

## The Teacher's Role as a Role Model: Disparities between Students' Expectations and Reality in Senior High School

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### Abstract

*Teachers are widely regarded as role models who significantly influence students' character development. However, in reality, there is often a notable disparity between this expectation and the actual circumstances faced by teachers in the field. This research aims to analyze teacher role modeling from the perceptions of both teachers and students. This study employs mixed-methods research, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. Research instruments included questionnaires administered to 25 teachers and 72 students as samples. The results indicate that teachers highly understand the importance of role modeling but feel less emulated by students. Conversely, students perceive teachers as good role models, despite some negative behaviors. This disparity arises from differences in perception between teachers and students, as well as the influence of social media. This disparity is analyzed through social perception theory and its relationship with the concept of social learning in Islam. Impact of this study shows that the effectiveness of role modelling is complex because it is influenced by several factors, including teacher-student interaction and the environment*

**Keywords:** Teacher Role Modeling; Student Perception; Disparity.

### Abstrak

Guru merupakan teladan atau role model yang memiliki pengaruh terhadap pembentukan serta perkembangan karakter peserta didik. Namun kenyataannya seringkali terjadi kesenjangan antara harapan dan kenyataannya terhadap guru di lapangan. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis keteladanan guru dari persepsi guru dan peserta didik. Penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian campuran (mixed-methods research) yang menggabungkan metode kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Instrumen penelitian menggunakan kuesioner kepada 25 guru dan 72 peserta didik sebagai sampel, hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa guru sangat memahami pentingnya keteladanan akan tetapi guru merasa kurang di ikuti oleh peserta didik. Sebaliknya peserta didik melihat guru sebagai teladan yang baik walaupun terdapat perilaku negatif. Disparitas ini terjadi karena adanya perbedaan persepsi antara guru dan peserta didik serta pengaruh media sosial. Disparitas ini dianalisis melalui teori persepsi sosial dan hubungannya dengan konsep belajar sosial dalam Islam. Dampak penelitian ini memperlihatkan bahwa efektivitas keteladanan bersifat kompleks karena dipengaruhi oleh beberapa faktor diantaranya interaksi guru dan peserta didik dan lingkungan.

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**Kata kunci :** Keteladanan Guru; Persepsi Siswa; Disparitas.

## I. Introduction

In the construction of a nation's civilization, education plays a very important and fundamental role, especially the role of teachers as irreplaceable central figures. A teacher is not only responsible for imparting knowledge to students, but also for guiding them to develop good character, manners, and ethics (Arif, Aziz & Ma'arif, 2025). Teachers serve as a source of inspiration and motivation for students, both in terms of character and knowledge. Therefore, teachers bear a significant responsibility in achieving educational objectives.

In addition to being educators, teachers are now also expected to function as facilitators, motivators, and most importantly, as role models for their students (Elihami & Melbourne, 2023). Education that is carried out by setting an example can stimulate the willingness and develop the creativity of students during learning (Saekan, 2017). In this case, teachers become figures who set an example for students, both in terms of knowledge and character. In Javanese terms, teachers are figures who can be emulated and used as role models (Salsabilah, Dewi, & Furnamasari, 2021). Teachers' efforts to motivate students are evident in their creativity, activity, and understanding of the material, which are quite significant (Mutaqorribain et al, 2022). This confirms that the aspect of teacher role modelling is the most fundamental and essential.

With education facing a variety of complex challenges these days, teachers need to be role models more than ever. Their example has a huge impact on students, not just in class but also outside of it, because it plays a crucial role in shaping character (Mulyati, Hidayati, & Hariyanto, 2020). The presence of a teacher in the teaching and learning process plays an important role as it can influence students' success in completing their education (Hariyanto et al., 2023). This means that teachers' behaviour and character significantly contribute to the development of students' behaviour and character. Teachers not only provide academic content but must also set a good example. Therefore, teachers are the primary figures in shaping the school climate, where their perceptions will impact the learning process and indirectly influence students' academic achievements (Pandia & Purwanti, 2019).

The relevance of teacher role models is currently very important at every level, especially in senior high schools (SMA), where students are in a crucial stage of development, namely identity and moral development. At this stage, students tend to be searching for their identity and looking for figures to idolise. The role of teachers here is to fill this void by providing positive examples and instilling good moral values in students. However, in reality, there are still teachers who have not fulfilled their roles optimally. There are still teachers who teach half-heartedly, feel burdened, and are reluctant to teach, which results in the values of teacher role models becoming hollow

(Darwin & Nasution, 2023). This shows the importance of teachers' understanding of the need to once again become role models for their students.

Competent teachers will have an impact on student performance, effectiveness, and efficiency of the entire education system (Gaganao & Odon, 2024). The relationship between teachers and students is asymmetrical, where teachers have authority in various contexts regarding language use and classroom learning, as well as controlling student behaviour (Munir, 2025). In Islamic education, the role of teachers as role models is very significant. When teachers are able to consistently demonstrate appropriate speech, behaviour, and attitudes, this has a significant impact on students in shaping their character. Especially in the current era of the 4th Industrial Revolution, where Islamic education plays a crucial role in developing students' potential comprehensively, including scientific and technological skills, character development, ethics, and religious practices (Adnan, 2022). Through words, attitudes, and behaviour consistent with Islamic teachings, teachers can serve as good examples for students. Combining these activities with religious practices such as congregational prayer can help shape students' characters to be virtuous, faithful, and knowledgeable (Nuronia & Jannah, 2025).

Islamic Religious Education teachers, for example, play an important role in shaping the moral character of students. Various problems that occur, such as students hitting teachers, gang fights, and other anarchic acts, constitute moral decadence (Muis, Hosaini, Eriyanto, & Readi, 2022). In addressing these challenges, the concept of noble values in society and moderation is actively developed and implemented across various fields, including education, social services, and health (Qodir, Nashir, & Hefner, 2023). Therefore, teachers' exemplary behaviour is the cornerstone in guiding students not only to master knowledge but also to develop strong moral values and character amidst the challenges of the times and social dynamics.

The religious behaviour of Muslims in urban areas exhibits uniqueness influenced by modernity, Islam, and individual identity (Mustofa, Juliansyahzen, & Hefni, 2023). The role of teachers is not limited to classroom teaching; rather, teachers are agents of change both in schools and in society (Yasin, Ikhsan, Hawa, and Nadila, 2024). To cope with ever-changing social changes, the role of teachers is greatly needed and can bring about positive transformation, especially for their students. Improving teacher performance in secondary education requires strong support in leadership, self-efficacy, work environment, and job satisfaction (Virgana & Fitriani, 2025).

Various research findings on teacher competencies, particularly in Islamic Religious Education, can serve as a starting point, even a benchmark, for developing teacher competencies, especially in the digital era (Arif et al., 2025). Currently, many contemporary issues highlight the need for character education not only in schools but also in home and social environments (Salsabilah, Dewi, & Furnamasari, 2021).

Character-related issues affecting students today include bullying, inappropriate language, and behaviours influenced by social media or gaming on gadgets (Marhan, 2023). This highlights the importance of character education to address these issues and the role of teachers as role models. Teachers must be adaptable to changes and shifts in social values and serve as catalysts for positive change both in schools and in society (Yasin, Ikhsan, Hawa, & Nadila, 2024). This means that teachers are not only educators but also facilitators and motivators in fostering positive habits both at school and in the community. Furthermore, the transition period from school to the workplace is a crucial stage in shaping an individual's career path (Wibowo et al., 2020).

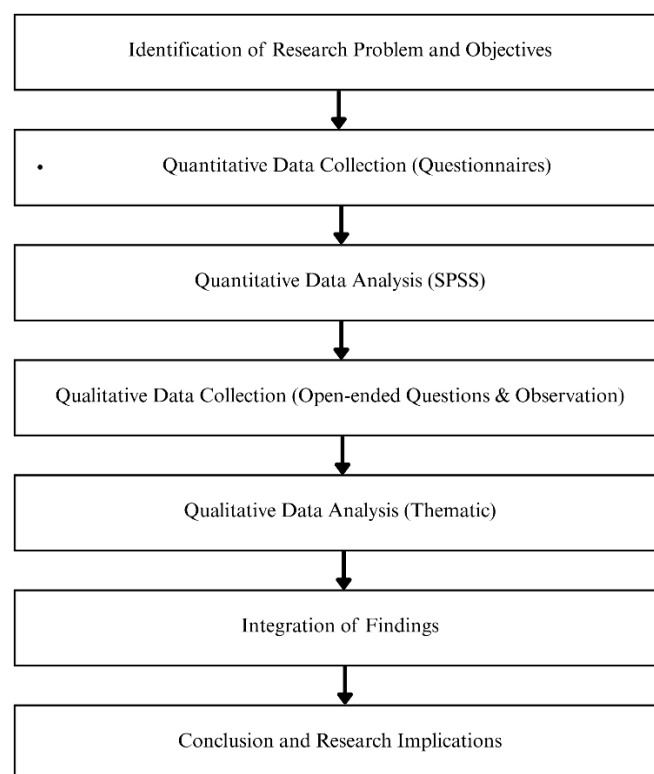
Although previous studies have examined the role of teachers as role models and their impact on the character, morals, and ethics of students, there are still significant gaps in the literature that need to be filled. Most previous studies have tended to focus on the ideal role of teachers and their positive impacts (Mutaqorribain, Asrori & Rusman, 2022; Tambak & Sukenti, 2023; Arif, Aziz & Ma'arif, 2025). However, previous research has not thoroughly and explicitly discussed the role of teachers as role models and the reality on the ground, particularly the moral challenges faced by students and teachers today. The gap that is the primary focus of this study is the disparity between the high expectations of teachers as role models in shaping students' character amid moral decline and the reality on the ground. Specifically, this study centres on the question: Are teachers still role models for students? This gap is important to study because it will make a significant contribution to improving the quality of character education.

The novelty value of this study lies in its approach to exploring in greater depth the perceptions of students and teachers regarding this question. This study will fill a knowledge gap and provide new perspectives and data that are not yet available on the implementation of teacher role modelling and its relationship to addressing moral issues. The objective of this study is to empirically analyse whether teachers still serve as role models for students, particularly in high schools, especially amid the prevailing moral and ethical decline in contemporary society. It is hoped that this study will provide new knowledge and insights for policymakers and teachers, as well as valid data on students' and teachers' perceptions of teacher role modelling.

The benefits of this study are to contribute knowledge to enrich the scientific realm of education and character. This study provides new insights from teachers and students that have rarely been explored in depth in previous studies. The results of this study are expected to serve as a foundation for further research, encourage scientific discussion about the role of teachers in the modern era, and become a reference for academics interested in researching the issue of teacher role models and student character.

## II. Research Method

This study uses mixed-methods research, which combines quantitative and qualitative methods. This method was chosen to obtain a deep and comprehensive understanding. This combination method will open up more space for research with various perspectives, different assumptions, and data collection and analysis techniques that are relevant to the study (Indrawan & Jalilah, 2021). Quantitative data is used to measure general levels of perception, while qualitative data provides richer and deeper nuances and understanding of respondents' subjective experiences. The research design uses a sequential exploratory approach, where quantitative data is collected and analysed first, followed by qualitative data analysis through open-ended questions and observation.



**Figure 1.** Research Design and Research Procedures

The research location is at SMAN 1 Sukaraja, Bogor Regency. The population is the generalisation area consisting of subjects or objects with certain characteristics and qualities determined by the researcher to be studied and subsequently drawn conclusions (Sugiyono, 2013). Furthermore, the sample is an adequate number to produce reliable data (Fathor Rasyid, 2022). The sample consists of 25 teachers and 72 students using purposive sampling. The data collection method used was a questionnaire and observation. The questionnaire was the primary instrument for collecting

quantitative and some qualitative data. The instrument served to measure the level of the variables being studied (Sugiyono, 2013).

The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part of the questions is presented using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree). These questions are designed to measure respondents' perceptions of teacher role models, such as honesty, speech, discipline, responsibility, and appearance. For teacher respondents, the questions are designed to assess their awareness of the importance of exemplary behaviour, teachers as role models, challenges, and support from the school environment. The second section uses open-ended questions in the form of short essays, allowing respondents to provide narrative-based answers. These open-ended questions are intended to delve deeper into teachers' exemplary behaviour. Respondent confidentiality is maintained to ensure that the answers provided are objective and honest.

Data processing for the first part uses a Likert scale with Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) for descriptive statistics. For the second part, thematic analysis will be used. This involves reading all the data thoroughly and repeatedly, identifying patterns or interesting ideas, grouping them based on similar codes, defining each theme if necessary, and presenting the qualitative research results with narratives quoted directly from the respondents. With this analysis, it is hoped that the data obtained can provide a useful overview for policy developers

### III. Result and Discussion

The first part of this study presents data that has been processed using Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS). The findings are presented in descriptive form and tables for ease of understanding. The results of the analysis of the teacher questionnaire related to exemplary behaviour and the role of teachers as role models can be seen in the following table:

**Table 1.** Exemplary Conduct in The Role of a Teacher

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	4,0	4,0	4,0
	4	4	16,0	16,0	20,0
	5	20	80,0	80,0	100,0
	Total	25	100,0	100,0	

The instrument asked: "I realise the importance of setting an example in my role as a teacher". Based on the table above, 80% of teachers strongly agreed and 16% agreed, indicating that the majority of teachers are highly committed to setting an example in their role as teachers. This shows that teachers are aware that their role is not limited to transferring knowledge but also to shaping character and morals.

**Table 2.** Exemplary Discipline, Speech, and Responsibility

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	4,0	4,0	4,0
	4	4	16,0	16,0	20,0
	5	20	80,0	80,0	100,0
	Total	25	100,0	100,0	

The instrument asked: "I strive to be a role model in terms of discipline, speech, and responsibility". Based on the table above, 80% of teachers strongly agree and 16% agree to strive to be role models in discipline, speech, and responsibility. This shows the commitment of teachers to realise their role models in everyday life.

**Table 3.** Students' Tendency to not Follow Teachers' Exemplary Behavior

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	4,0	4,0	4,0
	2	1	4,0	4,0	8,0
	4	21	84,0	84,0	92,0
	5	2	8,0	8,0	100,0
	Total	25	100,0	100,0	

The instrument asked: "Currently, there is a tendency for students to not follow the example set by teachers." Based on the table above, 8% of teachers strongly agree and 84% of teachers agree that teachers are no longer role models for students. This indicates a high level of concern among teachers regarding the acceptance of role models by students. This occurs because teachers have provided the best examples, but the response from students does not align with the teachers' expectations, although this may be due to external and internal factors related to the students.

**Table 4.** School Environment Encourages Teachers to Maintain Role Models

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4	7	28,0	28,0	28,0
	5	18	72,0	72,0	100,0
	Total	25	100,0	100,0	

The instrument asked: "The school environment encourages teachers to maintain exemplary behaviour". Based on the table above, 72% of teachers strongly agree and 28% agree that schools have a positive culture and environment that continues to provide support and facilities for teachers to be positive. This environmental factor is important because exemplary behaviour is not the sole responsibility of teachers but is also shaped by the environment.

**Table 5.** Exemplary Behavior is More Important than Merely Transferring Knowledge

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	1	4,0	4,0	4,0
	4	6	24,0	24,0	28,0
	5	18	72,0	72,0	100,0
	Total	25	100,0	100,0	

The instrument asked: "I feel that setting an example is more important than simply transferring knowledge". Based on the table above, 72% of teachers strongly agree and 24% agree that setting an example has a higher priority than simply transferring knowledge. This shows that the formation of good character in students through the example set by teachers will have a significant and long-lasting impact on students in their lives.

**Table 6.** The Impact of Teacher Role Models on The Character Development of Student

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	1	4,0	4,0	4,0
	4	6	24,0	24,0	28,0
	5	18	72,0	72,0	100,0
	Total	25	100,0	100,0	

The instrument asked: "Teachers" exemplary behaviour has a significant impact on the character development of students'. Based on the table above, 72% of teachers strongly agree and 24% agree that they are architects who build the character of students. Teachers realise that their behaviour will directly and indirectly shape the character of students. This belief motivates teachers to continue to be good role models.

**Table 7.** Special Training to Maintain Exemplary Behaviour in The Modern Era

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	3	12,0	12,0	12,0
	3	1	4,0	4,0	16,0
	4	11	44,0	44,0	60,0
	5	10	40,0	40,0	100,0
	Total	25	100,0	100,0	

Instrument asked: 'Teachers need special training to maintain exemplary behaviour in the modern era'. Based on the table above, 40% of teachers strongly agree and 44%



agree that teacher exemplary behaviour is something that must continue to be improved, because the influence of technology and social change requires new strategies to maintain good exemplary behavior.

**Table 8.** Exemplary Behaviour as an Additional Burden for Teachers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	7	28,0	28,0	28,0
	2	15	60,0	60,0	88,0
	4	3	12,0	12,0	100,0
	Total	25	100,0	100,0	

Question: 'The role of being a role model at school is an additional burden for teachers'. Based on the table above, 60% of teachers disagree and 28% strongly disagree that being a role model is an inherent part of the teaching profession rather than an additional burden.

**Table 9.** Descriptive Statistics (Teacher Questionnaire)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I realise the importance of setting an example in my role as a teacher	25	1	5	4,68	,852
I strive to be a role model in terms of discipline, speech, and responsibility.	25	1	5	4,68	,852
Currently, there is a tendency for students to not follow the example set by their teachers.	25	1	5	3,88	,781
The school environment encourages teachers to maintain their exemplary behaviour.	25	4	5	4,72	,458
I feel that setting an example is more important than simply transferring knowledge.	25	3	5	4,68	,557
Teachers' exemplary behaviour has a significant impact on the character development of students.	25	3	5	4,68	,557
Teachers need special training to maintain their exemplary behaviour in the modern era.	25	2	5	4,12	,971
The role of being a role model at school is an additional burden for teachers.	25	1	4	1,96	,889
Valid N (listwise)	25				

From the quantitative results above, it is clear that teachers are aware of how important they are as role models and strive to be good examples, with an average score of 4.68 (on a scale of 1-5) for the statements 'I am aware of the importance of role modelling in my role as a teacher' and 'I strive to be an example in terms of discipline, speech, and responsibility.' This means that teachers have a high commitment to being role models. Based on previous research, it indicates that, in general, respondents rate teachers as having good to moderate competence at 44%, and teacher work motivation is at a good level at 38% (Sibuea et al., 2022). This shows a positive consistency in important aspects of being a teacher. However, an important finding is that teachers feel that students no longer view them as role models, as indicated by an average score of 3.88 for the statement, "Currently, there is a tendency for students to follow teachers' role models less." Although this figure is above the midpoint of the scale, it indicates a fairly high level of agreement among teachers regarding the issue of students no longer following teachers as role models.

Qualitative findings obtained from open-ended questions indicate that the meaning of teacher role modelling is that teachers not only impart knowledge but also set a good example in their attitudes, words, and behaviour. This involves fostering good character traits such as honesty, fairness, discipline, respect for others, patience, compassion, and responsibility. In applying teacher role modelling, many challenges are faced, such as a lack of respect for others, talking when the teacher is speaking, not greeting others, bullying peers, dishonesty, and irresponsibility. Social media also plays a negative role with various negative content that tends to be normalised by students.

Furthermore, the results of the analysis of students' perceptions of teacher role modelling show data from the student questionnaire analysis, along with the results of frequency analysis and descriptive statistics of students' perceptions:

**Table 10.** My Teacher is A Role Model in Being Honest

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	1,4	1,4	1,4
	4	40	55,6	55,6	56,9
	5	31	43,1	43,1	100,0
	Total	72	100,0	100,0	

Based on the table above, 43.1% strongly agree and 55.6% agree that teachers' honesty is highly valued by students. This shows that honesty is a fundamental value in building teaching and learning relationships. It also indicates that teachers' honesty has been reflected in their students.

**Table 11.** My Teacher Shows Discipline in Teaching and Learning Activities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	1,4	1,4	1,4

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	3	3	4,2	4,2	5,6
	4	47	65,3	65,3	70,8
	5	21	29,2	29,2	100,0
	Total	72	100,0	100,0	

Based on the table above, 29.2% strongly agree and 65.3% agree that teachers demonstrate good discipline in terms of punctuality, classroom management, and delivery of material.

**Table 12.** I am motivated to learn because I see the example set by my teachers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	1,4	1,4	1,4
	2	2	2,8	2,8	4,2
	3	7	9,7	9,7	13,9
	4	38	52,8	52,8	66,7
	5	24	33,3	33,3	100,0
	Total	72	100,0	100,0	

Based on the table above, 33.3% strongly agree and 52.48% agree that students are motivated to learn because they see their teachers as role models. This shows that teachers are able to inspire students to learn.

**Table 13.** My teacher uses appropriate language when communicating

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	1,4	1,4	1,4
	3	5	6,9	6,9	8,3
	4	32	44,4	44,4	52,8
	5	34	47,2	47,2	100,0
	Total	72	100,0	100,0	

Based on the table above, 47.2% strongly agree and 44.4% agree that teachers have good communication skills, thereby creating a comfortable learning atmosphere and serving as role models for students' communication skills.

**Table 14.** I feel valued by teachers in every learning process

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	1,4	1,4	1,4
	2	3	4,2	4,2	5,6
	3	4	5,6	5,6	11,1
	4	44	61,1	61,1	72,2
	5	20	27,8	27,8	100,0
	Total	72	100,0	100,0	

Based on the table above, 27.8% strongly agree and 61.1% agree that students feel valued by teachers, which is crucial for their psychological well-being. When students

feel valued, they tend to be more confident and motivated to learn, which also builds a good relationship between teachers and students.

**Table 15.** The school environment supports the development of exemplary attitudes among teachers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	1,4	1,4	1,4
	2	2	2,8	2,8	4,2
	3	8	11,1	11,1	15,3
	4	41	56,9	56,9	72,2
	5	20	27,8	27,8	100,0
	Total	72	100,0	100,0	

Based on the table above, 27.8% strongly agree and 56.9% agree that the school environment encourages teachers to develop exemplary behaviour. This indicates a good and positive educational ecosystem.

**Table 16.** Neatness of teachers' clothing and appearance sets an example for students

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	1,4	1,4	1,4
	2	2	2,8	2,8	4,2
	3	5	6,9	6,9	11,1
	4	28	38,9	38,9	50,0
	5	36	50,0	50,0	100,0
	Total	72	100,0	100,0	

Based on the table above, 50% strongly agree and 38.9% agree that teachers are not limited to moral and behavioural aspects, but that appearance is also highlighted by students. A neat appearance demonstrates the professionalism of teachers and can reflect discipline and respect by students, becoming a standard worthy of emulation by students.

**Table 17.** Teachers' exemplary behaviour has a positive influence on my behaviour outside of school.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	1,4	1,4	1,4
	2	2	2,8	2,8	4,2
	3	4	5,6	5,6	9,7
	4	38	52,8	52,8	62,5
	5	27	37,5	37,5	100,0
	Total	72	100,0	100,0	

Based on the table above, 37.5% strongly agree and 52.8% agree that the process of absorbing values from teachers is not only adapted in the classroom but also outside the classroom in everyday life. This shows that teachers' exemplary behaviour has a broad impact on students in shaping their character and ethics as a whole.

**Table 18.** Descriptive Statistics (Student Questionnaire)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
My teacher sets an example in being honest.	72	1	5	4,39	,640
My teacher demonstrates discipline in teaching and learning activities.	72	1	5	4,21	,649
I am motivated to learn because I see my teacher's example.	72	1	5	4,14	,810
My teacher maintains good language when communicating.	72	1	5	4,36	,737
I feel valued by my teacher in every learning process.	72	1	5	4,10	,790
The neatness of my teacher's attire and appearance serves as an example for students.	72	1	5	4,33	,839
My teacher's exemplary behaviour has a positive influence on my behaviour outside of school.	72	1	5	4,22	,791
The school environment supports the development of my teacher's exemplary behaviour.	72	1	5	4,07	,793
Valid N (listwise)	72				

The quantitative results above consistently show that students have a significant perception of teacher role modelling, with an average score of 4.39 for 'My teacher is a role model in being honest' and a score of 4.21 for 'My teacher demonstrates discipline in teaching and learning activities'. These figures indicate strong approval from students, indicating that their teachers remain role models in these aspects. For the statement 'I am motivated to learn because I see my teacher's exemplary behaviour,' with an average score of 4.14, it shows that teachers have a significant impact on students' learning motivation.

Furthermore, in response to open-ended questions from students, they view teacher role models as reflections of good speech, behaviour, and actions for students both at school and in the community. A role model teacher is one who develops students' attitudes, is patient, and provides positive examples for students. The most frequently mentioned characteristics of exemplary teachers by students include discipline, patience, responsibility, honesty, politeness, firmness, critical thinking, empathy, good communication skills, and neatness in dress. However, in one question related to inappropriate teacher behaviour, students mentioned using harsh language, being undisciplined, and being unfair or discriminating against students. Students hope that teachers can set a good example in both academic and moral aspects, provide more motivation, guidance, patience, and kindness to create a comfortable learning

environment.

Creating a comfortable learning environment, motivating teachers, and setting a positive example are the expectations of students, which are highly relevant to the concept of student engagement. Student engagement is defined as having three main dimensions: their active participation in the classroom, their contribution to curriculum design, and their sense of being an important part of the learning community (Tambak & Sukenti, 2023). When teachers set a good example and students feel valued in the learning process, this directly encourages active student participation in the learning process.

Based on the data from the analysis above, there is a disparity in the perceptions of teachers and students regarding teacher role modelling. From the teachers' perspective, there are indications of concern that teacher role modelling is not fully followed by students, as seen in the statement 'Currently, there is a tendency for students to not fully follow teacher role modelling' with a score of 3.88. Conversely, the results of the student questionnaire show positive results regarding teacher role modelling, with an average score above 4.00 for statements indicating that teachers are honest, disciplined, speak well, and motivate students. Students' open-ended responses also explicitly mention teachers as role models and examples to follow. This results in a contradiction indicating a gap between teachers' perceptions of how much students follow their teachers and students' experiences, who still view teachers as role models. This creates a disparity between expectations and reality from two different perspectives: teachers feel they are not being followed, while students feel teachers are role models for them.

This phenomenon can be analysed based on social perception theory, where teachers and students form subjective views based on their experiences and the information they receive. Social perception involves observing and interpreting others through social cues such as facial expressions, body language and the surrounding situation (Satria & Neviyarni S., 2024). Teachers may compare students' behaviour with ideal behaviour as exemplified by them. If students do not exhibit behaviour consistent with what the teacher has demonstrated, they are perceived as failing to follow or imitate the desired behaviour, thereby influencing their perceptions. Conversely, students may focus on positive aspects observed during their interactions with the teacher, thereby forming a positive impression.

Although the majority of students consider teachers to be role models, in open-ended questions, students criticised negative behaviour exhibited by teachers, which could create a gap that makes teachers feel that they are not being fully followed. This disparity may lie in the consistency of teachers in maintaining their attitude in the eyes of students. Furthermore, teachers highlighted the influence of social media, which makes students less likely to emulate teachers, as students are perceived to follow figures found on social media more closely. This is actually relevant to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory,

where the environment can influence individual development, and the relationship between the individual and the environment shapes human behaviour (Unik Hanifah Salsabila, 2018). Teachers feel that students today are exposed to many role models or examples obtained from social media that are not in line with the values taught at school. This indicates that external factors are more influential, leading teachers to feel there is competition in setting an example for students.

In Islam, exemplary behaviour is fundamental and can be seen in the figure of the Prophet Muhammad SAW as *uswatun hasanah* or a good example for all mankind. The goal of education in Islam is to shape outstanding personalities or *insan kamil* (Masturin et al., 2022). Education in Islam has an important role in encouraging humans to develop fully (Elihami & Melbourne, 2023). Teachers are expected to embody these values of exemplary behaviour. In social learning theory, as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad SAW, learning occurs through observation, retention, reproduction, and motivation (Arifin et al., 2024). When teachers feel that their students are not following them, it indicates a barrier in one of the social learning processes. There may be obstacles in observation or retention, as mentioned by the teacher, where students are heavily influenced by role models on social media. Alternatively, there may be challenges in motivating students to reproduce the teacher's exemplary behaviour due to inconsistencies in what they observe. If this occurs, the social theory is realised. This is evident from open statements about the teacher's behaviour that is not worthy of emulation, and this can reduce students' motivation to learn, while motivation is an important element in social learning theory.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The research clearly illustrates two crucial perspectives, namely those of teachers and students, regarding teacher role modelling. The findings indicate that teachers have a deep awareness of their role as role models, going beyond mere knowledge transfer, and actively strive to demonstrate positive behaviours such as discipline, proper speech, and responsibility. This is not viewed as an additional burden by teachers but rather as a form of dedication to the noble profession of teaching, supported by a positive school environment. On the other hand, students consistently view teachers as figures who deserve respect, motivated by teachers' discipline and effective communication. This indicates that teachers have generally succeeded in instilling exemplary behaviour in students, creating a positive impression that drives learning motivation and shapes students' character both at school and beyond.

However, an in-depth analysis revealed significant disparities between the perceptions of teachers and students. Teachers are concerned because students tend to follow examples found on social media and do not emulate their teachers, resulting in a gap between teachers' expectations and the reality they observe. This phenomenon can

be explained through social perception, where teachers and students have different interpretations: teachers focus on students' behavioural outcomes, while students emphasise the positive qualities demonstrated by teachers. Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of development explains the influence of external factors, particularly social media, which shapes students' behaviour. In the theory of Islamic social learning, although teachers serve as models (through observation), there are obstacles in the process of retention, reproduction, or motivation among students, especially due to inconsistencies in teachers' behaviour highlighted by students or other examples from social media.

This study has certain constraints. First, its focus was confined to a single institution, which limits the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. Second, the approach used was unable to quantitatively measure the disparity between the expectation and the actual circumstances. Consequently, it is strongly suggested that future studies consider a mixed-methods approach or a larger, more diverse sample to achieve a more comprehensive understanding.

Thus, the conclusion of this study states that the concept of teacher role models is not a fixed concept but a changing process influenced by various factors, both internal and external. The impact of teacher role models depends not only on the quality of the teacher's delivery but also on how students receive the message of the role model. To maximise the role of teacher exemplarity in education, a comprehensive and integrated approach is needed. This includes increasing teachers' awareness of the impact of small inconsistencies on students, innovating new strategies to bridge perception gaps, and the importance of training students to think critically to filter out negative influences from social media and the environment. Therefore, character education programmes should not only focus on 'how to be a role model' but also on 'how to ensure that the role model is followed' by understanding the existing reality.

Theoretically, this research has implications for enriching the study and knowledge of the teacher's exemplary character, which is not static but dynamic, influenced by both internal and external factors. The study emphasizes the consistency of teachers' behavior, exemplary strategies, and digital literacy for enhancing students' higher-order thinking skills to filter out negative external influences. For policymakers, this research could serve as a reference for developing character education programs that not only emphasize being exemplary but also focus on how teachers can maintain consistency in that role in their real-world circumstances.

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