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Strategy for Strengthening Islamic Religious Education Curriculum in Forming Children's Islamic Character

Aura Mahdiyah¹, Juliani², Nia Nazlia³, Nurul Arsih⁴, Nurul Jannah⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5} Institut Syekh Abdul Halim Hasan Binjai, Indonesia

Email: mahdiyyahaura@gmail.com¹, juliani@insan.ac.id², nianazliaa242@gmail.com³,
nurularsih538@gmail.com⁴, nuruljannah32026@gmail.com⁵

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ABSTRACT

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a pivotal role in shaping students' Islamic character as a foundation for ethical and moral behavior aligned with Islamic values. This study aims to explore strategies for strengthening the PAI curriculum to foster Islamic character among students. A qualitative approach is employed, utilizing literature reviews, observations, and case studies to identify effective strategies. The findings highlight five key strategies: (1) integrating Islamic values into learning materials in Islamic Religious Education and Civic Education subjects; (2) habituating Islamic character values through daily school activities; (3) empowering extracurricular activities as a medium for internalizing Islamic principles; (4) establishing an Islamic school environment through exemplary behavior of teachers and school staff; and (5) monitoring and guiding students' behavior to ensure character development. These strategies are found to significantly enhance the formation of students' Islamic character, enabling them to navigate the challenges of globalization without compromising their moral identity. This research provides practical insights for educators and policymakers in designing and implementing an effective PAI curriculum.

ABSTRAK

Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) memiliki peran penting dalam membentuk karakter Islami peserta didik sebagai fondasi perilaku yang etis, bermoral, dan sesuai dengan nilai-nilai Islam. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji strategi penguatan kurikulum PAI dalam membentuk karakter Islami peserta didik. Pendekatan kualitatif digunakan dengan memanfaatkan tinjauan pustaka, observasi, dan studi kasus untuk mengidentifikasi strategi yang efektif. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan lima strategi utama: (1) integrasi nilai-nilai Islami ke dalam materi pembelajaran pada mata pelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan; (2) pembiasaan nilai-nilai karakter Islami melalui kegiatan sehari-hari di lingkungan sekolah; (3) pemberdayaan kegiatan ekstrakurikuler sebagai media internalisasi prinsip Islami; (4) pembentukan lingkungan sekolah Islami melalui keteladanan guru dan staf sekolah; serta (5) pengawasan dan pembimbingan perilaku peserta didik untuk memastikan pengembangan karakter. Strategi ini terbukti secara signifikan meningkatkan pembentukan karakter Islami peserta didik, memungkinkan mereka menghadapi tantangan globalisasi tanpa mengorbankan identitas moral mereka. Penelitian ini memberikan wawasan praktis bagi pendidik dan pembuat kebijakan dalam merancang dan mengimplementasikan kurikulum PAI yang efektif.

PRELIMINARY

Education is a process achieved by someone through teaching. Education is basically also an effort to develop all of a person's potential in order to prepare a person's character to face various life challenges so that they can become individuals who have faith and devotion to Allah SWT. Education also aims to form noble attitudes, maintain health, increase knowledge, develop creativity, foster independence, and help students become democratic and responsible citizens.

Islamic education and character education aim to shape adolescents into individuals who have more positive characters or values. Islamic education aligns with clear and detailed principles in the Quran, so that it does not deviate from religious teachings. Thus, education is a means to internalize the values of life and life teachings to someone to shape someone's personality and character in a better direction (Somad, 2021).

By considering various aspects, such as intellectual, spiritual, and social, education can be said to be ideal. Certainly, by considering the physical capacity and potential, as well as the reality of students. Therefore, every component and educational tool is very important to support the success of learning programs and activities. In the context of Islamic education, the main attention is given to the values of virtue. The content of Islamic education lies in the formation of character and values.

Efforts to strengthen character are carried out through various strategies such as integrating values into the learning process, habituation, role models, joint movements, and increasing the cultivation of mentality and human resources in Indonesia in the future and forming their own perspectives on the world. Teenagers are individuals who have just entered adulthood and are learning what is right and what is wrong, getting to know the opposite sex, understanding their role in the social world, accepting the identity of Allah SWT. Given to him and being able to develop throughout life the potentials that exist in a person. Today's teenagers must be ready and able to face the challenges of life and society.

Adolescence is the most important age in everyone's life, it is a transition period between childhood and adolescence and will determine maturity in adulthood. Education in Indonesia pays great attention to the importance of character. This is evidenced in Article 1 Chapter 1 which states that in organizing education in Indonesia it is necessary to develop latent abilities such as spiritual religious strength, self-control, character, intelligence, noble morals, and the ability to pay much attention to your students. For yourself, society, nation, and state (House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia, 2003). Therefore, the importance of character means that all educational institutions have a major role and responsibility to instill character in every learning process. Recently, the government has also emphasized the importance of quality education and included it in the 2013 curriculum. In terms of learning outcomes, the curriculum emphasizes the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.

Education is a very important aspect for forming a generation that is ready to take the baton from the older generation and build the future. Therefore, education plays a role in equipping them with new skills and enabling them to anticipate the demands of a dynamic society. On the other hand, Islamic Religious Education is also a compulsory subject at all levels of education, starting from elementary school, junior high school, and high school. This position makes Islamic Religious Education a central role in providing multiculturalism doctrine to students so that through the integration of multicultural values given to them, it can form a multicultural attitude of students. Education is one of the effective media for creating a generation of mindsets that can appreciate diversity constructively. Understanding and experiencing multicultural reality through education at all levels of education will certainly have a real impact on life in the future.

METHOD

This study is a qualitative research method that can be used to examine the strategy of strengthening the Islamic Religious Education curriculum in shaping the Islamic character of students by conducting library research, interviews, observations, and documentation. The analysis can be done with descriptive analysis to explain the characteristics and aspects that are relevant to the observed phenomenon. For the validity of the data, data triangulation can be used (Assingkily, 2021). The strategy of Islamic Religious Education teachers in shaping the Islamic character of students can be done by: Habituation, such as reading prayers before and after learning activities, reciting the Koran, and praying Dzuhur in congregation. Role model, such as providing examples to always behave well, be polite, polite, greet, greet, shake hands, and always be honest. Motivate students to always practice the values of Islamic

teachings. Teach students about knowledge and morals. Educate students so that they always obey the teachings of Islam. Islamic religious education provides a solid ethical and moral foundation, which shapes students' personalities with principles such as honesty, integrity, kindness, and justice.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Islamic religious education has a very crucial role in shaping the Islamic character of students. A strong Islamic character will be the foundation for students in living their lives, both in this world and in the hereafter. Therefore, an effective strategy is needed to strengthen the Islamic religious education curriculum so that these goals can be achieved. Superior character does not only concern ethical, moral, polite and socially-oriented characters, but also concerns all elements in an individual's mentality. Islamic character is in line with the character developed in the goals of national education. Strengthening Islamic character must always be carried out by all elements of Islamic educators, carried out comprehensively in the education system, especially in formal educational institutions in Indonesia. This is done by integrating the subjects of Islamic Religious Education, Civic Education, and public schools that have Islamic characteristics in various regions of Indonesia.

Here are some strategies that can be applied to strengthen the Islamic religious education curriculum in forming the Islamic character of students:

Application in learning materials

In the curriculum structure, basically every subject contains materials related to character. Substantively, there are at least two subjects that are directly related to the development of character and noble morals, namely Islamic Religious Education and Citizenship Education (PKn). Both subjects are subjects that directly (explicitly) introduce values, and to a certain extent make students care about and internalize values. The integration of character education in subjects leads to the internalization of values in everyday behavior through the learning process from the planning, implementation, and assessment stages.

Learning materials, especially Islamic Religious Education, are directed to foster and relate sensitivity to the development of students' character in various ways. Learning can be directed to the formation of noble character by analyzing relevant cases, identifying values in Islamic behavior, and emulating stories in Islamic history including the stories of the Prophets and Apostles, Islamic figures, and so on. In essence, Islamic Religious Education is full of content and material about character, it only needs to be strengthened by developing innovative learning models in its implementation. In addition, Islamic character can be strengthened and integrated into various elements of other subjects in an interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and cross-disciplinary manner (Wahid, 2019).

First, role models. Modeling can be done by school administrators, administrative staff, and teachers, who can make students as models. In classroom learning, role models can be used using the story method so that learning can be taken. As practiced in the lesson and before the lesson ends, the teacher explains the caliphs to be used in wisdom and learning (Rachmat, et.al., 2024). Second, habituation (habit formation). Character education is an effort that is designed and implemented systematically to help students understand the values of human behavior related to God Almighty, themselves, fellow human beings, the environment, and nationality which are manifested in thoughts, attitudes, feelings, words, and actions based on religious norms, laws, manners, culture, and customs. Forming attitudes, behaviors, and characters requires habituation. This habituation can be done from simple things in the family and school environment. Cultures that are developed through habituation can shape students' mentality in a better direction.

In character education in schools, all components (education stakeholders) must be involved, including the components of education itself, namely curriculum content, learning and assessment processes, handling or management of subjects, school management, implementation of curricular activities or activities, empowerment of facilities and infrastructure, financing, and work ethic of all school/environment residents. In addition, character education is interpreted as a behavior of school residents who in organizing education must have character.

Third, character building through extracurricular activities. Extracurricular activities can also be an important means of strengthening character education. Through activities such as scouts, student organizations, and social activities, students can learn to work together, appreciate differences, and build a sense of responsibility. Islamic religious education can be integrated into these activities, where students

are taught to apply religious values in all their actions. For example, social service activities can be an effective means of teaching concern and empathy for others.

Extracurricular activities also have a strategic role in building student character. Schools help students develop their potential through extracurricular activities. Extracurricular activities such as soccer, futsal, basketball, volleyball, gendang beleq, traditional dance, paskibraka, scouts, martial arts, small companies, PMR, mading, and imtaq All extracurricular branches are created to meet students' interests and talents. They are designed to maximize students' interests and talents and direct them to useful activities. Each extracurricular has a supervisor who is responsible for implementing and instilling character values in extracurricular activities. In addition, there are other supervisors who are responsible for carrying out extracurricular activities (Wisiyanti, 2024).

Fourth, Maintaining Moral Identity and Character. One of the biggest challenges faced by students in the era of globalization is the influence of foreign cultures that can erode local moral values that have long been part of the nation's identity and character. Globalization brings a rapid flow of information, technology, and foreign cultures into various aspects of life, including education, lifestyle, and social interaction. Although globalization opens opportunities for students to gain wider access to knowledge and technology, there are negative aspects that can affect their understanding and appreciation of local moral values that need to be watched out for. Global culture often brings values that conflict with local norms, such as hedonism and individualism. Islamic religious education in this case functions as a fortress that protects students from these negative influences. By instilling strong religious values, students can maintain their moral identity and not be easily carried away by the current of globalization that conflicts with Islamic religious values.

Fifth, Consistent Approach. Schools apply a consistent attitude in respecting and treating all students, regardless of ethnic background, religion, or social status. Multicultural values in Islamic Religious Education can be instilled by showing real examples that all students are treated equally, for example in the election of class leaders or the giving of awards, so that they feel appreciated and treated fairly. This consistency builds trust and strengthens students' understanding that diversity is natural and must be respected.

Sixth, provide Attention and Supervision of Student Behavior. Every student need attention and help from their teacher if they face things that are difficult to overcome alone, it will be impossible for them to stand alone without anyone else to achieve their desired goals. Thus, the role of the teacher is very important in paying attention to the development of their students. Regarding how teachers pay attention to their students, the author saw in the field during observations where the author observed teachers in providing attention and supervision by joining students during break times, after the Dhuhur prayer while providing input on good education (Hayat, et.al., n.d). Seventh, Motivating Students. Guiding and motivating students to always practice the values of Islamic teachings so that the expected character is formed in each student (Rahmad, et.al., 2024).

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Formation of Students' Religiousness

Character education is a new program prioritized by the Ministry of Education and Culture. In the implementation of religious character formation for students, of course there are two factors that are often found in an educational institution, namely supporting factors and inhibiting factors. Supporting factors are one of the factors that can be beneficial for students to become more religious. Supporting factors in the formation of religious character for students are first, supporters outside of school, students also study the Koran, so students are definitely taught to pray five times a day. So students already know (get) at least religious knowledge from their Koran teachers, so teachers don't have too much difficulty in explaining it. Second, students always interact with their friends, so teachers can easily directly exemplify to students an attitude of caring about respecting, appreciating, helping, and working together with their friends.

Third, students already know the rules if we make a mistake there must be a punishment, because at home if he makes a mistake he will be punished too, so it is easy to explain. Fourth, teachers find it easy to explain (example) good social life to students because every day students face society. Fifth, Teaching and Advising Children about the Importance of Character Education. Responsibility Education is a primary need, because with education children will be able to know good and bad deeds, so that they can

become useful people in the future. With education, the personality development of education can be better (Awali, et.al., 2020).

Factors that inhibit the formation of students' religious character can be included in several categories, including the influence of the family, school, and community environments. The following is an in-depth analysis of these factors: first, the inhibiting factor for strengthening character education by instilling religious values is the lack of support from parents who do not understand the character education carried out at school so that when they return home, parents tend to be indifferent or do not supervise what their children do at home. so that children always do what has been programmed at school (Study, 2023).

Second, the environment around the student's residence plays an important role in the formation of student character. Success and failure in the formation of students' religious character are also more or less influenced by the surrounding environment. If the existence of the surrounding environment can reflect positively on the process of forming students' religious character, then it is able to make a good contribution to the formation of religious character. Conversely, if the contribution of the environment is not good, not relevant to the process of forming students' religious character, then it will clearly hinder the process of forming students' religious character. Likewise, students' social interactions outside of school have a major impact on students' religious character. Because fast socializing has a big impact, if one of them is negative, the child will also be negatively impacted (Andita, 2023).

Unsupportive Student Social Environment. The environment as a place for children to socialize with the community also has an impact on children both directly and indirectly. The environment around the student's residence plays an important role in the formation of student character, if the environment has good morals, then the students' morals will also be good, but conversely if the environment has bad morals, then it is possible that their morals will also be bad. Success and failure in the formation of religious and disciplined character are also more or less influenced by the surrounding environment.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis of several journals and books, it can be concluded that the strategy of strengthening the Islamic religious education curriculum in forming the Islamic character of students can be done by using interesting learning media and developing a curriculum that is appropriate for students and implementing a religious character education program. Therefore, it is necessary to improve Islamic religious development, especially in terms of curriculum development and implementation of Islamic religious education programs with religious character. This is expected to form students with good character and morals and face various social problems today. Strengthening the Islamic religious education curriculum for students is an important step in forming character and morals and has a positive impact on their lives. Through effective strategies such as strengthening activity-based methods, Character Formation Through Extracurricular Activities, habituation, application of technology and involvement in social and religious activities, Islamic religious education can be strengthened.

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