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Developing character education in Islamic primary schools through a teoanthropoecocentric paradigm

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ABSTRACT

This study highlights the fragmented nature of character education in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, which tends to emphasize normative moral religious instruction while neglecting anthropological and ecological dimensions. The absence of an integrative paradigm weakens holistic character formation, social responsibility, and environmental awareness, necessitating a theoanthropoecocentric approach in educational practice. The study aims to examine the implementation of the theoanthropocentric paradigm in character education at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah through the integration of divine, human, and environmental values in learning processes and daily educational practices. Employing a literature review method, this research analyzes character education grounded in the theoanthropocentric paradigm through rigorous source selection and conceptual synthesis to strengthen the theoretical foundation of holistic character education integrating theocentric, anthropocentric, and ecocentric values. The findings indicate that the theoanthropoecocentric paradigm effectively fosters holistic character development among Madrasah Ibtidaiyah students by integrating divine, human, and environmental values. Character education extends beyond normative moral instruction toward lived religious practice, ethical social relations, and ecological responsibility, with effectiveness contingent upon implementation consistency, institutional support, and school culture. The implications underscore the need to strengthen policies, curricula, and school culture that consistently integrate divine, human, and ecological values, alongside enhancing teachers' roles as role models in promoting sustainable and holistic character education in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.

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INTRODUCTION

Character education has become a central focus in Indonesia's national education system, including in Islamic elementary schools (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah). However, its implementation in MI tends to be oriented toward academic achievement and mastery of cognitive aspects. As a result, the development of moral values, ethics, spirituality, and concern for God, fellow humans, and the environment has not yet been fully integrated into the learning process (Bajuri et al., 2021; Fidelis et al., 2024; Colon & Galigao, 2025). This condition has led to various social issues at the primary school level, such as weak moral reasoning, declining empathy, and increasing deviant behaviors, including bullying and dishonesty (Lo Cricchio et al., 2021; Hikmat et al., 2024; Brugman et al., 2024). These phenomena indicate that partial character education has not been able to develop students' personalities holistically. Therefore, a more comprehensive and holistic approach to character education is needed, especially within the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah environment.

Several studies indicate that character education overly focused on cognitive aspects may lead to behavioral problems in students, such as lack of discipline, dependence, and low integrity and personal responsibility (Susilawati et al., 2020; Aruğaslan, 2024). Such an approach tends to neglect the formation of affective and spiritual dimensions, which are fundamental to character development. In this context, the Theoanthroposentric paradigm emerges as a conceptual alternative, offering a harmonious integration of divine, human, and environmental dimensions in the educational process (Susanto et al., 2022; Sikandar et al., 2024). This paradigm asserts that character formation cannot be achieved solely through the transmission of moral knowledge but must be supported by the internalization of spiritual values, reinforcement of ethical social relations, and cultivation of ecological awareness among students. Thus, Theoanthroposentric-based character education has the potential to shape individuals who are faithful, virtuous, socially responsible, and environmentally conscious (Dasopang, 2020; Begum et al., 2022).

Although several studies have examined character education in Islamic educational institutions, the application of the Theoanthroposentric paradigm at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah level remains relatively limited and has not been explored in depth. Hasriani et al. (2025) emphasize the importance of strengthening moral values in student character formation, but do not integrate the ecocentric dimension or human-nature relationships in learning. Salamuddin et al. (2025) focus more on the social and moral aspects of character education in MI, without incorporating environmental awareness as an integral part of the educational process. Meanwhile, Desfita et al. (2024) stress the importance of integrating spiritual, social, and environmental dimensions in Islamic education but do not specifically address the context of primary Islamic education in MI. These findings indicate a research gap regarding the comprehensive integration of spiritual, social, and ecological values in character education at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.

This study aims to explore in depth the application of the Theoanthroposentric paradigm in character education at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah through the integration of divine, human, and environmental values. The study focuses on how these values are internalized in the learning process and daily educational practices. Theoretically, this research is expected to expand scholarly understanding of the Theoanthroposentric paradigm in the context of Islamic primary education, particularly at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah level. Practically, the findings are expected to provide contributions in the form of models and strategies for character education that are more holistic, contextual, and sustainable. Additionally, this study is anticipated to serve as a reference for educators, school administrators, and policymakers in developing a character education curriculum that is more integrated and responsive to students' spiritual, social, and ecological needs.

This study is based on the assumption that the formation of good, ethical, and responsible student character requires the integration of spiritual awareness, positive social attitudes, and concern for environmental sustainability throughout the learning process. Character education cannot be limited to cognitive aspects alone but must engage students' affective and practical life dimensions. Therefore, this study proposes several key research questions: (1) how is the integration of spiritual, social, and environmental values implemented in learning at Madrasah

Ibtidaiyah; (2) what factors support or hinder the implementation of these value integrations in the classroom; and (3) what is the impact of integrating spiritual, social, and environmental values on students' character development in daily learning practices within the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah environment.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a literature review approach to explore the implementation of character education based on the Theoanthroposentric paradigm in Islamic elementary schools (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, MI). This approach was chosen to build a deep conceptual and theoretical understanding of character education within the context of Islamic primary education. A literature review allows the researcher to examine various relevant scholarly sources, such as reputable journal articles, academic books, research reports, and educational policy documents (Boote & Beile, 2005). Although it does not involve empirical field data collection, this approach is suitable for mapping the concepts, principles, and models of Theoanthroposentric-based character education that have been developed in various contexts. Therefore, the study focuses on strengthening the theoretical foundation as a basis for analyzing holistic character education in MI.

To minimize the limitations of a literature review, which depends on the quality of sources, the study applied strict literature selection criteria (Gusenbauer & Gauster, 2025). Sources were selected based on topic relevance, academic credibility, novelty, and their connection to character education and Islamic education. The literature analyzed included studies on character education, Islamic values, primary education, and the integration of spiritual, social, and ecological dimensions in learning. This selection aims to avoid bias arising from limited or unrepresentative sources (Ahmed, 2024). Furthermore, literature from various theoretical perspectives was analyzed comparatively to enrich viewpoints and strengthen conceptual validity (Kholodniak, 2023). This approach is expected to produce a more balanced and comprehensive understanding of the Theoanthroposentric paradigm in MI character education.

The Theoanthroposentric paradigm, which is the focus of this study, emphasizes a harmonious relationship among divine, human, and environmental dimensions in character education. Therefore, the literature reviewed focused on character education studies that simultaneously integrate these three dimensions (Snyder, 2019). Sources included theories of character education based on religious values, social ethics, and environmental education concepts emphasizing human-nature relationships. The study not only examined normative ideas but also explored practices and models for implementing character education in Islamic educational institutions, particularly at the primary level. Through this approach, the Theoanthroposentric paradigm is understood not merely as an ideal concept but as an educational framework with tangible pedagogical and institutional implications.

The literature analysis process was conducted through a conceptual synthesis of various perspectives, theories, and relevant research findings. The researcher identified patterns, similarities, and differences in approaches to character education based on spiritual, social, and ecological values (Wolfram & Zhao, 2014). To reduce interpretive subjectivity, the analysis was carried out systematically, linking each literature finding to the Theoanthroposentric conceptual framework (Gulotta et al., 2023). The study also considered factors influencing the implementation of character education, such as curriculum, teaching methods, educators' roles, and the school environment. Although it does not empirically measure impacts, the analysis provides a conceptual overview of the potential contributions of Theoanthroposentric character education in shaping morally upright, faithful, and environmentally conscious students.

As a literature study, this research has limitations in depicting the empirical and contextual practice of character education in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. However, these limitations simultaneously constitute a conceptual strength, as the study is focused on formulating an analytical framework and mapping scholarly discourse in depth. The results are expected to serve as a theoretical foundation for subsequent qualitative or quantitative research examining the direct implementation of the

Theoanthroposentric paradigm in the field. Thus, this study provides an initial contribution in the form of conceptual understanding, identification of challenges, and strategic recommendations for developing holistic character education in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah that integrates divine, human, and environmental care values.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Application of theoanthropocentric values in character education

The findings indicate that the implementation of the Theoanthropocentric paradigm in character education contributes to the formation of students' holistic character development. This paradigm integrates spiritual (theocentric), social (anthropocentric), and environmental (ecocentric) values, enabling students to develop not only moral and social competencies but also religious awareness and ecological responsibility. Such integration fosters balanced intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and environmental consciousness among students. The implementation of these values is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Implementation of Theoanthropocentric Values in Students' Character Education

No	Dimension	Key Findings	Forms of Implementation
1	Spiritual (Theocentric)	Internalization of faith and obedience to God	Congregational prayers; pre- and post-learning prayers; Islamic education linking nature to divine power
2	Social (Anthropocentric)	Strengthening social relations based on Islamic moral values	Collaborative learning; Friday charity programs; anti-bullying initiatives
3	Environmental (Ecocentric)	Development of ecological awareness as a moral responsibility	Classroom and school cleanliness programs; tree planting; thematic learning integrating humans and nature
4	Holistic Character	Synergy of spiritual, social, and ecological values	Integration across subjects; teacher role modeling; routine habituation and extracurricular activities

Source: processed by the researcher, 2025

Table 1 illustrates the implementation of theo-anthropocentric values in students' character education through four dimensions. First, the spiritual dimension emphasizes the internalization of faith and devotion to God through congregational prayers and supplications. Second, the social dimension strengthens human relationships grounded in Islamic moral values through collaborative learning activities and the Friday charity program. Third, the environmental dimension fosters ecological awareness through cleanliness initiatives and tree-planting programs. Fourth, the holistic character dimension integrates spiritual, social, and ecological values through cross-curricular integration and teacher role modelling.

Based on the findings, the implementation of theo-anthropocentric values demonstrates a systematic integration of vertical relations with God, horizontal relations with fellow human beings, and environmental responsibility. The spiritual dimension serves as the foundational basis, as it cultivates transcendental awareness that is subsequently manifested in social and ecological actions. The novelty of this approach lies in the integration of three interconnected domains theocentric, anthropocentric, and ecocentric within the framework of Islamic character education. Environmental values, for instance, are not taught as separate subjects but are embedded as moral responsibilities grounded in religious principles. Holistic character formation is achieved through habitual practices and teachers' role modeling rather than through theoretical instruction alone. Consequently, this model transcends conventional character education approaches, which tend to address moral development in a more partial and fragmented manner.

Impact of theoanthropocentric values on madrasah ibtidaiyah students

The findings show that implementing Theoanthropocentric values in character education substantially impacts students' development at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Internalizing spiritual, social,

and ecocentric values through instruction, religious activities, social interaction, and environmental programs fosters religious awareness, social empathy, and ecological responsibility. These impacts are evident in daily behavior, attitudes, moral reasoning, and ethical responsibilities toward God, others, and the environment. Thus, this paradigm supports balanced learners with integrated intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and ecological competencies.

Table 2
Impact of Theoanthropocentric Values on Students' Character Development

No	Dimension	Key Impacts
1	Spiritual Aspect	Increased religious awareness, stronger discipline in worship, and deeper understanding of *tawḥīd*
2	Social Aspect	Greater empathy, improved collaboration, enhanced politeness, and stronger social responsibility
3	Environmental Aspect	Heightened environmental awareness, improved cleanliness behavior, and respect for public facilities
4	Holistic Character	Integrated intellectual, emotional, moral, and ecological development

Source: processed by the researcher, 2025

Table 2 shows that the implementation of theoanthropocentric values has a positive impact on students' character development across four aspects. The spiritual aspect increases religious awareness, worship discipline, and understanding of tawḥīd. The social aspect fosters empathy, collaboration, politeness, and social responsibility. The environmental aspect enhances ecological awareness, cleanliness behavior, and respect for public facilities. The holistic character aspect integrates intellectual, emotional, moral, and ecological development simultaneously. Thus, theoanthropocentric values are proven to shape students' character in a complete and balanced manner.

Based on the researcher's findings, the impact of theo-anthropocentric values shows that spiritual strengthening serves as the primary foundation, which subsequently extends to the social and environmental domains. The increased understanding of tawhid is not limited to ritual worship, but also transforms social ethics and ecological awareness. The social aspect reflects the internalization of Islamic moral values in everyday relationships, such as empathy and collaboration, indicating a well-developed prosocial character. Meanwhile, the environmental aspect indicates an awareness that nature is a trust from God (amanah), so maintaining cleanliness and preserving public facilities becomes an expression of religious responsibility. Most significantly, the integrated holistic character demonstrates that theo-anthropocentric values are able to unite cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and ecological domains within a comprehensive framework for character formation.

Constraints and enabling factors in implementing the theo–anthropo–ecocentric paradigm

The findings indicate that the implementation of the Theo Anthropo Ecocentric paradigm in character education at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah is shaped by a dynamic interaction between structural constraints and enabling factors across spiritual, social, and ecological dimensions. These challenges reflect both internal factors, such as students' readiness and behavioral habits, and external factors, including institutional support, pedagogical consistency, and school resources. Understanding these conditions is essential for assessing the feasibility and sustainability of holistic character education in Islamic primary education settings.

Table 3
Constraints and Supporting Factors of the Theo-Anthropo-Ecocentric Paradigm

No	Dimension	Constraints	Enabling Factors
1	Spiritual (Theocentric)	Inconsistent worship practices; limited instructional time for Islamic Religious Education	Teacher role modeling; integration of spiritual values across subjects; routine religious activities
2	Social	Limited collaborative skills; bullying	Collaborative learning models; social programs

	(Anthropocentric)	behaviors; lack of structured social programs	(charity and peer-support initiatives); continuous teacher mentoring
3	Environmental (Ecocentric)	Low initial environmental awareness; limited ecological facilities	School cleanliness and greening programs; thematic learning linking humans and nature; support from teachers and school community
4	Holistic Character	Inconsistent value integration; variation in implementation across classrooms	Cross-curricular value integration; habituation practices; extracurricular activities; supportive school culture

Source: processed by the researcher, 2025

Table 3 shows the constraints and enabling factors for implementing theoanthropocentric values across four dimensions. In the spiritual dimension, constraints include inconsistent worship practices and limited instructional time for Islamic Religious Education, supported by teacher role modeling and value integration. The social dimension is constrained by limited collaborative skills and bullying behaviors, supported by collaborative learning models and social programs. The environmental dimension faces low ecological awareness and limited facilities, supported by cleanliness programs and thematic learning. The holistic character dimension experiences inconsistent value integration, supported by cross-curricular integration and a supportive school culture.

Based on the findings, each dimension has internal constraints (e.g., limited collaborative skills) and structural constraints (e.g., limited instructional time for Islamic Religious Education), while the enabling factors are systemic, consisting of role modeling, structured programs, and school culture. An interesting pattern is that enabling factors do not always directly address constraints but rather build an ecosystem that indirectly fosters values. For example, low ecological awareness is addressed through cleanliness programs and thematic learning that connect humans and nature, not merely through lectures. The holistic dimension shows that inconsistencies in implementation across classrooms can be resolved through cross-curricular integration and habituation, which require collective commitment. Thus, successful implementation heavily depends on the synergy among formal programs, role modeling, and a supportive culture.

Discussion

Integrating theocentric, anthropocentric, and ecocentric values in Islamic primary education

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of character education based on the theoanthropocentric paradigm in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah fosters holistic character development by integrating spiritual, social, and ecological values. Character education is not understood merely as the acquisition of moral norms, but as a process of internalizing faith, social ethics, and environmental care within everyday learning practices (Muchtarom, 2023). Spiritual (theocentric) values serve as the primary foundation guiding students' behavior through religious habituation, teacher role modeling, and the integration of religious values into the curriculum (Syihabuddin, 2017; Zengin, 2025). These findings emphasize that students' religious character is formed through lived experiences rather than solely through conceptual instruction, allowing faith-based values to function as an ethical orientation in students' social and environmental lives.

In the social and environmental dimensions, the findings reveal that character education in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah encourages the development of empathy, cooperation, social responsibility, and ecological awareness among students. Extracurricular activities such as scouting, social service programs, and charitable initiatives play a significant role in cultivating anthropocentric values, including concern for others and collaborative skills (Miseliunaite et al., 2022; Pekkarinen, 2025). Meanwhile, environmentally oriented activities such as maintaining school cleanliness, greening programs, and nature-based thematic learning foster awareness that environmental stewardship is an integral part of religious responsibility (Rahmania, 2024). Consequently, students not only develop ethical social relations but also perceive nature as an essential component of their moral and spiritual responsibility.

Within the context of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah as Islamic primary education institutions, these findings demonstrate that the theoanthropocentric paradigm is well aligned with the social, cultural, and religious characteristics of learners. The integration of spiritual, social, and ecological values reflects the Islamic educational tradition that emphasizes balance between faith, action, and socio-environmental responsibility (Al-Gerafi et al., 2024; Asman et al., 2025). Learning practices that emphasize teacher exemplification, value habituation, and contextual experiences enable students to internalize character values sustainably. In this regard, theoanthropocentric-based character education functions not only as a pedagogical approach but also as a cultural strategy for shaping students who possess noble character, social concern, and responsibility toward the natural environment (Dirgantari & Cahyani, 2023).

Teoanthropocentric paradigm in holistic character education Islamic primary schools

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of the theoanthropocentric paradigm in character education at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah results in holistic character formation among students. The integration of spiritual (theocentric), social (anthropocentric), and environmental (ecocentric) dimensions operates in an interconnected and mutually reinforcing manner (Thompson & Barton, 1994). Spiritual awareness functions as a foundational value that mediates the development of social attitudes such as empathy, responsibility, and cooperation, while also moderating students' ecological behavior in environmental stewardship (Cooper et al., 2016). In this sense, the internalization of divine values not only directly influences religious discipline but also acts as a driving force for ethical social and ecological conduct (Sudirman et al., 2025). These interdimensional relationships demonstrate that character education does not proceed linearly, but rather through an integrative mechanism that simultaneously shapes moral, social, and ecological consciousness.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings both reinforce and extend previous studies on character education grounded in moral and spiritual values (Oldham & McLoughlin, 2025; Erihadiana et al., 2025). Unlike earlier research that primarily emphasized spiritual and social dimensions (Khobir et al., 2021), this study highlights the ecological dimension not as a complementary element, but as an integral component of students' character formation. The simultaneous integration of religious practices, collaborative learning, and environmentally oriented activities represents a conceptual novelty in framing character education as an interconnected value system. Accordingly, the theoanthropocentric paradigm within the context of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah contributes to Islamic education literature by emphasizing the ethical relationship among God, humans, and nature from the primary education level.

Within the social and institutional context of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah as Islamic primary education institutions, these findings reflect the strong influence of school religious culture, teacher role modeling, and routine habituation in shaping students' character (Masturin, 2024). Collective worship practices, social programs, and environmental activities function not merely as supplementary initiatives, but as primary media for value internalization (Nurizka et al., 2020; Sakti et al., 2024). These findings align with the characteristics of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, which place moral and faith-based education at the core of the curriculum, while simultaneously addressing contemporary social challenges such as moral degradation and environmental crises. Therefore, the theoanthropocentric paradigm can be understood as a contextually appropriate approach to Islamic primary education in Indonesia, as it harmonizes religious, social, and ecological objectives within a sustainable character education framework.

Challenges and enablers of teoanthropoecocentric character education implementation

The findings indicate that the implementation of the Theo-Anthropo-Ecocentric paradigm in character education at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah involves dynamic interactions between constraints and enabling factors. Challenges across spiritual, social, and ecological dimensions do not operate in isolation, but mutually influence the effectiveness of holistic value internalization (Rocha et al.,

2024; Amanbaikyzy & Jakavonytė-Staškuvienė, 2025). Inconsistent religious practices, negative social behaviors, and low environmental awareness suggest that character formation cannot rely solely on formal curriculum regulations. Conversely, enabling factors such as teacher role modeling, routine habituation, and collaborative programs function as mediating mechanisms that connect theological values with students' social and ecological practices (Eom et al., 2021; Stacey, 2024). Accordingly, the success of character education depends on interdimensional synergy, wherein spiritual values serve as a moral foundation that strengthens social attitudes and environmental awareness.

These findings extend previous studies on Islamic character education that have predominantly emphasized moral and social aspects in isolation. In contrast to earlier research focusing on cognitive or disciplinary constraints in character education (Sakban & Sundawa, 2023; Albet et al., 2024), this study demonstrates that the primary challenge lies in the consistency of cross-dimensional value integration. The novelty of this study lies in affirming that the ecological dimension is not merely an additional activity, but a critical variable that moderates the overall effectiveness of character education. Moreover, the study positions teacher exemplarity and school culture as key factors bridging theocentric values with social and ecological behaviors, thereby enriching the discourse on holistic character education based on the Theo Anthropo Ecocentric paradigm in Islamic primary education (Suharto, 2015).

Within the context of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah as Islamic primary education institutions, these findings reflect social and institutional realities that position teachers as central figures in character formation. Variations in implementation across classrooms and limitations in facilities indicate that the effectiveness of the Theo Anthropo cocentric paradigm is strongly influenced by school culture and institutional support (Ross, 2020). Value habituation through religious, social, and environmental activities becomes more effective when supported by a consistent and participatory religious environment (de Costa et al., 2025). Therefore, this paradigm is highly relevant to the Indonesian Islamic education context, which emphasizes moral integrity, communal values, and ecological responsibility. Conceptually, these findings underscore that holistic character education can only be achieved through continuity of practice, curriculum integration, and sustained role modeling within everyday school life.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of the teoanthropoecocentric paradigm in Islamic primary education effectively fosters holistic character formation by integrating theocentric, anthropocentric, and ecocentric values. Character education in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah extends beyond moral instruction to encompass lived religious practice, ethical social relations, and ecological responsibility. Spiritual values function as the ethical foundation that mediates students' social behavior and moderates their environmental awareness. Through habituation, teacher role modeling, collaborative learning, and environmentally oriented activities, students develop balanced moral, social, and ecological consciousness. However, the effectiveness of this paradigm depends on consistency of implementation, institutional support, and school culture. Overall, teoanthropoecocentric character education provides a contextually relevant and sustainable framework for Islamic primary education in addressing contemporary moral and environmental challenges.

This study contributes theoretically by advancing the teoanthropoecentric paradigm as an integrative framework in character education, extending prior moral spiritual models by positioning ecological values as a constitutive rather than supplementary dimension. The findings demonstrate that spiritual values mediate social character formation and moderate ecological behavior, offering a multidimensional model of character development in Islamic education that emphasizes relational ethics among God, humans, and nature from early educational stages. Practically, these findings imply that policymakers and school leaders should consistently integrate spiritual, social, and ecological values across curricula, pedagogy, and school culture. Teacher professional development

needs to prioritize moral role modeling and integrative instructional strategies, while schools are encouraged to institutionalize routine religious practices, collaborative social programs, and sustainable environmental activities, supported by strengthened school community partnerships to foster students' social responsibility and ecological awareness.

This study is limited by its qualitative scope and its specific focus on Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, which may constrain the generalizability of the findings. To address these limitations, future research could adopt mixed-method approaches or longitudinal designs to systematically assess the long-term impacts of Theoanthropoecocentric character education on students' moral, social, and ecological development. Additionally, comparative studies across diverse educational settings, regions, and cultural contexts are recommended to explore how implementation may vary contextually. Such research would enhance the theoretical generalization of the paradigm, provide practical insights for broader application, and inform evidence-based educational policy and curriculum development.

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