundation and implementing the Independent Curriculum alongside an Islamic curriculum. The two schools share a name but are separate institutions in different regencies, and we are not aware of any institutional connection between them. The studies also differ in focus: Nasrullah et al. examined the general role of PAI teachers in character education, drawing on teachers, the principal, and school documents, whereas the present study examines one specific construct, the teacher's personality competence, interprets it against the five sub-competencies in national regulations, and sets students' accounts alongside the teacher's.

SMPIT Mutiara Hikmah Bekasi is an integrated Islamic junior high school that combines the national curriculum with an Islamic curriculum and includes the formation of a generation of noble character among its missions. These characteristics make it an appropriate setting for examining how teacher personality operates in students' character formation within an integrated curriculum. Accordingly, this study addresses three questions: (1) How is the personality competence of the PAI teacher manifested at SMPIT Mutiara Hikmah Bekasi? (2) How is this competence enacted in instruction and in students' character formation? and (3) What factors support and inhibit it? The study contributes in three ways: it takes personality competence, rather than the PAI teacher's role in general, as the unit of analysis; it reports students' perspectives alongside the teacher's, including where they diverge; and it interprets the teacher's personal conduct as part of how an integrated Islamic curriculum is enacted in daily school life.

2. Method

Research Design and Setting

This study employed a descriptive qualitative single-case design grounded in the interpretive paradigm, which seeks to understand phenomena in depth from participants' perspectives within

their real-life context. The case was bounded as the personality competence of one PAI teacher as enacted and experienced at one integrated Islamic junior high school during the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. Rather than measuring the effect of teacher personality competence on students' character, as survey-based studies have done (Rakhmah et al., 2024), this study sought to describe how that competence is manifested and enacted in daily school life. In-depth interviews with a small number of purposively selected participants are well established for examining teachers' professional practice and identity (Amorim & Ribeiro-Silva, 2024; Succarie, 2024). The study was conducted at SMPIT Mutiara Hikmah, Sumberjaya Village, Tambun Selatan District, Bekasi Regency, West Java, from February to July 2026. The school was selected purposively on the basis of preliminary observation and the fit between field conditions and the research focus. As an integrated Islamic school, it implements the Independent Curriculum alongside an Islamic curriculum that includes Qur'anic learning and daily worship habituation, a form of curricular integration that has also been documented in other Indonesian schools (Umroni & Romelah, 2025). Consequently, the teacher–student interactions under study occurred naturally, both in classrooms and elsewhere on the school premises.

Participants and Data Sources

The primary participants were one PAI teacher and two eighth-grade students, one male and one female. The teacher was selected because she is the PAI teacher responsible for the eighth grade and is therefore the central actor in the case. The two students were selected purposively with the assistance of the PAI teacher and the homeroom teacher, using three criteria: they had been taught PAI by this teacher for at least one academic year, they took part regularly in the school's religious activities, and they were willing and able to describe their experiences. To protect confidentiality, the participants are referred to as the PAI Teacher, Student 1, and Student 2.

Three participants were considered adequate for this case study for three reasons. First, the case concerns the personality competence of a single teacher, so the teacher is the central informant, while the students' role is to corroborate or contest her account from the position of those who experience it daily. Second, the participants were information-rich: all three had sustained, direct experience of the phenomenon, and the interviews were focused on three specific research questions, which allows depth with few participants. Third, interview data were not used on their own but were checked against observation and document evidence. The three accounts overlapped substantially on the core behaviours while also revealing divergences, which are reported in the Results. Nevertheless, the small number of participants limits transferability, a point taken up in the Discussion.

Secondary data comprised school documents: the school profile and official website (founding, accreditation, staffing, and student numbers), the vision and mission statement, the curriculum structure combining the Independent Curriculum with the Islamic curriculum (Qur'anic learning, *tahfiz*, and worship habituation), the school regulations, the religious activity schedule, and the extracurricular programme.

Data Collection

Data were collected through three techniques. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted using a guide derived from the three research questions. Each participant was asked nine core questions, three for each focus (the forms of the teacher's personality competence, its enactment in instruction and character formation, and its supporting and inhibiting factors), followed by probes where answers needed clarification. All interviews were conducted individually at the school on 19 May 2026, lasted approximately 30–45 minutes each, and were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. An observation guide directed attention to three aspects: learning activities and teacher–student interaction; students' engagement, respect, and social empathy; and students' reactions to rule enforcement and the teacher's handling of them. Observations were recorded as

field notes on the day they took place. Third, the documents listed above were analysed to verify factual information about the school and to check whether the practices described by participants were formalised in school policies and programmes. Throughout the process, the researcher acted as the key instrument, being present at the site, interacting naturally with participants, and recording data carefully and systematically.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

The data were analysed inductively using thematic analysis, following the phases described in Byrne's (2022) worked example of reflexive thematic analysis. First, the researcher read the transcripts and field notes repeatedly to become familiar with the data. Second, initial codes were assigned to meaningful segments, staying close to participants' wording, for example 'arrives before the lesson', 'prepares materials', and 'reminds students of prayer times'. Third, codes were grouped into candidate themes under each research question; the three codes above, for instance, formed the candidate theme 'discipline and responsibility'. Fourth, candidate themes were reviewed against the coded extracts and the full data set: themes were retained only when supported by at least two participants or two types of data, overlapping themes were merged (for example, 'polite speech' and 'neat appearance' became 'exemplary behaviour and speech'), and segments that contradicted a theme were coded separately as divergent accounts rather than discarded. Fifth, the final themes were defined, named, and compared with the personality sub-competencies set out in national regulations and with previous studies. Coding was carried out manually in a spreadsheet by the first author and reviewed by the second author, and disagreements were resolved through discussion. The final themes are summarised in Table 1, and the evidence supporting each theme is mapped in Table 2.

Trustworthiness was established through the credibility criterion. Triangulation was operationalised through an evidence matrix (Table 2) that recorded, for each theme, whether it was supported by the teacher's interview, the students' interviews, observation field notes, and documents. Source triangulation compared the teacher's accounts with those of the students; method triangulation checked whether behaviours described in interviews were also recorded in field notes and whether practices were formalised in school documents; and time triangulation compared observations made on different days. Where sources converged, a theme is reported as corroborated; where it rested on a single source, such as the teacher's report of training and supervision, it is reported as that participant's perspective; and where sources diverged, the divergence is reported in the Results. The researcher also used direct quotations to ground the analysis and discussed the coding and themes with the supervisor. The study was conducted with the school's permission, and data collection was scheduled around teaching activities to avoid disrupting learning.

3. Results

SMPIT Mutiara Hikmah operates under the Mutiara Hikmah Foundation; it was established in 2010 and began operating in 2012. The school profile records 22 teachers, approximately 133 students, and a B accreditation. The curriculum documents show that the school implements the Independent Curriculum integrated with an Islamic curriculum comprising Qur'anic learning, Qur'an memorisation (*tahfiz*), and worship habituation, and that it employs eight Qur'anic reading and writing teachers who use the Ummi method. Its vision is to be an institution that excels in achievement and serves as a model in building a culture of discipline, with a mission to develop a generation that is faithful, of noble character, high-achieving, and healthy; the emphasis on discipline in the vision recurs in the participants' accounts reported below. Students' development is further supported by homeroom teachers at every grade and by extracurricular activities such as *tahfiz*, scouting, the flag-raising troop, *pencak silat*, and futsal, which also train discipline and

responsibility; scouting, for example, is held every Wednesday. The findings are presented according to the three research questions and summarised in Table 1, and the sources supporting each theme are mapped in Table 2.

Table 1. Summary of research findings

Focus	Themes	Field manifestations
Personality competence of the PAI teacher	Discipline and responsibility; exemplary behaviour and speech; religious commitment; capacity to nurture and guide	Arriving on time, preparing teaching materials, speaking courteously, leading worship, patience and care for students
Enactment in instruction and character formation	Role modelling in instruction; habituation of discipline; religious habituation; guidance and motivation	Exemplary stories, courteous reprimands, prayer and Qur'an recitation, congregational prayer, personal approach, appreciation
Supporting factors	Religious school climate; school and foundation support; teacher–parent collaboration	Routine religious activities, religious study circles and teacher training, supervision, communication with parents
Inhibiting factors	Diverse student characters and backgrounds; peer and social media influences; limited awareness among some students	Some students difficult to guide, distracted by mobile phones, repeated rule violations

Table 2. Sources of evidence supporting each theme

Theme	Teacher interview	Student interviews	Observation	Documents
		Personality competence		
Discipline and responsibility	✓	✓ (S1, S2)	✓ punctual arrival; prepared materials	✓ vision: culture of discipline
Exemplary behaviour and speech	✓	✓ (S1, S2)	✓ courteous language; respect for students' opinions	–
Religious commitment	✓	✓ (S1, S2)	✓ greeting; opening and closing prayers; congregational prayer	✓ religious activity schedule
Capacity to nurture and guide	✓	✓ (S1, S2)	✓ calm reprimands; verbal appreciation	–
		Enactment		
Role modelling in instruction	✓	✓ (S1, S2)	✓	–
Habituation of discipline	✓	✓ (S1, S2)	✓ reminders on punctuality, uniforms, order	✓ school regulations
Religious habituation	✓	✓ (S1, S2)	✓	✓ Islamic curriculum; activity schedule

Theme	Teacher interview	Student interviews	Observation	Documents
Guidance and motivation	✓	✓ (S1, S2)	–	–
Supporting and inhibiting factors				
Religious school climate	✓	✓ (S1, S2)	✓	✓ curriculum; activity schedule
School and foundation support	✓ training, supervision	Partial (S2: facilities only)	–	✓ foundation; staffing
Teacher–parent collaboration	✓	✓ (S1)	–	–
Diverse student backgrounds	✓	✓ (S1, S2)	–	–
Peer and social media influences	✓	✓ (S1, S2)	–	–
Limited awareness among some students	✓	✓ (S1, S2)	–	–

Note. ✓ = theme supported by this source; – = theme not addressed by this source; S1 = Student 1; S2 = Student 2.

Personality Competence of the PAI Teacher

The first manifestation of the PAI teacher's personality competence was discipline and responsibility in carrying out professional duties. The teacher arrived on time, prepared teaching materials before lessons, and accompanied students throughout learning activities. As the PAI Teacher stated, "Teachers must arrive on time, carry out their duties well, and guide students responsibly so that students also become accustomed to discipline in their daily lives." The students confirmed this account. Student 1 noted that the teachers "always arrive on time and often remind us to be disciplined in both learning and worship," while Student 2 felt better directed in learning because the teacher taught and guided responsibly. Student 1 added that the teacher adhered to the rules, from which he learned that discipline matters in life.

The second manifestation was exemplary conduct in behaviour and speech. The teacher strove to be honest, to speak courteously, and to respect fellow teachers and students. According to the PAI Teacher, "Moral education is easier to apply when the teacher gives a direct example." Student 1 described the teacher as neatly dressed, polite in speech, and respectful toward all students without discrimination. Student 2 added that the teacher gave advice in a kind manner, which made students feel comfortable and encouraged them to behave well; she also regarded the teacher as consistent between what was taught and what was practised. What she admired most was the teacher's friendliness and care, which extended equally to all students, whereas Student 1 was most impressed by the teacher's patience in remaining calm when some students did not pay attention.

The third manifestation was religious commitment. The teacher habituated both herself and the students to congregational prayer, Qur'an recitation, and Islamic conduct at school. The PAI Teacher stressed that teachers must set an example in worship "because students will more easily imitate what their teacher does." Student 1 confirmed that the teacher often invited students to pray in congregation and recite the Qur'an before lessons, while Student 2 noted that the teacher was active in the school's religious activities and constantly reminded students to maintain good morals and manners and to practise Islamic teachings in daily life. Observation confirmed that she greeted

students on entering the classroom, opened and closed lessons with prayer, and joined the school's congregational prayers, and the school's religious activity schedule shows that these routines are institutionalised rather than left to individual teachers. According to Student 1, the teacher could serve as a role model because she possessed sound religious knowledge and applied it, allowing students to observe the example directly.

The fourth manifestation was the capacity to nurture and guide students with patience and attention. The PAI Teacher recognised that each student has a different character and therefore must be approached with patience and care. When students broke the rules, the teacher gave advice, explained the consequences of their actions, and, when necessary, provided individual guidance in cooperation with parents. Student 1 reported that the teacher called the student concerned aside and advised them kindly, so the advice was accepted "without feeling afraid or ashamed." Student 2 stated that reprimands were delivered in polite language that did not hurt students' feelings and were followed by guidance on how to improve.

Enactment in Instruction and Character Formation

In instruction, personality competence was enacted primarily through role modelling. The PAI Teacher integrated moral values into learning activities by providing examples, habituating positive behaviour, telling exemplary stories, and linking subject matter to the values of honesty, responsibility, discipline, and respect. She stated that students "imitate behaviour more easily than they merely listen to explanations of the material." Student 1 recalled that, when discussing honesty, the teacher related it to the obligation to be truthful with parents, teachers, and friends. According to Student 2, the teacher taught not only the subject but also how to behave well through her own daily conduct.

Discipline was cultivated through daily habituation. The teacher reminded students to arrive on time, follow school regulations, and complete assignments, while modelling the same by arriving punctually and teaching in an orderly manner. The PAI Teacher used a variety of methods, including role modelling, habituation, assignments that train responsibility, group discussion, religious activities, and appreciation for students who behaved well. Student 1 explained that students who violated rules were reprimanded kindly and guided so as not to repeat their mistakes, and Student 2 acknowledged that the teacher's example of discipline helped students become disciplined in learning and other school activities.

Religious character was formed through the habituation of praying before and after lessons, reciting the Qur'an, and performing congregational prayer. The PAI Teacher emphasised that it is insufficient for teachers merely to explain religious values; they must practise them so that students can imitate them. For Student 1, the activities that most influenced his behaviour were the habituation of prayer, motivation before lessons, and stories about the exemplary conduct of the Prophet and his Companions. Student 2 mentioned the habituation of reciting prayers, motivational talks, and discussions about praiseworthy behaviour. The teacher also habituated students to speak kindly, value one another, and respect teachers and peers, so religious habituation extended beyond ritual worship to include social etiquette (*adab*).

The teacher also provided personal guidance and motivation. She paid attention to students experiencing learning difficulties or personal problems and adapted her approach to each student's character. Both students experienced this: Student 1 stated that the teacher helped and directed students patiently, and Student 2 noted that the teacher's care made students feel noticed and comfortable while learning. Both students also described changes in themselves, which are reported here as their own perceptions rather than as measured outcomes. Student 1 felt that he better understood how to respect parents, value friends, and take responsibility for assignments, and Student 2 felt more disciplined, more respectful of others, and more aware of the importance of

good conduct. Student 1 emphasised that what he learned was not merely theory but practice applicable to daily life.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

Three supporting factors were identified. The first was a religious school climate. Routine congregational prayer, Qur'an recitation, collective supplication, and moral guidance made it easier for the teacher to set an example, and Student 2 observed that the Islamic environment made students easier to guide toward good conduct and respect for teachers and peers. The second was support from the school and its foundation. The PAI Teacher mentioned religious study circles, teacher training, professional development activities, academic supervision, and the habituation of an Islamic school culture, together with adequate learning facilities. The third was collaboration among teachers and between teachers and parents. As the PAI Teacher asserted, "Teachers cannot work alone without the support of the family, because moral education must be applied both at school and at home." Student 1 confirmed that teachers contacted parents when a student needed special guidance. The PAI Teacher also cited her personal motivation for continuous self-improvement as an internal driver.

Three inhibiting factors were also identified. The first was the diversity of students' characters and family backgrounds: some students were easy to guide, whereas others required special attention and approaches, so character formation demanded more time and patience. The second was the influence of peers outside school and of social media. The PAI Teacher acknowledged that students were sometimes more easily influenced by their peer environment or social media, and Student 2 stated that mobile phone and social media use made some students less focused on learning and harder to guide. The third was limited awareness among some students of the importance of good character. Student 1 noted that some students still broke rules despite repeated reminders, and Student 2 admitted that some students paid little attention when the teacher gave advice, so the message had not been taken up by all. The teacher therefore had to repeat guidance and supervision, which she addressed through individual approaches, continuous mentoring, and communication with parents. Beyond these three factors, the PAI Teacher acknowledged a personal challenge, namely maintaining consistency in setting an example amid a heavy workload, which she addressed through self-reflection and the strengthening of religious values.

Convergent and Divergent Accounts

Most themes were supported by more than one source (Table 2), but the accounts did not fully converge. First, the students described the teacher as consistently punctual, patient, and exemplary, whereas the teacher herself acknowledged that maintaining consistency amid a heavy workload was difficult. The students' uniformly positive portrayal may therefore reflect what was visible to them rather than the effort behind it, and possibly a reluctance to criticise a teacher in an interview held at school. Second, several student statements referred to "the teachers" collectively, for example that "the teachers always arrive on time" and that the teachers work together in guiding students, so part of their account describes a school-wide teacher culture rather than the PAI teacher alone. Third, the participants located the obstacles differently: the teacher emphasised family background and influences from outside the school, whereas the students emphasised their peers' limited awareness and mobile phone use. Fourth, institutional support through training and supervision was reported only by the teacher; the students could not observe it and referred instead to the school's facilities. Finally, although both students reported positive changes in themselves, both also noted that some peers continued to break rules despite repeated reminders, indicating that the effects they described were neither uniform nor complete.

4. Discussion

The first finding shows that the PAI teacher's personality competence at SMPIT Mutiara Hikmah was manifested in four forms: discipline and responsibility, exemplary behaviour and speech, religious commitment, and the capacity to nurture and guide. These forms correspond to the personality sub-competencies stipulated in national regulations (Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia, 2007). Discipline and responsibility reflect a stable and mature personality, that is, consistent conduct in accordance with norms and a professional work ethic. Patience and reprimands that consider students' feelings and welfare reflect a wise personality. Students' acknowledgement that they felt encouraged to imitate the teacher indicates an authoritative personality, namely conduct that exerts positive influence and earns respect. The teacher's religious commitment and honesty reflect the sub-competency of noble character and exemplarity. In this way, normative formulations of personality competence acquire concrete form in daily behaviour that students can observe. Studies of Islamic educational foundations similarly present exemplary figures marked by integrity, patience, and composure as models for those who educate and discuss the qualifications that educators should possess (Abd, 2024).

On the behaviours that students could observe, the teacher's self-reports and the students' accounts largely converged. The teacher stated that she strove to be punctual, courteous, and exemplary in worship, and the students independently described the same behaviours; one student even cited the consistency between teaching and practice as the reason the teacher deserved to be emulated. This pattern is consistent with the classical view, articulated in al-Zarnūjī's *Ta'līm al-Muta'allim*, that the teacher is the foremost exemplar in the learning process and that students' respect for the teacher underpins character formation (Huda et al., 2024). The convergence was not complete, however. The teacher's acknowledgement that consistency was difficult to sustain suggests that the exemplarity the students saw required continual effort, and the students' uniformly positive descriptions may partly reflect what was visible to them. Within these limits, the teacher's authority in this case appeared to derive less from punishment than from the unity of word and deed.

In the students' accounts, what stood out most was the teacher's conduct in everyday relationships, namely patience, friendliness, and fair treatment. Students did not cite the breadth of the teacher's knowledge or her instructional skill as what encouraged them to behave well, but the way she treated them. This suggests that, at least in this case, personality competence functioned as a foundation for the other competencies: mastery of moral content becomes meaningful to students most readily when it is conveyed by a teacher whose behaviour they can trust. For PAI teachers this demand is heavier, because the subject they teach is moral character itself, and any inconsistency between their words and actions immediately weakens the message. Research in Islamic boarding schools has likewise positioned teacher role modelling as the core method of student development, delivered through direct daily practice and through examples drawn from exemplary Islamic figures (Fauziah et al., 2026).

The second finding shows that personality competence was enacted through four pathways: role modelling in instruction, habituation of discipline, religious habituation, and guidance and motivation. This pattern resembles the character education paradigm identified at an integrated Islamic elementary school, where character was acculturated through exemplary behaviour, discipline, habituation, wise advice, and rewards for good conduct (Wasehudin et al., 2024). The teacher's statement that students imitate behaviour more readily than they absorb explanations also resonates with the principle of exemplarity in QS. Al-Ahzab [33]: 21. Role modelling, however, did not stand alone; it was reinforced by daily habits such as prayer, Qur'an recitation, congregational worship, and punctuality, so that the values modelled were repeated until they became habitual. This is consistent with the finding of Hantika and Rohana (2022) that discipline, honesty, and

responsibility develop through habituation and role modelling at school, and with research that treats role modelling as a deliberately designed component of character education programmes (Osman, 2024).

The way the teacher handled rule violations is equally important. Students said they accepted advice because reprimands were delivered privately and courteously, accompanied by an explanation of the consequences of their actions, so they did not feel humiliated. In their accounts, reprimands thus functioned as guidance rather than mere sanctions, whereas public reprimands risk provoking shame and resistance. This practice is consistent with evidence that teachers who perceive a positive school climate and hold higher self-efficacy make greater use of positive rather than punitive behaviour management strategies (Brannon & Clark, 2024). A comparable pattern was reported among PAI teachers in a vocational school, who combined preventive religious habituation with curative measures such as personal advice, coordination with counsellors, and parental involvement (Sumiyati et al., 2025). The changes students reported, such as greater discipline, more respect for parents and teachers, more appreciation of peers, and greater responsibility, correspond to the indicators of noble character used in this study. Nonetheless, these changes are students' self-reports and should therefore be read as indications rather than measured outcomes.

The four pathways are mutually reinforcing. Role modelling gives students a concrete picture of good behaviour, habituation provides opportunities to repeat it, advice and exemplary stories explain its rationale, and personal guidance reaches students who have not been touched by the other three. This may help explain why, in this case, character formation did not rely on a single method. The PAI teacher in this study combined role modelling, habituation, assignments, group discussion, religious activities, and appreciation. The use of discussion is notable because the role of Islamic education teachers extends beyond transmitting content to fostering students' higher-order thinking (Alotaibi, 2024). Such variety matters because different students respond to different approaches.

These findings also carry curricular implications. At SMPIT Mutiara Hikmah, worship habituation, Qur'anic learning, and moral guidance are not extracurricular additions but structural components of an integrated curriculum that combines the Independent Curriculum with an Islamic curriculum. In this case, the teacher's personality competence appeared to be what brought this curriculum to life: participants' accounts suggest that the planned habituation programmes became meaningful to students when teachers modelled them consistently. This aligns with a literature-based analysis arguing that the Independent Curriculum in Islamic schools enables the integration of academic competencies with Islamic values and character development, but that its effectiveness depends on continuous teacher professional development and institutional capacity (Sultani & Sulthani, 2026). It also echoes evidence that well-designed curricular materials can cultivate specific character traits; for example, local-wisdom-based modules have been shown to foster peace-loving character among elementary students (Asrial et al., 2022). Curriculum design and teacher personality may therefore be viewed as two sides of the same process of character formation.

The third finding concerns supporting and inhibiting factors. A religious school climate, support from the school and foundation, and teacher–parent collaboration indicate that teacher personality competence does not operate in a vacuum. An Islamic school culture turns the teacher's good conduct into a shared habit rather than an individual effort, while religious study circles, training, and supervision, as reported by the teacher, give her space to keep improving herself. Because this institutional support was reported only by the teacher, it should be read as her perspective rather than as corroborated evidence. This is consistent with evidence that clinical supervision can strengthen teachers' pedagogical, personality, social, and professional

competencies in Islamic boarding schools (Arifin et al., 2023), and that community-based, culturally responsive professional development can offer teachers authentic opportunities for learning (Nganga & Kambutu, 2024). The teacher's admission that maintaining consistency is difficult shows that personality competence is not a one-time achievement but an ongoing effort sustained through self-reflection and institutional support. Teacher development in schools tends to be understood as improving instructional skills, yet teachers also need space to cultivate their personal qualities, for example through religious study circles, peer mentoring, and supervision that provides feedback on attitudes and not merely on teaching administration.

The inhibiting factors identified, namely diverse student backgrounds, peer and social media influences, and limited awareness among some students, resemble those reported by Talibo et al. (2026) in an elementary school, where the negative influence of digital media and limited parental supervision constrained moral development. Similar challenges, including uneven access to technology and tensions between traditional values and digital culture, have been noted in discussions of Islamic character education in the Industry 5.0 era (Adiyono et al., 2024). This similarity suggests that the challenges of moral education in the digital era cut across school levels. Values instilled at school do not always carry over outside school, so the teacher's example must be continued through family supervision. Parental engagement has been shown to affect character education outcomes (Ariani et al., 2022), and parents' perspectives on home-based character education activities point to the home as a complementary site of character formation (Paul et al., 2020). This case suggests that even in an integrated Islamic school, a religious environment does not automatically shield students from external influences; school–family collaboration therefore appears to be a prerequisite rather than a complement. At the same time, diversity in students' characters is not solely an obstacle, because it requires teachers to adopt individualised approaches, which the students in this study valued as part of the teacher's capacity to guide them.

The novelty of this study lies in three aspects. First, it takes personality competence itself, rather than the PAI teacher's role in general, as the unit of analysis and examines its forms, enactment, and influencing factors together in an integrated Islamic junior high school. This distinguishes it from Nasrullah et al. (2023), whose study of a similarly named but separate vocational school addressed PAI teachers' overall role in character education, and from studies that were set in elementary or senior secondary schools, focused on a single strategy, relied on surveys, or were conceptual. Second, by setting students' accounts alongside the teacher's, it shows that what students noticed most was not the content of advice but the consistency of the teacher's behaviour and the manner of reprimand, while also exposing where the two perspectives diverged. Third, it interprets the teacher's personal conduct as part of how an integrated Islamic curriculum is enacted in daily school life. Theoretically, the findings are consistent with the view that personality competence operates through a sequence of role modelling, habituation, and personal guidance, sustained by school culture and curriculum, although a single case cannot establish this relationship. Practically, they suggest that schools should develop teachers' personal qualities systematically, not merely their pedagogical skills, strengthen communication with parents, and equip students to use social media wisely. For PAI teachers, the manner of reprimand, patience, and fair treatment emerged in this case as part of moral teaching rather than as peripheral to it.

This study has several limitations. The participants were limited to one PAI teacher and two eighth-grade students at a single school, and the students were selected with staff assistance, which may have favoured students with positive views of the teacher. The interviews were conducted in one session at the school, which may have encouraged socially desirable answers, and the number of observation sessions was limited. Changes in students' character were not measured independently but were reported by the students themselves, so the study cannot establish that the teacher's personality competence caused these changes. The findings should therefore be read as an

in-depth interpretation of a single case that warrants testing in broader settings, with more diverse participants, and with independent measures of students' character.

5. Conclusion

The personality competence of the PAI teacher at SMPIT Mutiara Hikmah Bekasi was manifested in four forms: discipline and responsibility in carrying out duties, exemplary conduct in behaviour and speech, religious commitment in school life, and the capacity to nurture and guide students patiently. This competence was enacted through role modelling in instruction, habituation of discipline, habituation of worship, and personal guidance and motivation, including courteous reprimands for students who broke the rules. Students reported becoming more disciplined, more respectful toward teachers and parents, more appreciative of peers, and more responsible, although these changes were self-reported and not independently measured. What the students emphasised most was the consistency between the teacher's words and actions and the patient, friendly, and fair way in which she treated them.

The enactment of the teacher's personality competence was supported by a religious school climate, institutional support from the school and foundation through training and supervision, and teacher–parent collaboration. It was inhibited by the diversity of students' characters and backgrounds, peer and social media influences, and limited awareness among some students of the importance of good character. Within the limits of this single case, the findings suggest that the teacher's personality competence, as perceived by the participants, supported students' noble character formation chiefly through consistent role modelling reinforced by an integrated curriculum and school culture; they do not establish a causal effect. The contribution of this study is an integrated account of the forms, workings, and conditions of PAI teachers' personality competence in an integrated Islamic junior high school from both teacher and student perspectives, including the points at which these perspectives diverge.

Schools are advised to develop teachers' personal qualities through regular programmes, to include attitudes and role modelling in supervision, and to establish routine communication forums with parents on students' peer relationships and social media use. PAI teachers are advised to maintain their personal approach and to add guidance on social media ethics. Future research should involve more diverse participants, such as principals, homeroom teachers, and parents, should observe teachers over longer periods, and should measure changes in students' character using independent, standardised instruments.

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