APPROACHES AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR TEACHING MORALITY: INSIGHTS FROM ISLAMIC AND CONVENTIONAL SCHOOLS

Zuwaira Abubakar[1] &

[1] Department of Islamic Studies, Sokoto State University, Nigeria. znamadee@gmail.com
[2] Department of Islamic Studies, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Nigeria. shehu.aboki@udusok.edu.ng

Abstract:
Schools are expected not only to transmit academic knowledge but also to cultivate students' moral character, making teachers' roles in moral education particularly significant. This study examines teachers' perceptions and practices regarding moral instruction in Islamic secondary schools under the Arabic and Islamic Education Board (AIEB) and conventional secondary schools under the Ministry of Education (MOE). Data were collected through questionnaires administered to teachers at 18 selected schools. The findings revealed a similar pattern of moral development approaches among students in both Islamic and conventional schools. In both types of schools, the overwhelming majority of teachers regard the teaching of morality as a core professional responsibility and report frequent attempts to integrate moral values into their teaching. Nevertheless, many respondents were unable to clearly articulate specific strategies used for moral integration, suggesting a gap between intention and practice. Moral counselling emerged as the most commonly employed strategy, whereas systematic integration of moral education into regular subject teaching was the least reported. Teachers also expressed near-unanimous agreement that school managements are committed to students' moral development. Formal moral instruction was primarily delivered through Religious Studies, Social Studies, and Civic Education, while co-curricular activities, such as drama and quizzes, served as supplementary avenues for reinforcement. This study recommends strengthening teachers' pedagogical skills in moral education, promoting clearer instructional strategies across subjects, and enhancing co-curricular programs to ensure that moral values are effectively translated into students' everyday behaviour.

Introduction

Teachers play a profound role in shaping children's moral development, often equal to that of parents, as teachers become role models once the child enters school. Al-Ghazali emphasized that schools are critical in forming moral and social behavior, but only when educators embody compassion, follow the Prophet's example, gently correct negative behaviors and guide with mercy rather than harshness. He further advised teachers to align lessons with learners' capacity, progress gradually, and maintain harmony between their words and actions (Al-Ghazali, 1402). Likewise, al-Nahlāwī viewed educators as heirs of the Prophets (AS), entrusted with continuing their mission through qualities such as piety (*Rabbāniyyah*), sincerity (*Ikhlās*), patience (*Ṣabr*), and truthfulness (*Ṣidq*) (Al-Nahlawi, 1428).

Modern scholarship echoes these classical insights, recognizing schools as essential environments for nurturing moral values alongside academic knowledge. Recent research stresses that effective moral education requires both structured curricula and practical opportunities for students to embody virtues (Gökçeli, 2025). While subjects such as civic education and religious studies often serve as formal avenues for teaching morality, extracurricular activities, including mentoring, drama, and community services, provide more experiential forms of moral learning.

Nonetheless, scholars such as Cam (2014) and Biesta (2009, 2010, 2015) have identified a persistent gap between academic instruction and moral education. While some institutions rely predominantly on theoretical or subject-based teaching with limited opportunities for lived moral experiences (Arthur, 2015), others emphasize that true moral formation occurs when teachers consciously model the virtues they seek to cultivate in their students, an approach consistent with the timeless educational principles upheld by Islamic scholars (Ibn Jamāʿah, 1354).

Despite the importance of morality in education, there is a limited research base on how different school systems, particularly Islamic secondary schools and conventional schools, structure their approaches to moral development. This lack of comparative insight limits the understanding of the strengths, challenges, and opportunities of each system. This study investigates the moral approaches and support systems employed by Islamic secondary schools under the Arabic and Islamic Education Board (AIEB) and conventional secondary schools under the Ministry of Education (MOE). It explores the curricular, co-curricular, and methodological strategies used by teachers to foster morality, with a view to identifying areas for the enhancement and greater integration of moral education in both systems.

Methodology

Population

The population of this study consisted of teachers from Islamic and conventional schools in Sokoto, Kebbi, and Zamfara States. In this research, Islamic schools refer to integrated Islamic schools under the jurisdiction of the Arabic and Islamic Education Board (AIEB). On the other hand, conventional schools refer to the public schools under the Ministry of Education. These two institutions are central to understanding how morality is taught in Nigerian schools, as they constitute the primary channels of formal education for young people in the study area. The Ministry of Education (MOE) oversees conventional secondary schools, while the Arabic and Islamic Education Board (AIEB) regulates Arabic and Islamic secondary schools.

Sample

Eighteen secondary schools were randomly selected, comprising nine Islamic schools and nine conventional schools. The schools were drawn from three states in Northwestern Nigeria—Sokoto, Kebbi, and Zamfara—with each state contributing six schools (three Islamic and three conventional). The questionnaire administered to teachers examined the schools' moral support structures and the strategies employed by teachers to fulfill their responsibilities towards students' moral development. To ensure confidentiality, both the schools and participating teachers were anonymized.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents the key characteristics of the biodata of the participants. The table highlights demographic details, such as age, gender, educational qualifications, and teaching experience.

Table 1: Characteristics of the Biodata of the Muslim Teachers Participants

Variables	Total N=190 (100%)	Males Total N=127 (67%)	Females Total N=63 (33%)
Age (Years)			
Less than 30	35 (18.4%)	22 (11.6%)	13 (6.8%)
30-39	88 (46.3%)	54 (28.4%)	34 (17.9%)
40-49	53 (27.9%)	38 (20.0%)	15 (7.9%)
50- Above	12 (6.3%)	11 (5.8%)	1 (0.5%)
Unspecified	2 (1.1%)	2 (1.1%)	0 (0%)
Highest Qualification			
NCE	54(28.4%)	33 (17.4%)	21 (11.1%)
Diploma	11 (5.8%)	9 (4.7%)	2 (1.1%)
Bachelor	101 (53.1%)	67 (35.3%)	34 (17.9%)
Master	14 (7.4%)	12 (6.3%)	2 (1.1%)
Ph.D.	1 (0.5)	1 (0.5%)	0 (0.0%)
H.N.D.	3 (1.6%)	1 (0.5%)	2 (1.1%)
Kulliyah	1 (0.5%)	1 (0.5%)	0 (0.0%)
Unspecified	5 (2.6%)	3 (1.6%)	2 (1.1%)
Type of School			
Islamic	93 (49%)	70 (36.9%)	23 (12.1%)
Conventional	97 (51.0%)	57 (30.0%)	40 (21.0%)
Teaching Experience (years)			
0-2	29 (15.2%)	24 (12.6%)	5 (2.6%)
3-5	41 (21.6%)	26 (13.7%)	15 (7.9%)
6-8	25 (13.2%)	11 (5.8%)	14 (7.4%)
9-11	29 (15.3%)	18 (9.5%)	11 (5.8%)
12-Above	64 (33.6%)	46 (24.2%)	18 (9.5%)
Unspecified	2 (1.1%)	2 (1.1%)	0 (0%)

Source: Data collected by the researcher from May to July 2021.

These results revealed that the majority of the participants were male (67%) and predominantly aged between 30 and 49 years (75%). There was almost a similar proportion of participants from conventional schools (51%) and Islamic schools (49%). In terms of education, the majority held either a bachelor's degree (53%) or an NCE qualification (28%). Most respondents had significant teaching experience, with 49% having 9 or more years in the field.

Teachers' Attitude and Approaches towards the Moral Development of Students

Teachers' perspectives on their responsibility for moral education, together with the frequency and methods through which they incorporate moral values into their teaching, are summarized in Tables 2, 3, and 4.

Table 2: Moral Instruction is a Primary Responsibility of Teachers

Response	Islamic	Conventional	Total
Yes	85 (45%)	89 (47%)	174 (92%)
No	0 (0%)	2 (1%)	2 (1%)
No Response	8 (4%)	6 (3%)	14 (7%)
Total	93 (49%)	97 (51%)	190 (100%)

Source: Data collected by the researcher from May to July 2021.

The results, as shown in Table 2, indicate a strong consensus among teachers regarding the role of teaching morality, with 92% affirming that it is the primary responsibility of all teachers. This view was predominantly held by respondents from both Islamic (45%) and conventional (47%) schools. Meanwhile, 7% of the respondents did not provide an answer, suggesting that a small portion of teachers may either be uncertain about their stance or choose not to express it. These findings underscore the widespread belief among educators that teaching morality is integral to their professional responsibilities.

Table 3: The Frequency with which the Teachers Integrate Moral Values into Their Teaching

Response	Islamic	Conventional	Total
Very Often	48 (25.3%)	62 (32.6%)	110 (58%)
Often	23 (12.1%)	22 (11.6%)	45 (24%)
Sometimes	10 (5.3%)	3 (1.6%)	13 (7%)
Seldom	0 (0%)	1 (0.5%)	1 (0.5%)
Never	0 (0%)	1 (0.5%)	1 (0.5%)
No Response	12 (6%)	8 (4%)	20 (10%)
Total	93 (49%)	97 (51%)	190 (100%)

Source: Data collected by the researcher from May to July 2021.

Based on the results in Table 3, the majority of respondents (82%) affirmed that they frequently or regularly incorporated moral values into their instructional practices. In comparison, only 1% of respondents from conventional schools reported that they either infrequently or never included moral values in their teaching approaches. Meanwhile, 10% of the respondents did not answer, suggesting a need for improved engagement or clarity regarding the importance of moral integration in education.

Table 4: The Strategies Used by the Teachers to Incorporate Moral Values in Their Teaching

Response	Islamic	Conventional	Total
By advising students to abide by good behavior	17 (8.9%)	20 (10.5%)	37 (19.5%)
By advice and personal example	3 (1.6%)	2 (1.1%)	5 (2.6%)
By advice and punishment	3 (1.6%)	2 (1.1%)	5 (2.6%)
Exhortation to good behavior by citing Islamic teachings	5 (2.6%)	8 (4.2%)	13 (6.8%)
Dedicating time to exhortation before/after each period	6 (3.2%)	1 (0.5%)	7 (3.7%)
By personal example	13 (6.8%)	14 (7.4%)	27 (14.2%)
Being friendly with students	5 (2.6%)	2 (1.1%)	7 (3.7%)
Twisting it with/Explaining the moral values of the subject	2 (1.1%)	1 (0.5%)	3 (1.6%)
Rewards and punishments.	2 (1.1%)	5 (2.6%)	7 (3.7%)
Vague/Irrelevant	22 (11.6%)	27 (14.2%)	49 (25.8%)
No Response	15 (7.9%)	15 (7.9%)	30 (15.8%)
Total	93 (49%)	97 (51%)	190 (100%)

Source: Data collected by the researcher from May to July 2021.

Although Table 3 shows that 82% of respondents reported consistently incorporating moral values into their teaching, only 58% offered details on the specific strategies they use for this purpose. Approximately 42% of the respondents either circumvented the question or offered responses that were ambiguous or unrelated. For instance, Participant no.4 from AIEB School no.4 simply stated that the strategy he is using is 'following all the methodologies of teaching' (field questionnaire data, 2021).

Among the responses considered relevant (58% of the total), the study revealed that the most frequently used approach to foster students' moral development was moral counselling. Teachers commonly described engaging in this practice by advising students to behave

well, encouraging them towards good conduct, and dedicating time before or after lessons for moral talk. Notably, 35% of the respondents (18% from Islamic schools and 17% from conventional schools) identified moral counselling as either their primary method or an integral part of their overall strategy for promoting students' moral values. However, a significant proportion (19%) did not specify when or how this strategy was applied. This suggests that while a significant proportion of teachers (35%) employ moral counselling strategies, the majority do so through informal or advisory means, with fewer engaging in structured or religious methods. This highlights the importance of supporting and training teachers to expand and formalize their approaches to moral education.

This result coincides with the findings of Gui et al. (2020), who reported moral mentorship as one of the most frequent roles played by teachers in developing morality among students. Rukaya and Alam (2024) demonstrated a significant positive link between guidance and counselling programs and the moral conduct of students, underscoring the role of counselling as a key mechanism for promoting ethical values.

The second most prominent strategy mentioned by teachers is to teach morality through personal examples, wherein they serve as moral models or exemplars. Fourteen per cent of the respondents reported this method as the only strategy they used to teach morality to students, while 2.6% of the respondents employed it together with moral counselling. The number of teachers (18%) who acknowledge this method as a strategy for students' moral development is not encouraging if the importance of this method is taken into consideration. Nucci and Narvaez (2008a) emphasized that the personal example set by teachers is critical, as students often learn moral values through observation and imitation of respected adults. However, this result is not surprising, considering the reports of indiscipline acts documented among teachers in Nigerian schools (Atanda & Wambugu, 2022; Sulyman, 2020).

Apart from the above two strategies, there were other strategies reported, including being friendly with students (3.7%), using reward and punishment (3.7%), and integrating moral values into subject content (1.6%), the least frequently cited approach. This finding aligns with Cam's observation that school education often separates academic learning, such as science, history, or mathematics, from moral and intellectual growth, a separation that ultimately reduces education's overall effectiveness in cultivating both knowledge and character (Cam, 2014). Research shows that sustained curriculum-embedded approaches, coupled with teacher professional development and whole-school commitment, produce more reliable improvements in students' behavior than isolated interventions (Arthur et al., 2022; Gökçeli, 2025).

Teachers' Perceptions of Management's Commitment to Students' Moral Development

Tables 5 and 6 show teachers' perceptions of administrative commitment and the presence of specific subject(s) for students' moral growth, while Table 7 outlines extracurricular programs organized by the school, parents, or the community that support character development.

Table 5: Commitment of the Management of Schools to the Moral Development of Students

Response	Islamic School	Conventional School	Total
Highly Committed	50 (26%)	61 (32%)	111 (58%)
Committed	29 (15%)	20 (11%)	49 (26%)
Slightly Committed	4 (2%)	6 (3%)	10 (5%)
Not Committed at all	1 (0.5%)	2 (1%)	3 (2%)
No Response	9 (4%)	8 (4%)	17 (9%)
Total	93 (49%)	97 (51%)	190 (100%)

Source: Data collected by the researcher from May to July 2021.

From Table 5, it is clear that the majority (84%) of respondents were of the view that their school was either highly committed (58%) or at least committed (26%) towards the moral development of the students. Only 7% of respondents reported that their schools made little or no effort toward students' moral development.

Subsequently, teachers were asked whether their schools offered any subject specifically devoted to students' moral development; their responses are presented in the following table.

Table 6: Presence of Morality-Focused Subjects in the Schools

Response	Islamic School	Conventional School	Total
Yes	81 (42.6%)	83 (43.7%)	164 (86%)
No	5 (2.6%)	8 (4.2%)	13 (7%)
No Response	7 (3.7%)	6 (3.2%)	13 (7%)
Total	93 (49%)	97(51%)	190 (100%)

Source: Data collected by the researcher from May to July 2021.

From the analysis of individual responses, 66% of the respondents identified Islamic/Religious Studies (28%), Civic Education (17%), or a combination of both (21%) as the primary subjects for moral education. Meanwhile, 17% cited unrelated subjects, such as Mathematics and Computer Science, which diverge from dedicated moral education. This suggests that no extracurricular subjects specifically designed for moral instruction were reported in any of the selected schools.

Table 7: Extracurricular Activities that Support the Character Goals of the Schools

Response	Islamic	Conventional	Total
Weekly Preaching (during Assembly)	5 (3%)	2 (1%)	7 (4%)
Games/Sports/Drama/Quiz/clubs, etc.	27 (14%)	32 (17%)	59 (31%)
MSS[1]	4 (5%)	5 (3%)	9 (5%)
MSS and *Musabaqa*/ Islamiyyah/Moral talk	1 (0.5%)	7 (3.5%)	8 (4%)
MSS and Islamiyyah	1 (0.5%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.5%)
MSS and Club/Debate/Quiz	6 (3%)	12 (6%)	18 (9%)
MSS, PTA meeting	1 (0.5%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.5%)
Musabaqah and Sport/clubs	1 (0.5%)	1 (0.5%)	2 (1%)
Moral Talk	0 (0%)	1(0.5%)	1 (0.5%)
PTA committee, GandC/Quiz/Debate[2]	0 (0%)	2 (1%)	2 (1%)
Yes (without mentioning anything)	1 (0.5%)	3 (1.5%)	4 (2%)
Islamiyyah after School Hours	1 (0.5%)	1 (0.5%)	2 (1%)
Guidance and Counselling	2 (1%)	0 (0%)	2 (1%)
Nill/Not functioning/ They have, but I don't know them	21 (11%)	15 (8%)	36 (19%)
Irrelevant	8 (4%)	2 (1%)	10 (5%)
No Response	14 (7.4%)	14 (7.4%)	28 (15%)
Total	93 (49%)	97 (51%)	190 (100%)

Source: Data collected by the researcher from May to July 2021.

As shown in Table 7, respondents identified games, sports, drama, quizzes, and clubs as the main extracurricular activities supporting students' moral development. While such activities have been advocated and proven to help students learn character-building lessons (Nucci & Narvaez, 2008b; Okoro, 2013; Okoro & Samuel, 2016), research, such as a survey by Shields et al. (2005), highlights numerous ethical problems occurring in many youth sport-related programs. Furthermore, the moral impact of these extracurricular activities is often limited, as participation is voluntary and both schools and students frequently prioritize success in national examinations over engagement in these programs (Mohammed et al., 2017; Okoro & Samuel, 2016).

---

[1] MSS=Muslim Student Association.

[2] PTA=Parent Teachers Association, GandC=Guidanc and Counselling.

Nearly one-fifth of the teachers (19%) indicated that their schools lacked functional extracurricular activities for moral development, while about 20% showed uncertainty or limited awareness of their moral purpose. Together, these findings highlight the need for clearer school policies, enhanced teacher awareness, and stronger institutional support to ensure that extracurricular programmes are intentionally structured and effectively utilised for students' moral development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this study suggest that both Islamic and conventional schools recognise their responsibility for students' moral development, and most teachers believe their schools are genuinely committed to this task. However, a clear gap remains between this sense of responsibility and how moral values are actually integrated into everyday teaching. While teachers commonly support students through counselling, fewer intentionally embed moral lessons within subject instruction. Schools mainly rely on general extracurricular activities, such as sports, clubs, and religious programmes, to promote moral development, yet none offer programmes specifically designed for this purpose. Overall, the study shows that although both AIEB and MOE schools value moral education, greater attention is needed to strengthen classroom integration, clarify teaching strategies, and develop more structured extracurricular approaches to support students' moral growth.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, it is highly recommended that:

➤ Teachers should consciously embed moral dimensions within their subject areas rather than treating moral education as a separate activity. Every subject, whether science, history, or language, should be viewed as an avenue for developing both intellectual and moral virtues.

➤ Professional development programs should train teachers to identify moral values inherent in their subjects and employ pedagogical strategies that promote reflection, dialogue, and ethical judgment in everyday lessons.

➤ Regularly assessing and reviewing moral education initiatives: Schools should establish mechanisms for the ongoing evaluation and assessment of their moral education programs. Feedback from teachers, students, and parents can inform adjustments and improvements to ensure the effectiveness of these initiatives.

Conflict of Interest Statement

Zuwaira Abubakar and Shehu Abdur-Rahman Aboki declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Bibliography

Al-Ghazali, M. A. (1402). *Ihya' Ulum al-Din: 1*. Dar al-Ma'rifah. https://shamela.ws/book/9472

Al-Nahlawi, A.-R. (1428). *Usūl al-Tarbiyah al-Islāmiyyah wa Asālībuhā fī al-Bayt wa al-Madrasah wa al-Mujtama'*. (Twenty-fifth). Dar Al-Fikr.

Arthur, J. (2015). *Of good character: Exploration of virtues and values in 3-25 year-olds*. Andrews UK Limited. https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=BHbZCgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Of+good+character:+Exploration+of+virtues+and+values+in+3-25+year-olds&ots=ubFOQHB3nU&sig=kecJI9GM_5Qq136iOojOMxGu390

Arthur, J., Fullard, M., & O'Leary, C. (2022). Teaching character education: What works (Research report). *University of Birmingham, Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues [Online]. Retrieved December*, *20*, 2023.

Atanda, O. O., & Wambugu, L. (2022). Comparative Analysis of Teachers' Discipline and Control in Public and Private Secondary Schools in Lagos State, Nigeria. *EduLine: Journal of Education and Learning Innovation*, *2*(2), 62–71.

Biesta, G. (2009). Good education in an age of measurement: On the need to reconnect with the question of purpose in education. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, *21*(1), 33–46. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11092-008-9064-9

Biesta, G. (2010). *Good education in an age of measurement: Ethics, politics, democracy*. https://orbilu.uni.lu/handle/10993/6859

Biesta, G. (2015). Freeing Teaching from Learning: Opening Up Existential Possibilities in Educational Relationships. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, *34*(3), 229–243. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-014-9454-z

Cam, P. (2014). Philosophy for Children, Values Education and the Inquiring Society. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, *46*(11), 1203–1211.

Gökçeli, M. Z. (2025). Integrating Character Education Across the Curriculum: Teachers' Perspectives and Experiences. *Değerler Eğitimi Dergisi*, *23*(49), 91–119. https://doi.org/10.34234/ded.1642899

Gui, A. K. W., Yasin, M., Abdullah, N. S. M., & Saharuddin, N. (2020). Roles of teacher and challenges in developing students' morality. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, *8*(3), 52–59.

Ibn Jamāʿah, B. al-Dīn. (1354). *Tadhkirat al-Sāmiʿ wa al-Mutakallim fī Ādāb al-*

ʿĀlim wa al-Mutaʿallim. Dar al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah,. https://shamela.ws/book/151180

Mohammed, A. I., Dawaki, M. A., Idris, M., Abdulhameed, Z., Bello, H., & Abdullahi, R. (2017). An Assessement Extra-Curricular Activities and Primary School Pupils' Academic Self-Efficacy In Gwale Local Government Area, Kano State Of Nigeria. *NIU Journal of Humanities*, *2*(1), 295–304.

Nucci, L., & Narvaez, D. (2008a). Smart & good schools: A new paradigm for high school character education. In *Handbook of moral and character education* (pp. 386–406). Routledge. https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203931431-28/smart-good-schools-new-paradigm-high-school-character-education

Nucci, L., & Narvaez, D. (2008b). Sport and the Development of Character. In *Handbook of Moral and Character Education* (pp. 516–535). Routledge. https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203931431-35/sport-development-character

Okoro, C. O. (2013). Development and validation of extracurricular instructional package (EIP) in Social Studies. *International Journal of Learning and Development*, *3*(3), 101–109.

Okoro, C. O., & Samuel, A. (2016). "Using Extra Curricular Activities To Develop ... - Google Scholar. *Journal Of University Of Port Harcourt Of Nigeria*, *3,* 16-21.

Rukaya, & Alam, A. F. A. (2024). Pengaruh Layanan Bimbingan dan Konseling Terhadap Moral Peserta Didik. *JURKAM: Jurnal Konseling Andi Matappa*, 115–121.

Shields, D., Bredemeier, B. L., LaVoi, N. M., & Power, F. C. (2005). The sport behaviour of youth, parents and coaches. *Journal of Research in Character Education*, *3*(1), 43–59.

Sulyman, K. O. (2020). Assessment of teachers' dedication, discipline, knowledge and skills in Kwara state basic schools, Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Learning (EduLearn)*, *14*(4), 536–542.