



The Role Of Aqidah In Building Muslim Character In The Digital Era: A Theological And Psychological Perspective

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Abstract: This article explores the role of aqidah in shaping Muslim character in the digital era through the perspectives of theology and psychology. The study is motivated by a moral crisis amidst rapid technological advancements. Through a literature-based approach, the study highlights aqidah as the foundation of Islamic beliefs that shape behavior that is aligned with the values of the Qur'an and Sunnah, both in relationships with Allah and with fellow humans. Aqidah reinforces values such as honesty, responsibility, and justice, including in the digital space, fraught with challenges like misinformation and hate speech. The study emphasizes the importance of integrating aqidah education with psychology, such as behaviorism theory, through three stages: understanding, loving, and practicing good values. Instilling aqidah from an early age is deemed critical for character development. This article offers an interdisciplinary solution to the moral challenges younger generations face, demonstrating that strong aqidah equips individuals to manage digital behavior, adhere to Islamic values, and become dignified, ethical, and responsible individuals. The study provides practical and theoretical contributions to Islamic character education relevant to the modern era.

Keyword: Aqidah (Akidah), Character, Theology, Psychology

Abstrak: Artikel ini membahas peran akidah dalam membentuk karakter muslim di era digital melalui perspektif teologi dan psikologi. Penelitian ini berangkat dari krisis moral di tengah kemajuan teknologi. Dengan studi literatur, kajian ini menyoroti akidah sebagai fondasi keyakinan Islam yang membentuk perilaku sesuai nilai Al-Qur'an dan sunnah, baik dalam hubungan dengan Allah maupun sesama manusia. Akidah memperkuat nilai kejujuran, tanggung jawab, dan keadilan, termasuk di ruang digital yang dipenuhi tantangan seperti informasi palsu dan ujaran kebencian. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya pendidikan akidah yang terintegrasi dengan psikologi, seperti teori behaviorisme, melalui tiga tahap: memahami, mencintai, dan menerapkan nilai kebaikan. Penanaman akidah sejak usia dini dianggap krusial untuk perkembangan karakter. Artikel ini menawarkan solusi interdisipliner bagi tantangan moral generasi muda, menunjukkan bahwa akidah yang kuat membantu individu mengontrol perilaku digital, berpegang pada nilai Islam, serta menjadi pribadi beradab dan bertanggung jawab. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi praktis dan teoretis bagi pendidikan karakter Islami yang relevan dengan era modern.

Kata kunci : Akidah, Karakter, Teologi, Psikologi

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Introduction

In today's modern society, the issue of character and moral crises has become a prominent topic frequently discussed on both national and international levels. For Muslims, maintaining moral and spiritual integrity presents a significant challenge amidst rapid technological advancements and the ever-evolving era (Nafsaka, 2023; Rahmania, 2024). One of the primary foundations in shaping a person's character is aqidah, as it enables individuals to act and behave by Islamic guidance, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah. A strong aqidah is the foundation for building solid personal integrity (Banna, 2019; Nasution Z., 2019).

In Indonesia, the character crisis among the younger generation is increasingly evident. A contributing factor is neglecting aqidah-based values, which are essential in shaping character across family, educational, and social settings. While digital technology has advanced rapidly, the development of moral character has not kept pace. When misused, technology can hinder moral development (Agnia, 2021; Lestari, 2018). Alarming statistics from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection show that 20,863 cases of violence were reported between January and October 2024, with numbers still rising (Lado, 2022). This illustrates the urgency of addressing character development comprehensively and contextually.

To address this crisis, this study explores aqidah from an integrative perspective, specifically through the lenses of theology and psychology. Imam Ghazali's thought, rooted in the Ash'ari school, offers a balanced view that harmonizes reason and revelation. This approach emphasizes that while reason plays a role, it has limitations in understanding transcendent realities, which must be grounded in divine revelation (Samad, 2019). In today's era of information overload and "post-truth" phenomena, theological understanding often becomes shallow and fragmented, as people accept information without adequate verification (Irama, 2022).

On the other hand, psychology provides a complementary framework for understanding character formation. From a psychological perspective, character results from the dynamic interplay between biological predispositions, social experiences, and educational influences (Hermino, 2015). Learning processes, moral development, and the environment—especially within family and school—are all essential in shaping one's character. Behaviorism, for example, explains how behavior is formed through conditioning, with John B. Watson emphasizing the significance of hereditary and environmental factors (Majid, 2020).

Although both theological and psychological perspectives have been studied independently, their integration remains underexplored in the context of aqidah and character development. Previous studies have discussed theological

and psychological elements separately or in broad, interdisciplinary contexts. For instance, Dariyo (2023) and Chamidi (2022) examined educational improvements through multiple disciplinary lenses, while Masmuri (2016), Silaen (2023), and Mujib (2005) addressed specific themes like sexual deviation or Islamic psychology. Hasibuan (2024), Ulum (2024), and Ramadhani (2024) explored theological or psychological dimensions within Islamic education.

However, these studies have not sufficiently addressed how aqidah can serve as a practical and holistic model for character building when approached through a combined theological-psychological framework. This research thus presents a distinctive approach by directly integrating theological depth with psychological insight. It posits that psychological well-being—manifested in values such as gratitude, sincerity, and patience—is often nurtured by firm theological grounding (Septia, 2023).

This study's contribution is demonstrating that effective teaching and internalization of aqidah can be more impactful when approached holistically. Instead of limiting itself to doctrinal explanations, it explores how theological principles can support psychological growth and moral behavior. This aligns with the view that theology, which investigates the human being's spiritual essence, and psychology, which examines cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dynamics, must not be seen in isolation (Daryanto, 2024). The integration of both offers a more comprehensive strategy for addressing character crises in contemporary Muslim societies.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach to examine the role of aqidah in shaping the character of the younger generation amid digital-era advancements. The qualitative method was chosen because it allows researchers to explore complex human and spiritual phenomena with depth and contextual understanding (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach is particularly suitable for examining abstract constructs like aqidah and character, which are shaped by religious beliefs, experiences, and sociocultural contexts. Using a structured literature review technique, data were collected through library research (Fauziah, 2023). The researcher systematically searched academic databases such as Scopus, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar using keywords such as aqidah, character development, Islamic theology, and psychology. Inclusion criteria focused on peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and theses published between 2000 and 2024, while non-academic sources were excluded. The literature was analyzed through descriptive and thematic content analysis to enhance validity, synthesizing key findings from theological and psychological frameworks (Snyder, 2019; Xiao & Watson, 2019).

The justification for using a qualitative approach is its strength in providing rich, interpretive insights into the relationship between belief systems and behavior, especially where theology intersects with psychology. Theology examines the spiritual and divine-human relationship, while psychology explores the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions reflecting internalized faith (Arifah, 2024). The integrative analysis of both disciplines allows researchers to understand how aqidah-based values like sincerity, gratitude, and patience can shape psychological well-being and moral character (Septia, 2023). Moreover, qualitative research effectively captures dynamic and contextual factors influencing moral identity in youth (Varpio et al., 2020). This methodological framework ensures that the study interprets data meaningfully and contributes to theory development within interdisciplinary Islamic studies (Nowell et al., 2017).

Results And Discussions

Result

Aqidah as the Foundation of Character in the Digital Era

In the digital era, integrating Islamic theology (aqidah) with psychological principles becomes increasingly urgent due to the complexities of technological advancements and moral challenges. Aqidah, encompassing core beliefs such as faith in Allah, angels, revealed scriptures, prophets, the Day of Judgment, and divine predestination, serves not merely as a set of theological affirmations but as a comprehensive ethical framework that guides human behavior (Lubis, 2021). This dual function—as both spiritual compass and behavioral regulator—enables aqidah to form a solid basis for moral development in modern Muslim societies.

The relevance of aqidah to psychological development is supported by classical and contemporary thought. Islamic scholars like Abu Zayd al-Balkhi and Al-Ghazali emphasized soul purification and character refinement as essential components of religious life, aligning with current psychological theories on well-being and moral psychology (Al-Zyoud et al., 2021; Noor & Saleem, 2020). This demonstrates that the teachings of early Muslim scholars were ahead of their time in recognizing the interrelation between inner belief systems and outward ethical behavior.

Islamic pedagogy places significant emphasis on *adab* (morality) as central to education, valuing the cultivation of virtues such as honesty, humility, and perseverance over the mere acquisition of intellectual knowledge (Munawir, 2024). Modern psychological models echo this view, proposing that moral development should progress through knowing, loving, and doing the good (Sudrajat, 2011; Santrock, 2018; Zhao et al., 2022). In a digital context where identity is often masked and consequences seem remote, anchoring behavior in internalized aqidah becomes critical.

The formative years of a child's life provide a fertile ground for character building. The Islamic practice of reciting the adhan in the newborn's ear is more than ritual—it represents the symbolic initiation of aqidah as early moral orientation (Aryani, 2015). Neuroscientific studies affirm that this early stage of life is vital for cognitive and emotional development, reinforcing the need for early religious education (Susiba, 2019). Furthermore, Bandura's social learning theory underscores that modeled experiences profoundly shape children's behavior, especially those within family and school contexts (Setiyowati, 2020; Bandura, 2019).

Effective moral education must also consider the child's unique personality and interests. Forcing children into rigid molds can stifle their psychological growth and moral agency (Risnawati, 2021). Therefore, an integrative educational model that accommodates individual differences while reinforcing Islamic values is essential (Siregar, 2017). Islamic psychology distinguishes between innate personality traits and moral character, suggesting that while personality may be inherited, character is developed and refined through conscious effort (Ramadhan, 2023).

Aqidah plays not only a personal role but also a national one. Indonesia's state ideology, Pancasila, places belief in one God as its foundational principle, signifying that religious values are integral to civic and social virtues (Nata, 2021). This highlights that strengthening aqidah through education is a cultural and national imperative for moral resilience in facing digital-era challenges (Rofiah, 2016; Fauzi et al., 2021).

Theology of Aqidah and Its Implications on Character in the Digital World

Aqidah, in its theological dimension, extends its impact beyond individual belief to shaping moral character in the digital landscape. The primary doctrines—Tawhid (oneness of God), belief in prophethood, the revealed scriptures, eschatology, angels, and divine destiny—serve as ethical anchors in digital interactions (Nasution, 2023). Tawhid cultivates an awareness of divine surveillance (*muraqabah*), which fosters self-regulation and ethical conduct online (Aulia, 2021; Rangkuti, 2024; Abdul Aziz, 2020). In an environment where anonymity often leads to irresponsibility, Tawhid reinforces internal moral accountability.

Aqidah shapes digital behavior by instilling foundational values. For example, honesty (*shiddq*) ensures truthfulness in speech and transaction, while justice (*adl*) demands fairness and ethical consideration for others, particularly in digital commerce and online communication (Puspitasari, 2023; Rangkuti, 2017)—these values, when internalized, curb behaviors such as misinformation and

exploitation. Aqidah thus acts as a moral compass, even when external law may fail to regulate behavior effectively (Sultan, 2021).

The ethical model of the Prophet Muhammad SAW provides a template for digital interaction. His traits—honesty, patience, and compassion—can be translated into online conduct that avoids provocation and upholds respect for differing views (Ali, 2020). This model challenges the culture of online aggression and replaces it with prophetic ethics that dignify communication. Belief in the Day of Judgment (hisab) deepens moral sensitivity. It instills awareness that every action, including those done in cyberspace, will be accounted for (Nasir, 2019). Such theological awareness fosters digital caution, ensuring individuals verify facts before sharing and avoiding content that may harm others. Similarly, belief in qadar (divine destiny) nurtures patience and helps users avoid reactive behaviors, especially in emotionally charged online spaces (Rahman, 2021).

Aqidah as a Psychological Foundation in the Formation of Muslim Character in the Digital Era

From a psychological standpoint, aqidah contributes substantially to emotional stability, self-regulation, and resilience. Unlike reductionist psychological models focusing solely on observable behavior or biological predisposition, Islamic psychology integrates the metaphysical, recognizing the soul (nafs) as central to human conduct (Septia, 2023; Arroisi, 2020). This offers a more holistic understanding of character development in a digital society.

Behaviorism remains useful in analyzing digital moral behavior. It posits that behavior is shaped through reinforcement, which aligns with Islamic practice that repeatedly instills virtuous acts through prayer, fasting, and other rituals (Amalia, 2016). These acts serve as behavioral training that reinforce aqidah-driven character, making moral conduct habitual. However, contemporary society faces widespread moral decay, from online gambling to cyberbullying. This crisis is partly rooted in failing to integrate aqidah into daily behavioral patterns (Sopian, 2018). While Islamic education has addressed moral values, it often lacks the practical orientation necessary for behavioral transformation (Anwar, 2017).

Psychological factors such as trauma, poverty, and emotional neglect contribute to moral lapses. Children raised in unstable environments are more likely to develop destructive behavior due to a lack of internalized moral guidance (Fairuzzen, 2024). Lickona's list of societal warning signs—ranging from drug abuse to a decline in work ethic—can be traced to the erosion of spiritual values (Sapitri, 2022). Environmental conditioning also plays a crucial role; living in an immoral context can shape a person's values and behavior unless counteracted by strong religious formation (Hetharia, 2023).

The criminal psychology perspective offered by Yochelson and Samenow emphasizes that criminal behavior stems from cognitive distortions such as

egocentrism and lack of empathy, rather than inner conflict (Mamluchah, 2020). This supports the argument that psychological reform must involve reconfiguring belief systems, especially those rooted in aqidah. Two factors cause a person to carry out actions not by existing norms and ethical standards; the first is a factor from within oneself or the individual (internal). This includes something that is the potential that exists in a person when he is born, factors secondly, social or environmental, this has a significant influence on a person's psychology, a good environment will lead a person to good behavior and habits, on the other hand, if you live in a bad environment, this means that in that environment many events are not by the norms and norms. Ethics, drug abuse, and the number of criminals, then this environment will affect a person's psychology. If they cannot be strong enough to maintain a good personality, the potential for being contaminated by such actions is greater (Hetharia, 2023). The theory of why crime occurs from a psychological perspective when viewed from Yochelson (psychiatrist) and Samenow (psychologist) as outlined in their book *The Criminal Personality*, he rejects the opinion of psychoanalysts who state that criminal acts occur due to internal conflict, the two figures above think that the perpetrator evil is an angry person, feels a sense of superiority who thinks that he is above and superior to other people and feels irresponsible and free for the behavior he makes, this kind of person, if he feels he has received an attack or threat, will not think for a long time and act recklessly, namely using violence and crime (Mamluchah, 2020).

According to data covered by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, 23,667 cases of violence occurred throughout 2024, 20,947 cases of violence occurred against women, 5,197 cases of violence occurred against men, 15,518 cases of violence occurred in the household, this indicates that almost 75% of cases of violence occur in a small scope, domestic violence also indicates that the character and morals of this nation have significantly declined, lack of understanding of religion and science are the most significant factors in violence in life. All events and behaviors will refer to education in the family, parents are required to create a comfortable, peaceful and happy family environment, in every life we will not be free from a problem, so the role of the family in this case must teach children how to solve a problem with a calm mind, full consideration and careful to take a stance (Setiawan, 2023).

Discussion

Aqidah as the Foundation of Character in the Digital Era

Aqidah plays a central role in shaping Muslim character in the digital age, where moral boundaries are often blurred. Serving as a spiritual compass and behavioral guide, aqidah anchors ethical conduct in online environments. Classical thinkers like Al-Ghazali and al-Balkhi emphasized soul purification, aligning with modern psychology, highlighting early stages of moral development (Al-Zyoud,

2021; Noor, 2020). Islamic emphasis on adab reflects contemporary moral education theories (Santrock, 2018; Zhao, 2022). When instilled early, aqidah provides a stable foundation for consistent moral behavior.

Early childhood education and modeled behavior reinforce the strength of aqidah-based character formation. Practices such as the adhan at birth introduce core spiritual values (Aryani, 2015; Susiba, 2019). Social learning theory affirms that family and school significantly shape children's behavior (Bandura, 2019; Setiyowati, 2020). Character education considering personality differences proves more effective in internalizing values (Siregar, 2017; Ramadhan, 2023). Embedding aqidah in Pancasila illustrates its importance for personal piety and national moral resilience (Nata, 2021; Rofiah, 2016).

Theology of Aqidah and Its Implications on Character in the Digital World

The theological foundations of aqidah play a significant role in guiding ethical behavior in the digital world. Core beliefs such as tawhid, prophethood, and divine destiny are internal controls that promote responsibility even when external enforcement is lacking (Nasution, 2023). Through the muraqabah concept, Tawhid cultivates awareness of divine observation, fostering digital self-regulation and discouraging immoral online conduct (Aulia, 2021; Rangkuti, 2024). In digital spaces where anonymity often weakens accountability, aqidah offers a moral framework that strengthens personal integrity.

Furthermore, aqidah promotes values like honesty and justice, essential in online interactions and digital commerce (Puspitasari, 2023; Rangkuti, 2017). The Prophet Muhammad's ethical model is a powerful guide for online etiquette, promoting respectful and patient communication (Ali, 2020). Theological awareness of the Day of Judgment enhances caution in digital actions, encouraging fact-checking and discouraging harmful content (Nasir, 2019). Likewise, belief in qadar nurtures patience and reduces reactive behavior in emotionally charged situations (Rahman, 2021). Thus, aqidah offers a comprehensive moral compass for navigating the complexities of the digital age.

Aqidah as a Psychological Foundation in the Formation of Muslim Character in the Digital Era

From a psychological perspective, aqidah provides a holistic foundation for emotional regulation, self-discipline, and moral resilience. Islamic psychology integrates spiritual and behavioral dimensions, distinguishing itself from reductionist views focusing only on external actions or biology (Septia, 2023; Arroisi, 2020). Ritual acts like prayer and fasting align with behaviorist principles by reinforcing repeated moral habits (Amalia, 2016). However, when aqidah is not translated into daily actions, society becomes vulnerable to moral degradation, such as online gambling and cyberbullying (Sopian, 2018; Anwar, 2017). This

highlights the need for Islamic education that teaches values and fosters behavioral transformation.

Environmental and psychological instability further weaken character formation. Trauma, poverty, and neglect diminish moral awareness, while corrupt environments normalize deviance (Fairuzzen, 2024; Hetharia, 2023). The criminal psychology theory by Yochelson and Samenow asserts that deviant behavior arises from egocentric thinking and emotional detachment rather than internal conflict (Mamluchah, 2020). This suggests that reshaping one's belief system through aqidah is essential for character recovery. Data from 2024 showing over 23,000 cases of domestic violence emphasizes the need for family-based religious education to instill problem-solving, empathy, and moral clarity from an early age (Setiawan, 2023).

Conclusion

This research affirms the fundamental role of akidah in shaping a resilient Muslim character, especially in the digital era marked by increasing moral challenges. Integrating profound theological understanding with psychological approaches offers conceptual and practical frameworks for addressing moral degradation among the younger generation. Akidah-based education, when instilled early and reinforced by supportive family, school, and community environments, has proven effective in cultivating noble personal values. Moreover, when used wisely, digital technology can be a constructive tool in character development, yet it poses significant risks when misused. Therefore, developing a contextual and adaptive akidah education model that aligns with contemporary developments is imperative. Such an approach will nurture individuals who are not only intellectually competent but also spiritually and morally grounded by Islamic principles. These findings contribute meaningfully to the development of Islamic education curricula and serve as a foundation for formulating character-building strategies based on akidah in the modern age.

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