

In-service Training and Character Development in Relation to Islamization Initiatives in Selected Islamic Integrated Schools in Selangor

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Abstract

Integrated Islamic schools in Malaysia and elsewhere face acute problems in acquiring and developing teachers who facilitate the Islamization of education process as well as holistic character development (*tarbiyatul akhlaq*) of children. The purpose of this study is to assess the relationship between in-service teacher training programs with elements of Islamization, the character development of teachers, and their self-efficacy as *murrabis* in private integrated Islamic schools in Selangor. The study administered surveys to 161 teachers in six (6) integrated Islamic schools in Selangor. Due to Covid-19 related challenges in obtaining respondents, convenience and snowball sampling techniques were utilized. The study employed correlation analysis utilizing SPSS v21 statistical software to answer the research questions. A strong positive correlation was discovered between in-service training with Islamization elements and character development of teachers as well as with teachers' self-efficacy as a *murabbi*. The value of this research lies in underscoring the importance and development of in-service training in empowering the teacher to Islamize acquired knowledge subjects as well as in empowering them to be effective *murabbis*. It provides a basis for future research, especially in the Malaysian context, on teacher performance as a *murabbi* and its impact on students. It would also highlight to policymakers and educational administrators the need to develop a structured professional development program on Islamization of curriculum and the development of *murabbis*.

Keywords: *In-service teacher training, Islamization, character building, murabbi, Integrated schools*

INTRODUCTION

There is an increasing demand in Malaysia for schools that integrate Islam with other subjects, focusing on the development of competent graduates who stay true to Islamic values while addressing the challenges of modern society. This demand has been met through the establishment of various public and private institutions at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels (Baba et al., 2019). However, to realize the objectives of developing holistic graduates, the enhancement of teacher education programme is very critical.

The need for studying the impact of teacher training programs on teacher performance is well-recognized, as governments and institutions spend a lot of money on pre- and in-service teacher education programs. For instance, the Malaysian government, in the Education Blueprint 2018-2025, has allocated US\$1 billion of the education budget to areas critical to student outcomes, namely teacher training and upskilling (MOE, 2013).

While this phenomenon has been studied extensively in public schools, the impact of in-service teacher training programs on teacher performance in integrated Islamic schools, on Islamization and character development, is much lacking (Islam et al., 2019). In an important three-decade review of the 1977 Makkan Conference on Islamization of Education, Saqeb (2000) notes that the education and training of Muslim teachers in the Muslim world have not been well planned and structured.

Moreover, the colonial forces have left behind their governance systems, socio-political turmoil, and educational philosophies in the Muslim world, which led to chaos and dualism as Muslims tried to reconcile these with their Islamic beliefs. Secularism became the dominant philosophy in the West, leading to the separation of religion and state, and the propagation of secular thought to the rest of humanity. As a result, the adoption of secular values in governance and education in the Muslim world, has fuelled educational dualism. Ismail al-Faruqi and Naquib al-Attas, among others, called for the integration and Islamization of acquired knowledge to combat this predicament.

In Malaysia, the National Philosophy of Education (NPE) has tried to shift the dualism tide by insisting on "developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God" (Ministry of Education (MOE) Malaysia, 1992). The implementation of the NPE took shape through the Integrated Curriculum for Secondary Schools (KBSM), which aimed at "integration of values across the curriculum." Many universities and integrated schools were established to support the Islamization process. Hence, this study focuses on in-service teacher training in selected integrated Islamic schools to identify best practices for the promotion of Islamization and character development in Islamic schools.

ISSUES IN ISLAMIZATION OF EDUCATION

Integrated Islamic schools in Malaysia and elsewhere usually have a beautiful vision to integrate worldly and Islamic knowledge, though they face acute problems in actualizing their vision, primarily due to the (i) lack of teachers with expertise in both revealed (Islamic or *naqli*) and acquired knowledge (*'aqli*), (ii) curriculum dualism fuelled by the lack of Islamicized textbooks in acquired subjects, (c) commercial focus of prioritizing profit-maximization activities over Islamization efforts, and (d) emphasis on academic achievement over holistic character development (*tarbiyyah*) of students, overlooking the training of teachers for their role as a *murabbis* and role models.

Teachers form the backbone of any educational institution. Without effective teachers, no matter how grand the school's vision and mission may be or how capable the school's leadership may be, the school cannot accomplish its *raison d'être* – to educate and develop the students. For an Islamic school, the challenge is magnified as there is a shortage of teachers who are qualified in their field and simultaneously possess sufficient Islamic knowledge to teach the subject in an Islamicized manner. This type of teachers is a consequence of the dualistic education that they had undergone.

Secondly, many Muslim scholars (al-Faruqi, 1982; al-Attas, 1978) have highlighted the need for Islamization of knowledge to tackle the dual education system that exists in the Muslim world in the post-colonial era. Hashim (2019) notes that the traditional Islamic education system and the secular, liberal education model inherited from the West run parallel to each other, breeding Muslims with contradictory worldviews. The sciences, social sciences, and literature are taught without highlighting how these subjects relate from an Islamic point of view, while Islam is taught in madrasahs without integrating it with other branches of knowledge.

Islamic schools that wish to bridge the gap and remove dualism face the challenge of not finding Islamicized textbooks that facilitate the Islamization process. Private international Islamic schools resort to popular Western curriculum models such as "Cambridge" or "International Baccalaureate" that can be easily marketed to parents. Saqeb (2000) notes that the lack of continuous support and funding by Islamic institutions has led to the discontinuation or lack of institutionalization of Islamization of textbook projects. Except for a few exceptions like schools associated w/ Adni International's Integrated Holistic Education System (IHES), Bilal Philip's Lesson Plan Islamization initiative, or Karen Armstrong's Concentric Circles systems or Dawud Tauhidi's Integrated Learning Model in the US, most public and private integrated Islamic schools don't have a standardized program or training for Islamicizing the unit and lesson plans of acquired knowledge subjects such as STEM.

Thirdly, the commercial focus has led to the prioritization of profit-maximization activities over Islamization. Lewis (2007) explains that capitalism has taken its toll on our modern education system through the commodification of knowledge, leading to compromises in the quality of teaching and learning, curriculum, and evaluation geared towards advancing the institution's revenues rather than the holistic development of the student. Even institutions that wish to integrate Islamic and acquired knowledge have put aside the difficult and resource-intensive task of Islamization to focus on activities and programs that lead to expanding the bottom line. According to Othman et al. (2017), the commodification of knowledge has impacted the way people acquire and perceive knowledge. Technology has transformed the production, access, and consumption of knowledge. The spiralling growth of private educational institutes also requires students to be from a financially capable and focus is more on “customer satisfaction” rather than what is really good for the students in the long run.

Fourthly, school management tends to focus on academic achievement over students' holistic character development (*tarbiyyah*). As an extension of the commodification of education, Islamic schools tend to emphasise student achievement as a measure of school performance and student success, overlooking students' overall character, spiritual, and ethical development. This has led to the sidelining of teachers' training for their role as *murabbi*, enabling them to be role models for their students.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between in-service teacher training programs, Islamization of the teaching of non-revealed subjects and teachers' character in selected private integrated Islamic schools in Selangor. Specifically, the objectives are to investigate the following:

1. To investigate the relationship between in-service teacher training with Islamization elements and the character development of teachers.
2. To identify the relationship between in-service teacher training with Islamization elements and teachers' self-efficacy as a *murabbi*.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Buckley (1992) differentiates between in-service or on-the-job training and education. He theorizes that education differs from training in terms of process, effect, predictability, and outcome. While education is more organic, with a general impact that takes a longer time to observe and is less predictable, training is generally job-specific and "a mechanistic process, which emphasizes uniform and predictable responses to standard guidance and instruction reinforced by practice and repetition" to provide knowledge, skills, and instil attitudes necessary to perform specific tasks (Buckley, 1992, p.18-19).

Islamization models defined by al-Faruqi (1982), Al-Attas (1993), Nasr (1988), Hashim (2019), and others will be relied upon to define and understand the process of Islamization and compare different approaches to implementing Islamization in the classroom context.

Phillips' (2016) five principles of Islamization theory will be used to measure the extent to which teachers Islamicize the classroom experience through lesson plan Islamization (LPI) and the framework for in-service training with Islamization. Additionally, Harder & Iqbal's (2006) concentric circle theory of integrating Quranic education worldview in the classrooms will be relied upon to gauge the extent of Islamization in schools and the education process. Memon (2011) further elaborates on Harder's model in conceptualizing and designing in-service teacher training to promote Islamization. Mohamed (2019) has also developed the Integrated Holistic Education System that aims to integrate revealed and acquired knowledge and produce balanced development in spiritual, physical, intellectual, and emotional domains through *tarbiyah*. The program focuses on instilling these values in teachers through in-service training and other professional development opportunities. These models will form the theoretical framework for measuring how the teachers' training program influences the Islamization of education.

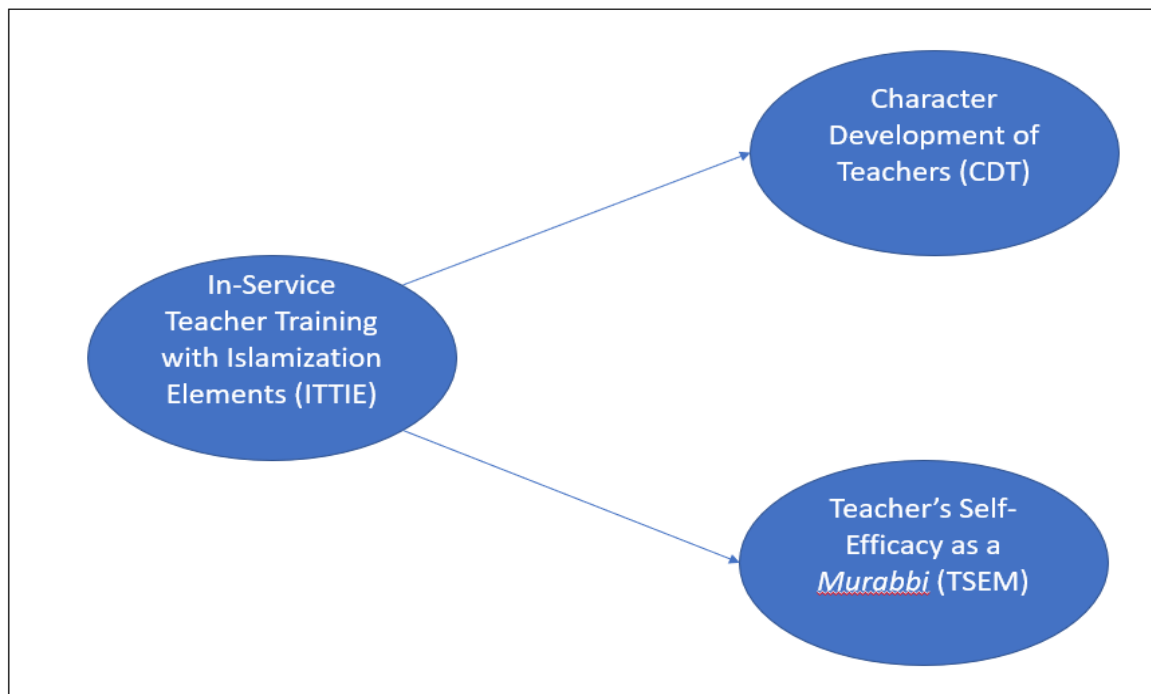
Luneto's (2014) observation that character development involves developing emotional and spiritual intelligence components of the student would be the theoretical basis for measuring the extent of teacher training's influence on students' character. Islamic scholars, classical and contemporary, have emphasized the importance of developing *adab* (ethics) and *akhlaq* (character) of students as the primary objective of education: al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, al-Ghazali, al-Attas, among others.

Modern research, including Bauer (1991), Berkowitz (2010), Chartier (2007), Battistich (2008), Halstead and Taylor (2000), and others, have documented best practices in character education from a Western perspective. Basher (1982), the Islamic Moral Education framework, would also be relied upon. Jaafar, et al. (2012), note that Islamic Education teachers who perform

the task as a *murabbi* must possess self-efficacy so that they can effectively educate and assist students in realizing the goals of developing their character. The theories would form the basis for the assumption that, in order to develop the character of students effectively, the teacher has to be a positive role model and recognize their role as a *murabbi*. Furthermore, the Islamization of the teacher's character forms the prerequisite to shaping the students' character.

Figure 1

The Study's Conceptual Framework



(Adapted from: Bandura, 1979; Basher, 1982; Buckley, 1992; Iqbal, 1996; Harder, 2006; Memon, 2011; Jaafar, et al., 2012; Luneto, 2014; Philips, 2015; Mohamed, 2019)

Teacher Training

Teacher training and education involve formal and informal interventions that equip aspiring and current teachers with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to be effective in the classroom and school community (Darling-Hammond, 2006). A successful teacher education program should empower trainees with the skills to teach children, instil desired behaviours and ideals, and develop their attitudes and values in line with society (Shulman, 1987). Teacher training programs should aim to develop specific skills, such as appraising student abilities, identifying learning challenges, managing the classroom effectively, evaluating student progress, and conducting educational research (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985).

There are three types of teacher training: pre-service, induction, and in-service training or Continuous Professional Development (CPD) (European Commission, 2013). Pre-service training is the formal education received by teachers prior to joining the profession (Darling-Hammond, 2006), while induction refers to the orientation of new teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). In-service training involves formal or informal interventions to help teachers update their knowledge and skills (European Commission, 2013).

Mentorship and effective induction programs are important in accelerating novice teachers' development into high-performing or professional teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Induction programs provide novice teachers with professional support and guidance from experienced teachers, which can help them navigate the complexities of the teaching profession (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985).

Islamization

Education plays a crucial role in shaping a nation's beliefs, values, ideals, and purpose, as well as transferring its culture to the next generation (Iqbal, 1996). Islamically, education aims to enable a person to worship Allah SWT and strive to make the Word of Allah SWT the highest. However, the interaction with various bodies of knowledge has led to various sects and schools of thought that are often distant from the pristine divine knowledge and practices. Revivalist scholars throughout Islamic history have sought to "Islamicize" divine and acquired knowledge and purge it from religious thought or philosophies incompatible with the revealed knowledge (Niyozov & Memon, 2011). After the colonial era, secularism became the dominant philosophy, leading to the adoption of secular values in varying degrees across the Muslim world in governance and education, fueling "Educational Dualism" (Hashim, 2008). To address this dualism, scholars such as al-Faruqi (1982) called for the integration and Islamization of acquired knowledge as essential to put the Muslims back on the trajectory towards revival and civilizational glory and reclaim their rightful place among the nations of the world.

Different scholars have approached the Islamization of Education with varying focuses. One approach is to eliminate un-Islamic concepts and terminology from knowledge, while others seek to integrate Islamic ethics into education to combat spiritual decay. Another practical approach is empowering teachers to Islamicize lessons via lesson plan Islamization (Husain & Ashraf, 1979).

Scholars have developed various models of Islamization to promote the integration of Islamic values into education. One of the prominent models is the Al-Attas Model, which provides a framework for an Islamic philosophy of education (Al-Attas, 1978). Another model is the Al-Faruqi Model, which suggests integrating Islamic values into every academic discipline (Abū Sulaymān, 1997). The Ashraf and Rahman Model emphasizes the need to develop an ethical

perspective based on Islamic principles that promotes social, economic, and political well-being (Husain & Ashraf, 1979).

Bilal Philips' Method focuses on the Islamization of education at both the macro and micro levels. It suggests that Islamic schools and teachers should focus on integrating Islamic values into the education system, curriculum, and teaching methodology (Philips, 2015). The macro-level approach aims to institutionalize Islamic education within the wider educational system, while the micro-level approach aims to incorporate Islamic values into classroom teaching.

While many models of teacher training have been postulated (Robinson & Mogliacci, 2019), there are limited Islamic models of teacher training. (Iqbal, 1996; Memon, 2006). The key factor that differentiates the Islamic model from other approaches to teacher education is that the models imported from the West are based on the secular model and education system, focused only on the body and the mind, and totally ignore the soul or spiritual development and connection with Allah SWT. In other words, it is solely this world-oriented, whereas the Islamic model is *akhirah* (here-after) oriented, which is naturally beneficial for this world as well.

In-service training influence on character development of teacher

The Islamic model of teacher education is distinct from other approaches in that it is oriented towards the spiritual development of teachers as well as their intellectual and professional development. Many Islamic scholars have proposed curricula for pre-service teacher training at various levels, but the reality is that qualified teacher candidates who can integrate Islam into their teaching are in short supply. Therefore, the focus needs to shift to in-service teacher education, which should be personalized to the teacher's needs and based on an evaluation of their performance over the previous five years. Proposed areas of study for in-service training include personalized development plans, seminars, conferences, and workshops.

Iqbal (1996) proposes that active teachers attend 10 to 12 weeks of residential in-service training every five years and participate in short courses and other professional development activities in between. Javed (2021) identifies seven fundamental principles of effective communication based on modelling the Prophet ﷺ that can be included in professional training to facilitate teachers to become effective teachers and communicators. Hashim (2019) identifies the key objectives of an Islamic-based teacher education program, including the need for teachers to possess psychological and pedagogical knowledge and skills to teach effectively and to act as role models. The in-service curriculum should also help teachers develop critical, creative, and reflective thinking skills, as well as sensitivity to social demands and problems.

Character development, or *tarbiyatul akhlaq*, is the process of instilling Islamic values and character refinement that seeks to regulate a person's attitude and behavior towards the Creator and the created according to the ideals encapsulated within the Quran and Prophetic examples (Sunnah). In other words, it is the process of Islamization of one's character. The lack of cultivating a strong bond with the Creator can lead to moral decay among youth. Teachers play a crucial role as *murabbis*, or role models, who develop students' character and connect them to their Lord through the process of *tazkiyah*, or purification of the heart. In-service training that focuses on the character development of teachers can help them perform their role as a *murabbi* effectively. A teacher as a *murabbi* should possess a noble character and personality based on the values of Islam and apply *tawhid*, human values, good language, motivation, knowledge of students, guidance, affection, respect, and gentle reprimand (Baharun & Ummah, 2018; Izfanna & Hisyam, 2012; Qardawi, 1981; Jaafar, et al., 2012; Al-Ghazali, 1982; Kasmar, et al., 2019).

In the context of Islamic education, the teacher is often seen as a "*murabbi*" or a guide who not only imparts knowledge but also helps students develop their character and morals. This role of the teacher as a *murabbi* is especially important in Islamic education as it aims to develop individuals who not only have knowledge but also possess strong ethical values.

Character development is a critical aspect of Islamic education, and it involves the development of several dimensions of character. According to Al-Attas (1993), the dimensions of character development in Islamic education include physical, intellectual, moral, spiritual, and aesthetic development. The physical dimension includes the development of physical health and strength, while intellectual development focuses on the development of knowledge and reasoning skills. Moral development emphasizes the development of good character and ethical behavior, while spiritual development involves the development of a strong connection with God. Finally, aesthetic development refers to the development of an appreciation for beauty and the arts.

While there have been previous studies that measure the influence and relationships between in-service teacher training and teacher performance (Salikin, 1998; Cheng, 1996; Ariff, 2000; Ciraso, 2012; Medley, 1982; Zhang, Lai, Pang, Yi, & Rozell, 2013) as well as self-efficacy (Ma'sum, 2014; Thorsnes, Rouhani, & Divitini, 2020), there have not been studies that specifically focus on the influence of in-service teacher training on the ability of teachers to Islamicize the education process and a few on the influence of teacher training on the character development of teachers, enabling them to be good role models and *murabbis* (Mustafa & Abdullah, 2016; Kasmar et al., 2019; Jaafar et al., 2012).

Self-Efficacy of a *Murabbi*

Self-efficacy is also an essential component of Islamic education, as it plays a crucial role in helping individuals develop the skills and confidence needed to achieve their goals. According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform a particular task. In the context of Islamic education, self-efficacy is developed through a combination of knowledge acquisition, skills development, and the guidance and support provided by the teacher as a *murabbi*.

Educational research has shown that teachers' self-efficacy contributes to a positive influence on teachers' attitudes and behavior (Sa-u, et al., 2010). Jaafar, et al. (2012) noted that Islamic Education Teachers who perform the task as a *murabbi* must possess self-efficacy to effectively educate and assist students in realizing the goals of developing their character. Ashton (1984) reiterates that the teachers' self-efficacy will influence the effort, productivity, and activities undertaken by the teacher and, as a result, facilitate the achievement of students. Hence, increasing the self-efficacy of the teacher in their role as a *murabbi* can be achieved through teacher training. That would, in turn, enhance their performance as a *murabbi* as well as being an effective role-model for the students, thereby able to positively influence the character development of the students, connect them to their Lord, and infuse adab and Prophetic models of behavior in them.

In conclusion, the success of Islamicized teacher education programs can bring about a radical change in the nation and inspire other Muslim nations to follow suit, thus bringing unity and spiritual and intellectual revival in the Ummah (Hashim, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

The main research objective of this study is to uncover the relationships between in-service teacher training with Islamization and character development and teachers' self-efficacy as *murabbi*. Quantitative analysis facilitates the collection of demographic data from a range of participants as well as uncovering relationships between variables. Correlation, a type of quantitative analysis, studies the extent to which variations in one variable are associated with differences in one or more variables (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). It essentially measures whether variables are related and if yes, how strongly, without influencing them. It also enables the researcher to administer a survey or questionnaire to a small representative group of people called a sample in order to identify trends in the larger population (Creswell, 2005). A cross-sectional design measures data from a population at a specific point in time. A quantitative analysis using a cross-sectional survey design was utilized for this study.

As it would not be feasible to collect data on in-service training from every teacher in integrated Islamic schools in Selangor, sampling selected integrated Islamic schools in districts that fall in the Klang Valley allows for inferences to be made for the population.

Population and Sample

The intended population of this study is all the teachers in private and public Integrated Islamic Primary and High Schools (*Sekolah Rendah/Menengah Islam Integrasi*) and the Islamic High Schools (*Sekolah Menengah Islam*) and Islamic Primary Schools (*Sekolah Rendah Islam*) in the state of Selangor in Malaysia.

Table 1

Total Population of Teachers and Schools in Selangor

	School Type	No. of Schools	No. of Teachers	Teachers Estimate
	Sekolah Rendah Agama (SRA)	228	4745	No
Run by JAIS	Sekolah Rendah Agama Integrasi (SRAI)	11	539	No
	Sekolah Agama Menengah Tinggi (SAMT)	23	674	Yes
	Sekolah Rendah Islam (SRI)	225	4500	Yes
Semi-Public	Sekolah Rendah Islam Integrasi (SRII)	97	1940	Yes
	Sekolah Menengah Islam (SMI)	49	491	Yes
Private	Private Integrated Islamic Schools	29	580	Yes
Total Population		633	13469	

The total population of teachers is estimated at 13,469, as noted in Table 1. Based on tolerating a Margin of Error of 5% and with a confidence interval of 95%, a sample size of 357 was suggested using the Krejcie & Morgan (1970) table for a population of 15,000.

The actual sample size of teachers in the study was 161 due to the acceptance rate of schools to participate in the study and due to resource constraints, such as time and cost. The researcher faced setbacks in acquiring the desired number of respondents as most of the international Islamic schools, which were the initial focus of the study, either did not respond or refused to participate due to various reasons.

Because of the various iterations of Movement Control Order during the course of this research, the educational institutes contacted were not interested in participating in the study as they were severely impacted by the restrictions, were short on resources and time, and focused on adapting to online platforms.

Faced with these setbacks and impending time and resource constraints, the focus of the research was shifted to integrated Islamic schools, as they would be more inclined to integration and Islamization compared to international Islamic schools and perhaps more willing to participate in this research.

Based on the primary resource constraint of time and the secondary constraint of cost, the researcher was able to secure a sample size of 161 teachers who responded from the 230 questionnaires distributed to 6 public and private integrated schools in the area.

Instrument

In this study, a self-developed cross-sectional questionnaire was used as the primary instrument. It was administered to teachers in an integrated Islamic School, and a combination of online and onsite instruments were used due to COVID-19 related policies. The questionnaire was bilingual – in English and Malay. The instrument consisted of a personal information section and 27 items divided into five sections addressing the research questions as elaborated in Table 2. The first section gathered demographic data about the teacher, while the second section requested information on training attended during the year. The remaining five sections consisted of 27 items that follow a 5-point scale with the values of strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. These sections addressed the research questions on in-service teacher training and Islamization, including knowledge and attributes, skills, teacher's values, character development, and self-efficacy as a *murabbi*.

Then there are 27 items divided into five sections addressing the 2nd and 3rd research questions:

Table 2

Summary of Research Instrument

Knowledge, Skill, Attitude or Attribute	No. of Items	Adapted Items	Adapted Source
In-Service Teacher Training and Islamization (Knowledge and Attitude)	5		
In-Service Teacher Training and Islamization (Skills)	6		
In-Service Teacher Training and Character Development (Teacher's Values)	5	2,3,4,5	Hashim and Hussien (2003)
In-Service Teacher Training and Character Development (Teacher's Akhlaq)	6	5,6	Ali (1998)
In-Service Teacher Training and Self-Efficacy as a <i>Murabbi</i>	5	3,4,5	Hashim and Hussien (2003)

The In-Service Teacher Training and Islamization (Knowledge and Attributes) construct pertains to the influence of teacher training on enhancing knowledge and fostering appropriate attitudes for integrating Islamic principles into the teaching of various subjects. In-Service Teacher Training and Islamization (Skills) construct relates to the acquisition of skills through in-service teacher training, specifically focusing on the ability to effectively integrate Islamic teachings into the curriculum. The In-Service Teacher Training and Character Development (Teacher's Values) construct centers on how training influences the personal values of teachers, reflecting in the classroom environment and students' spiritual development. In-Service Teacher Training & Character Development (Teacher's Akhlaq) construct explores the impact of in-service training on the character (akhlaq) of teachers, emphasizing behaviors and conduct that align with Islamic principles. The In-Service Teacher Training and Self-Efficacy as a *Murabbi* construct delves into the self-efficacy of teachers as *murabbis*, focusing on their confidence and competence in shaping students' Islamic personalities and behavior.

Content Validity

To ensure the validity of the instrument, a construct validation form was developed and sent to seven professors who are experts in education management and leadership, Islamization, and curriculum development. Three experts provided feedback on the appropriateness, meaningfulness, and effectiveness of the items in addressing the research questions. The experts had the option to recommend keeping, modifying, or removing the items and provided additional comments. The questionnaire was revised based on the feedback received to improve the quality and validity of the instrument.

Pilot Study Results

The pilot study sample consisted of 14 teachers from Seven Skies International Islamic School in Denai Alam in Klang Valley. The size of the sample for the pilot study is small that the recommended size of at least 30 for Cronbach Alpha reliability testing. This was due to constraints in getting schools to participate during the peak of the COVID restrictions as elaborated earlier. Additionally, a smaller scale may be acceptable when the items in the scale are homogeneous. (Clark & Watson,1995)

As seen in the table below, all 5 dimensions in the questionnaire received a Cronbach's alpha score > 0.70 and reasonably close to 1. Hence, it can be concluded that the instrument is internally consistent.

Table 3

Cronbach's Alpha for the Dimensions of Questionnaire

No	Dimensions	n	a
1	Islamization (Knowledge & Attitude)	5	0.812
2	Islamization (Skill)	6	0.919
3	Teacher's Values	5	0.956
4	Teacher's Character Development	6	0.883
5	Teacher's Self-Efficacy as <i>Murabbi</i>	5	0.932

Data Collection and Analysis

To gather data for the research, a letter was obtained from the Deputy Dean of the Kulliyah of Education requesting cooperation from selected international Islamic schools in the Klang Valley. The researcher personally visited and contacted the schools and sought permission to administer the questionnaire to teachers. A total of 230 questionnaires were distributed to six public and private integrated Islamic schools in Selangor that fit the criteria and agreed to participate in the research. Out of the 230, only 161 were completed and returned; all 161 returned questionnaires were used for the final analysis, which is an acceptable response rate of 70%. According to an American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) study, editors of prominent journals surveyed generally note that there is no minimum response rate across the board. One editor noted 60%, and another said they would not accept anything below 20%. The study also noted that, because of the declining response rates, it is not the single determinant of survey quality. (Timothy and Owens, 2003).

The study employed correlation analysis utilizing SPSS v21 statistical software to answer the research questions. Inferential statistical tests, particularly Pearson's correlation, was leveraged to determine the relationship between in-service teacher training with Islamization elements (ITTIE) and character development of teachers (CDT) as well as with teachers' self-efficacy as a *murabbi* (TSEM). Four assumptions needed to be ascertained so that the data were suitable for Pearson correlation analysis. These four assumptions are that the two measured variables should be continuous, a linear relationship exists between the two variables, no significant outliers, and the data set is approximately normally distributed (Laerd Statistics, n.d.). The results of these tests are explained in the following section.

Table 4

Test of Normality

	Statistic	P-Value
Mean of ITTEI	0.917	0.000
Mean of CDT	0.778	0.000
Mean of TSEM	0.883	0.000

The study utilized an interval scale with 5-point measurements to ensure the continuous nature of the data. The analysis showed a linear relationship between variables, and no significant outliers were found. Since the significance $p = .000$ for the three variables, according to the Shapiro-Wilk test, the dataset is not normal. However, the data set has to be further inspected to check for skewness as well as visually using graphs, such as histograms, to verify if the data set is close to being a normal distribution and that parametric tests such as Pearson's correlation can be conducted (Laerd Statistics, n.d.). However, the skewness statistic is acceptable. Overall, the data set satisfies the four assumptions necessary for Pearson correlation analysis.

RESULTS

Respondents' Profile

The respondents were 161 teachers from 6 private and public Islamic integrated schools in Selangor. The sample has a much higher female representation than their male counter parts (i.e., 73.4% females and 21.1% males). Almost all the teachers were "Malaysian" nationality (94.4%). The sample is relatively young, with about 77% between the ages of 20 and 40.

The majority of the respondents were primary school teachers (i.e., 44% primary, 22.4 secondary and 19.3% both). Approximately 40% of the teachers were relatively new teachers with 0 to 5 years of experience and 28.6% had 6 to 10 years of experience and another 28% had 11 to 20 years of experience

Table 5
Demographic Profile of the Respondents (N=161)

Demographic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	34	21.1
	Female	118	73.3
	Missing	9	5.6
	Total	161	100
Age Range	20 to 25	12	7.5
	26 to 30	39	24.2
	31 to 35	44	27.3
	36 to 40	30	18.6
	41 to 45	13	8.1
	Other	16	9.9
	Missing	7	4.3
	Total	161	100
Nationality	Malaysian	152	94.4
	Non-Malaysian	1	0.6
	Missing	7	4.3
	Total	161	100
Teaching Experience	0 to 5	64	39.8
	6 to 10	46	28.6
	11 to 15	30	18.6
	16 to 20	15	9.3
	21 to 25	2	1.2
	26 to 30	1	0.6
	31 to 35	1	0.6
	Missing	2	1.2
Total	161	100	
Level	Primary	71	44.1
	Secondary	36	22.4
	Both (Primary and Secondary)	31	19.3
	Pre-School	7	4.3
	Missing	16	9.9
	Total	161	100

Nature of Relationship Between In-Service Teacher Training and Character Development

As it was established that the dataset passes the assumptions for conducting Pearson correlation analysis, the analysis was conducted to explore the nature of the relationship between the two variables addressed in the first research objective, i.e., *“To investigate the relationship between in-service teacher training with Islamization elements and the character development of teachers.”*

The data set was analysed using bivariate correlation using the Pearson Product Moment procedure run using SPSS on the dataset on In-Service Teacher Training with Islamization Elements (ITTEI) and Character Development of Teachers (CDT). The score for every construct was computed by using the mean of the responses to the items in the questionnaire measuring the construct. The coefficients obtained from the correlations are summarized in Table 7, whereas the guidelines for interpretation of correlation coefficients (Mukaka, 2012) are shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6

Guidelines for Interpreting the Correlation Coefficients

Range of Coefficients	Interpretation
0.90 to 1.00	Very strong correlation
0.70 to 0.90	Strong correlation
0.50 to 0.70	Moderate correlation
0.30 to 0.50	Weak correlation
0.00 to 0.30	Very weak correlation

Since a positive relationship was expected between the variables under study, a 1-tailed Pearson Correlation analysis was performed. The correlation results, as shown in Table 6, indicate the presence of a positive and statistically significant association between In-Service Teacher Training and the Character Development of Teachers. The p-value is = .000 and hence significant at the 0.01 level. Since the Pearson statistic $r(161) = .703$, using the guidelines of interpretation outlined in Table 5, we can conclude that there is a strong positive correlation between In-Service Teacher Training and the Character Development of Teachers.

Table 7

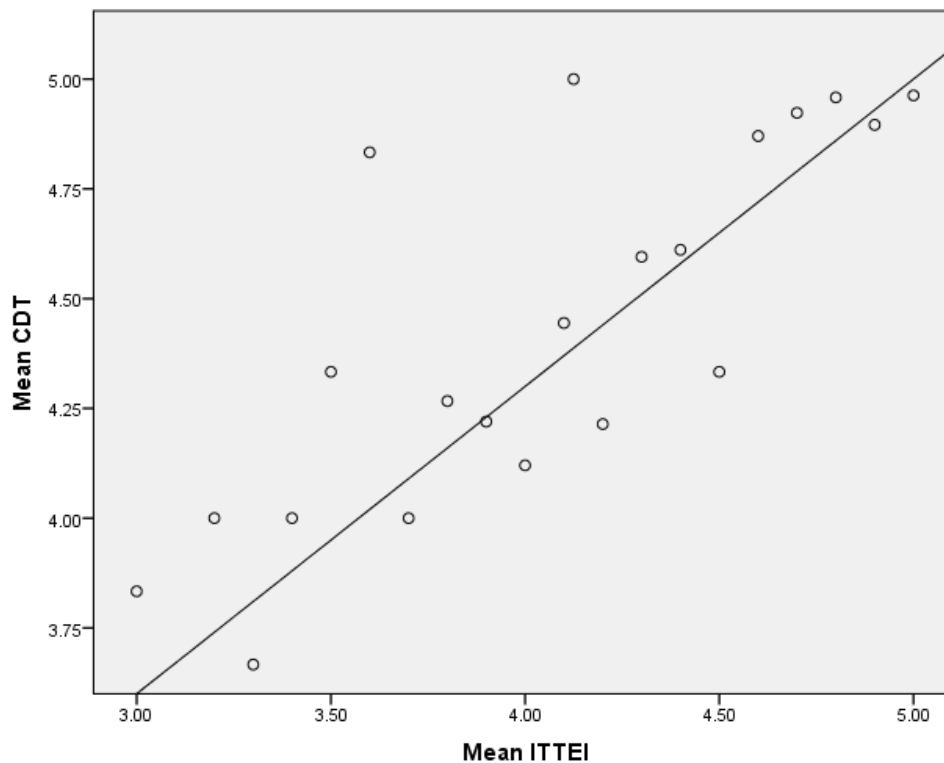
Correlation between In-service Teacher Training and Character Development of Teachers and Teachers' Self Efficacy as Murabbi

	Mean_CDT	Mean_TSEM
Pearson Correlation	.703**	.736**
Mean_ITTEI Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000
N	161	161

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Chart 1

Scatterplot of the relationship between Inservice Teacher Training with Islamization Elements and Character Development of Teachers



In summary, a strong positive relationship exists between In-service Teacher Training with Islamization Elements and the Character Development of Teachers.

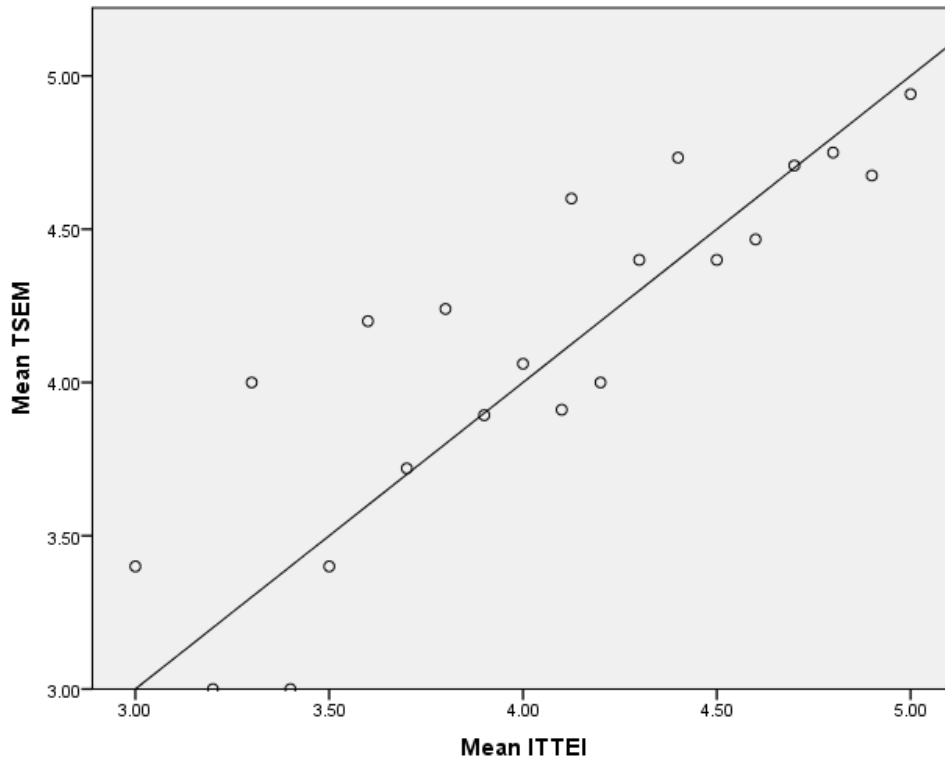
Nature of Relationship Between In-Service Teacher Training and Teacher’s Self-Efficacy as a *Murabbi*

The Pearson product-moment correlation 1-tailed test was conducted to analyze in-service teacher training with Islamization elements and teachers' self-efficacy as *murabbi*.

The correlation results, as shown in Table 6 earlier, indicate the presence of a positive and statistically significant association between In-Service Teacher Training and Teachers' Self-Efficacy as a *Murabbi*. The p-value is = .000 and hence significant at the 0.01 level. Since the Pearson statistic $r(161) = .736$, using the guidelines of interpretation outlined in Table 5, we can conclude that there is a strong correlation between In-Service Teacher Training and Teachers' Self-Efficacy as a *Murabbi*. In summary, a strong positive relationship exists between In-service Teacher Training with Islamization Elements and Teacher's Self-Efficacy as a *Murabbi*.

Chart 2

Scatterplot of the relationship between In-service Teacher Training with Islamization Elements and Teachers’ Self-Efficacy as a Murabbi



In summary, a strong positive relationship exists between Inservice Teacher Training with Islamization Elements and Teacher’s Self-Efficacy as a *Murabbi*.

DISCUSSION

Relationship Between In-Service Teacher Training and Teacher's Character Development

The study confirmed a strong positive correlation between in-service teacher training with elements of Islamization and the character development of teachers, suggesting that ongoing professional development with an emphasis on Islamization significantly relates to the Islamization of teachers' character. The data also revealed that the majority of the teachers perceived that in-service teacher training with Islamization elements empowered them with the skills, knowledge, and attitude needed to Islamicize the teaching of acquired knowledge subjects. For instance, they can integrate Islam in the development of learning objectives and lesson plans. They can facilitate Islamization by identifying Quranic ayat, hadith, moral message, or classical Islamic scholars' contributions relevant to the unit. This corroborates teacher training on Islamization conceptualized by Philips (2016), Harder (2006), and Memon (2010). The majority of the respondents also indicated that they are able to clarify topics to students that contradict Islamic beliefs and values, such as evolution, homosexuality, and pre-marital relations.

The Ulul Albab program in Malaysia also emphasizes the importance of teacher development as role models for students (Baba et al., 2019). In-service training could be critical for teachers to learn and teach science through the Quranic worldview by the remembrance of Allah (*dhikr*) and contemplation (*fikr*) in studying the sciences rather than the secular lens of removing the role of the Creator in the study of His creation. Subirin et al. (2018) outlined the input, process, and outcome in terms of the selection of the right teachers, the process of teacher training, and the nature of Ulul albab teachers to lay the theory for the Ulul albab Teachers' Professional Development Program.

Sabilan et al. (2021) found that teachers needed further development in constructing integrated lesson plans according to the Integrated Holistic Education System (IHES). Sa-u's (2010) study established the validity of four factors of teacher attributes in infusing Islamic manners (*adab*) in classrooms. These four factors, self-efficacy, teachers' values, Islamic work ethic, and organizational commitment, reiterate the positive correlation established in this study between in-service teacher training and the character development of teachers, eventually influencing the teacher's effectiveness in infusing Islamic manners or character in students.

Relationship Between In-Service Teacher Training and Teacher's Self-Efficacy as a Murabbi

The study indicates the presence of a positive and statistically significant association between In-Service Teacher Training and Teachers' Self-Efficacy as a Murabbi. The positive correlation between in-service training and teacher's self-efficacy as a *murabbi* supports the literature that emphasizes the role of the teacher is not just to impart knowledge but also to shape the character of the students (al-Attas S. M., 1979; Kasmar et al., 2019; Sa-u et al., 2010; Ryan & Lickona, 1992). Self-efficacy is an important determinant of actual teacher performance as a *murabbi* (Jaafar et al., 2012), in terms of taking on difficult tasks, undertaking necessary actions, and developing the mindset and readiness to solve difficult problems.

Targeted in-service teacher training can positively influence the self-efficacy of teachers as a *murabbi*, leading to effective character development in students. Islamic Education Teachers (IET) must recognize their role as a *murabbi* and play an important part in character development by serving as positive role models (Jaafar et al., 2012). Abdullah et al. (2020) suggest that the development of a child's behavior can be molded by the teacher's self-efficacy, religious knowledge, and social interactions. In a study by Jaafar et al. (2019), Islamic Education Teachers (IETs) demonstrated high levels of self-efficacy but lacked the ability to act as a Society Change Agent (SCA).

Hence, in-service training needs to address the teacher's connection with Allah through spiritual purification (*tazkiyah*) and promote community service. Therefore, the study shows that targeted in-service training can help increase teachers' self-efficacy as a *murabbi*, leading to effective character development in students.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has four key limitations: sample size, scope, method, and instrument. Firstly, the study's sample size and demographics are limited to teachers in integrated Islamic schools in Selangor, which may not be representative of all teachers in integrated and international Islamic schools inside and outside Malaysia. Secondly, the scope of the study is limited to identifying the nature and strength of the relationship between in-service teacher training opportunities with elements of Islamization and the character development of teachers as well as their self-efficacy as a *murabbi*. Thirdly, the questionnaire was partially adapted and developed by the researcher and was piloted to a small number of respondents below the minimum number of respondents recommended for Cronbach Alpha reliability testing. This was due to constraints in getting schools to participate during the peak of the COVID restrictions as elaborated earlier. Another point to note is that at the time of conducting the analysis, the researcher utilized the tool at his disposal, i.e., SPSS v21, although the latest available version is currently SPSS v26.

The study recommends that in-service training and induction programs be enhanced with a focus on the Islamization of the teaching process and character building of teachers. This will help to produce holistically developed and balanced students who are devoted to Allah and can function effectively as His khalifa on earth. The in-service training can include spiritual purification, essential Islamic knowledge, emotional-spiritual intelligence and leadership training, and training on the methodology of lesson plan Islamization. (Javed, n.d.) Policymakers and administrators can implement programs to gauge the level of knowledge transfer and training transfer in schools, create communities of learning, and deploy experts on Islamization and character development as consultants to schools. Teachers' annual performance reviews should include Islamization and character development components.

Future studies can expand the population to include integrated and international Islamic schools in other states in Malaysia as well as other relevant Muslim and Muslim minority countries so that the findings can be generalized in Malaysia and the wider Muslim Ummah. A larger sample size with randomized sampling can also calibrate the results to be more representative of the population. Additionally, future studies can explore the extent of influence of in-service training on the Islamization of the teaching process and character of teachers and students, as well as how in-service training targeting non-IETs can be developed to empower them with fundamental Islamic knowledge.

CONCLUSION

The educational dualism or dichotomy between the dominant secular form of education in the Muslim world and the traditional madrassas that focus purely on Islamic sciences with little context on how to apply Islam to solve problems of today's world continues to be an issue facing educationalists today. Thinkers such as al-Attas and al-Faruqi have launched efforts to effectively Islamicize the sciences to free knowledge from its secular framework so that this educational dualism can be addressed and Muslims can once again reach the peak of civilizational glory.

However, this effort of Islamization of Knowledge has seen many challenges since its early inception. While there are many challenges, such as the lack of Islamicized textbooks in various subjects across the school grades, commercial focus of education institutions prioritizing profit maximization over character development and Islamization, lack of teachers who are competent in their subjects as well as have Islamic knowledge and can act as a role model and *murabbi*.

This research looked at how this educational dualism in integrated Islamic schools can be reduced by examining the relationship of in-service teacher training to Islamization of teaching of acquired knowledge subjects, the character development of teachers, and their self-efficacy as a *murabbi*.

The integration of Islam in teaching subjects such as science, math, English, etc., can have a profound impact on the children as it would counter the secular framework in which the curriculum of these subjects is typically designed and taught. While it cannot be expected that all subject teachers can Islamicize the subjects they teach just because they are Muslim, the gaps can be addressed by mapping the competencies required for Islamization of lesson plans and providing relevant in-service training that addresses these gaps.

Since scholars have predominantly agreed that faith or *imaan* is knowledge (*ilm*) and action (*amal*), Islamic knowledge has to be reflected in the character of the Muslims. And hence the significance of character development (*tarbiyah*) in the Islamic education process and the role of the teacher as a *murabbi*. Hence, this role as a *murabbi* cannot be isolated to the Islamic Education Teachers (IETs) alone; rather, the students look at all teachers as authoritative figures and role models and observe and absorb their behaviors and character. Therefore, in-service teacher training can effectively address teachers' knowledge, behavior, and attitude gaps to enable them to be effective role models and *murabbis*.

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