

The application of students' religious character values through the subject of Islamic religious education in elementary schools

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Abstract

Character education has an important role in the formation of students' personalities from an early age, especially at the elementary school level. Currently, there is a phenomenon that shows that there is a crisis in character education that has an impact on the decline of religious values among students. This study aims to analyze the application of religious character values through the subject of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in elementary schools. The approach used is qualitative with the literature study method, where data is collected through the study of books, articles, journals, and other relevant sources. The results of the literature study show that the application of religious character values through PAI plays an important role in shaping the character of students with noble character. Strategies applied in PAI learning include the integration of religious values in learning activities, the use of contextual methods, and teacher examples. The religious values instilled include faith, obedience in worship, honesty, tolerance, empathy for others, and contributing to society with a good and responsible attitude. The habituation of religious rituals such as tadarus Al-Qur'an, congregational prayers, and the teaching of religious values according to Islamic teachings also support the implementation of religious character. However, this study identifies challenges in its implementation, such as low parental involvement and limited learning facilities and infrastructure. This study concludes that the application of religious character values through PAI plays a significant role in shaping student behavior based on religious teachings. For optimal results, this implementation requires stronger support from parents, the community, and the provision of adequate facilities.

Keywords: religious character; Islamic religious education; primary school

INTRODUCTION

Character education is the main foundation in the formation of students' personalities, especially in instilling religious values that are an integral part of social life. Character education is an effort made to influence the character of students (Sukatin & Al-Faruq, 2020). According to Lickona (2019), it is explained that character education supports the social, emotional, and ethical development of students, as well as helps them understand, appreciate, and apply ethical values. The role of character education is very important in building students' morals and morals from an early age, especially at the elementary school level. However, there is currently a phenomenon that shows a crisis in character education, which has an impact on the decline of religious values among students. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture (2019), the value of religious character reflects belief in God Almighty, which is manifested through the behavior of practicing religious teachings and beliefs, respecting religious differences, being tolerant of the implementation of other religious worship, and living peacefully and harmoniously with followers of other religions. For example, the research of Hasanah *et al.* (2019), shows a tendency to decline in students' religious character, which is reflected in behaviors such as skipping school, insulting friends, using abusive language, low respect for teachers and parents, and dishonest acts such as cheating, stealing, and bullying. In

addition, a viral incident reported by Teuku Fauzan (2023), showing an elementary school student in West Sumatra yelling at the teacher and kicking the classroom door, reflects low appreciation for moral and religious values. Cases like this show that there is an increasingly worrying character crisis in the world of Indonesian education.

Based on the results of the study, there are various factors that cause a decline in religious character among students. Among them is the lack of mentoring, guidance, and teaching of religious values in the family, school, and community environment (Hasanah *et al.* 2019). Parents' busyness and lack of knowledge about proper parenting contribute to this problem. In addition, the mental condition of students who are depressed due to external factors such as promiscuity and exposure to social media also exacerbates the problem. In this context, it is important for education observers to continue to innovate in developing an education system that not only focuses on cognitive aspects, but also on character formation based on moral and religious values (Sri Atin, 2022). Seeing the importance of this character formation, one of the solutions that can be applied to improve the character crisis is through Islamic Religious Education at the elementary school level. To overcome the negative impact of globalization and the current developing moral crisis, the application of religious character values through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects in elementary schools is an effective strategy. Suhairini and Abdul Ghofir (in Musya'adah, 2018), stated that Islamic Religious Education is a form of guidance provided by educators to help the physical and mental development of students, with the aim of forming a good and superior personality. The subject of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a strategic role in instilling the values of religious character in students, with the hope that students can develop noble qualities such as faith, obedience in worship, honesty, tolerance, empathy, and playing an active role in society with a responsible attitude. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) needs to receive serious attention in the educational curriculum, with the integration of relevant religious values in every aspect of student life.

The cultivation of religious character values is not only related to the spiritual aspect, but also includes the social and emotional aspects of the student. Satori & Komariah (2017), stated that the internalization of character values involves a learning process that aims to form moral and ethical awareness in students. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) functions as a medium to develop the spiritual and social dimensions of students, so that they can live in accordance with religious teachings. Research by Azizah *et al.* (2023), regarding the formation of religious character of students in vocational high schools, concluded that religious character is formed through three stages, namely planning, implementation, and evaluation, with indicators such as joint prayer, celebration of religious holidays, and attitudes of harmony between religious communities. However, existing research tends to focus more on education at a higher level, while the application of religious character values in elementary schools has not been comprehensively researched. This research has a uniqueness and originality that distinguishes it from previous research, especially in terms of the application of religious character values in elementary schools, which includes contextual methods, teacher examples, and habituation of religious rituals in the learning process. In addition, this study also highlights the challenges faced in the implementation of religious character education, such as limited

facilities, lack of parental involvement, and lack of support from the community. Thus, this research is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of more effective and applicable religious character education at the elementary school level, as well as explore the application of religious values in Islamic Religious Education in elementary schools and identify the challenges faced in its implementation.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method. According to Fink (2020), literature study is the process of searching, analyzing, and synthesizing relevant literature to understand the development of knowledge in a particular field. As a research approach, literature studies rely on the analysis of various sources of literature relevant to the topic under study, which aims to provide a comprehensive overview of previous findings, as well as identify existing knowledge gaps. Thus, the study of the literature serves as an important step to critically examine the various references that exist, which can ultimately assist the researcher in developing a deeper understanding of the topic being researched. Data was obtained through the analysis of various sources, including journals, books, and official documents related to the application of students' religious character values through the subject of Islamic Religious Education in elementary schools. Data analysis techniques involve data reduction, data presentation, as well as conclusion drawing and verification, as described by Miles and Huberman (in Satori & Komariah, 2017).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of the literature study show that the application of religious character values through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects in elementary schools has a significant role in shaping the character of students with noble character. In addition, it was found that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) not only teaches religious knowledge, but also shapes student behavior through various approaches and strategies applied in learning. Islamic Religious Education (PAI), has an important role in shaping the character of students at the elementary school level. Currently, there is an increase in awareness of the importance of character education as an effort to build a virtuous personality, especially in the face of growing social and cultural challenges. Along with the phenomenon of declining religious values among students, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has become an important channel in instilling religious character values that are essential for the life of the nation and state. Based on a study of various literature sources, it was found that several strategies applied in the learning of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) to instill religious values, namely: (1) Integration of Religious Values in Learning: Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in elementary schools not only discusses religious theory, but also relates it to the daily lives of students. Religious values are integrated into every aspect of learning activities in the classroom, both in the discussion of subject matter and in social interaction among students. This allows students to understand that religious values are not only to be learned, but also to be applied in everyday life; (2) Use of Contextual Methods: in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, the contextual method is used to connect religious teaching materials with real situations and conditions faced by

students. This method makes it easier for students to better understand and apply religious values according to their experiences in daily life. Through contextual learning, students are invited to understand religious values in their social context, such as tolerance, honesty, and empathy for others. It helps students to internalize those values in their daily behavior; (3) Interactive Learning: interactive learning is a method that actively involves students in the learning process through discussions, questions and answers, group work, and other activities that stimulate thinking and deep understanding. In the subject of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), interactive learning strategies are an effective approach to internalize the values of religious character. Here are some of the interactive learning strategies applied: (a) Group Discussions: teachers divide students into small groups to discuss specific topics, such as honesty, faith, or tolerance. Each group was given a case study or question related to daily life. Through these discussions, students learn to understand religious values deeply and how to apply them in their lives; (b) Role-Playing : students are asked to play specific roles that depict real-life situations, such as practicing empathy or helping others. Through this method, students can feel firsthand the impact of the application of religious values, such as tolerance and compassion; (c) Project-Based Learning: students are invited to create projects that are relevant to religious values, for example writing an essay on the importance of congregational prayer or creating a poster about the call to do good. The project provides hands-on experience in practicing the values of religious character; (d) Technology Integration: teachers use applications or interactive media such as videos, online quizzes, or multimedia presentations to explain religious material in an engaging way. This helps students to be more engaged and motivated in learning.

This approach not only increases student engagement, but also encourages them to understand and internalize religious values more deeply. In addition, this strategy strengthens students' relationships with teachers and peers, creating a learning environment conducive to the cultivation of religious character. (1) Teacher Example: teachers have an important role as an example or role model in the application of religious values. Students are more likely to follow the values applied by teachers who exemplify in their lives, such as in worship, manners, and social interaction. The example of teachers has also been proven to have a great influence in the application of religious character to students. Teachers who provide examples of behavior in accordance with Islamic religious teachings become role models for students. The example of teachers in living religious values such as faith, obedience in worship, and honesty is one of the effective ways to instill religious character in students. Students tend to imitate the behavior of teachers who they perceive as authoritative figures and role models in their lives. The habituation of religious rituals, such as the tadarus of the Qur'an, congregational prayers, and the teaching of Islamic manners and morals, is also an integral part of the application of religious values in elementary schools. (2) Habituation of Religious Rituals: habituation of religious rituals such as reciting the Qur'an, congregational prayers, and praying before and after learning activities strongly supports the implementation of religious values. These activities not only strengthen the spiritual aspects of students but also form habits that support the development of their religious character. These religious rituals not only improve students' discipline, but also strengthen their spiritual ties to religion and increase their sense of social

responsibility towards the surrounding environment. These activities are a place for students to train themselves in carrying out religious commandments with full seriousness.

However, this study also identifies several challenges faced in the application of religious character values through Islamic Religious Education (PAI). One of the main challenges is the low involvement of parents in supporting their children's religious character education. Parents who are not sufficiently involved in the education process at home can hinder the success of internalizing religious values taught in schools. In addition, the limited facilities and infrastructure to support religious learning, such as facilities for religious activities or adequate classrooms, are another obstacle in optimizing religious character education. Overall, the results of this study show that the application of religious character values through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a significant positive impact in shaping student behavior in accordance with Islamic religious teachings. However, to achieve maximum results, stronger support from various parties, including parents, the community, and the provision of adequate facilities for religious learning activities in schools are needed. Character education, especially through subjects.

Discussion

Based on the results of research on the application of religious character values through the subject of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in elementary schools, it has basically been running and implemented well. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is very important in shaping the personality of students with noble character and good ethics. Learning that integrates religious values in every learning activity not only aims to increase religious knowledge, but also to form attitudes and behaviors in accordance with the teachings of Islam. The application of religious character values through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in elementary schools is very much in line with the value-based learning theory put forward by Lickona (2019), which emphasizes the importance of three dimensions in character education: moral knowing, moral feeling, and *moral action* (moral action). PAI's learning strategies, such as the integration of religious values in learning, contextual learning, and habituation of religious rituals, reflect systematic efforts to develop these three dimensions. These results also reinforce the findings of Warsah and Uyun (2019), who stated that teachers play an important role as role models in guiding students to apply religious values, as well as the research of Khairani and Rosyidi (2022), which highlighted the importance of collaboration between teachers, principals, and parents in supporting the formation of students' character. Thus, this study contributes theoretically by providing empirical evidence that supports the relevance of character education theory in the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning in elementary schools, as well as expanding insights into its implementation strategies in the midst of the challenges of the modern era. The application of religious character values to students can be done through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects during the learning process guided by Islamic Religious Education Teachers (PAI).

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers have a crucial role in supporting the development of students' religious character, both through learning and school culture programs. In learning, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers function as role models in

implementing religious character values. As stated by Warsah and Uyun (2019), teachers as educators are role models for students, who provide knowledge briefing, guide noble morals, and correct bad behavior. Teachers play a role in guiding, developing, and purifying students' hearts to draw closer to the Creator. Islamic teachers have a great responsibility in shaping Islamic personalities in students, as well as being responsible to Allah SWT (Warsah & Uyun, 2019). In addition, Aziz (2016), emphasized that teachers must be role models and role models for students in character education efforts.

Some of the strategies identified in the learning of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) reflect systematic efforts to internalize religious values among students. (1) The strategic role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in the Formation of Student Character: the subject of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) not only provides religious knowledge, but also becomes a means of shaping student behavior. Through the integration of religious values in learning, students are invited to understand and practice religious values in daily life. For example, learning that connects theory with real practice allows students to understand the relevance of religious values in a social context. (2) Effective strategies in learning Islamic Religious Education (PAI): (a) Integration of religious values in learning. Religious values are directly integrated into learning materials and daily interactions. Teachers play an active role in instilling the concepts of faith, honesty, tolerance, and empathy by relating them to real situations. This helps students see religion as a practical guideline relevant to their lives; (b) The use of contextual methods The contextual method allows students to understand religious values in their daily lives. By connecting religious teachings with personal experiences, students more easily internalize religious values such as tolerance and empathy. For example, case-based learning helps students analyze moral dilemmas according to Islamic values; (c) Interactive learning: interactive learning strategies, such as group discussions, role-playing, and project-based learning, provide students with hands-on experience to practice religious values. This approach increases student engagement and helps them understand the importance of values such as cooperation and responsibility; (d) Teacher example: Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers act as role models in the application of religious values. The example shown by teachers in worship, social behavior, and daily interactions is an inspiration for students. As authoritative figures, teachers influence students to imitate and apply religious values in their lives; (e) Habituation of religious rituals: religious rituals such as reciting the Qur'an, congregational prayers, and praying before and after learning create positive habits that strengthen the spiritual aspects of students. This activity not only builds discipline but also strengthens students' relationship with religious teachings.

Challenges in the Application of Religious Character Values

Although these strategies are effective, the study also found several challenges, such as: (1) Low parental involvement: lack of parental support in religious character education at home is an obstacle in internalizing the values taught in schools; (2) Limited facilities and infrastructure: facilities to support religious learning, such as prayer rooms or interactive teaching materials, are still inadequate in some elementary schools.

To overcome this challenge, greater support is needed from parents, the community, and the school. The active involvement of parents in accompanying and motivating their children to practice religious values is essential. In addition, the provision of adequate facilities and infrastructure, such as worship rooms and supportive learning facilities, also needs to be considered to create an environment conducive to the learning of religious character. With strong support from various parties, the application of religious character values through PAI can be carried out more optimally, resulting in a generation that is not only academically intelligent, but also has good character and noble character.

Implications and Recommendations

The results of this study provide very important practical implications in the development of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning in elementary schools, especially in the formation of students' religious character. Given the significant role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in instilling religious character values, the results of this study emphasize the importance of implementing effective learning strategies, such as the integration of religious values in every learning activity, the use of contextual methods, and interactive learning. Therefore, teachers are expected to implement these methods more consistently and creatively in their daily classroom practice, so that students not only understand religious theory, but can also apply those values in their lives. In addition, the involvement of parents in supporting religious character education at home is something that cannot be ignored. Parents need to play an active role in strengthening the learning that has been carried out at school by providing examples that are in accordance with Islamic religious teachings. Schools also need to improve supporting facilities, such as worship rooms or interactive learning media, to create an environment conducive to the development of students' religious character. With close cooperation between teachers, parents, and the community, religious character education through PAI can run more optimally, producing students who are not only religiously knowledgeable, but also behave nobly in accordance with Islamic values.

This research provides a new perspective by emphasizing the importance of a combination of contextual learning methods, interactive learning, and teacher exemplarism as a holistic approach in internalizing religious values in elementary school students. In addition, the innovative solutions offered involve the use of interactive technology to make religious learning more engaging and relevant for digital generation students, as well as strengthening collaboration between schools, parents, and communities to ensure the sustainability of religious character education. This approach not only provides an effective practical framework, but also addresses today's challenges in shaping students of religious character in the midst of ever-evolving social and cultural changes. Overall, the application of religious character values through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects in elementary schools has an important role in forming a generation with noble character and a religious spirit. However, to achieve maximum results, collaboration between schools, parents, the community, and the government is needed. The implementation of effective religious character education will have a positive impact on shaping the behavior of students who are not only religious, but also responsible, tolerant, and play an active role in society.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that the application of religious character values through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects in elementary schools has an important role in shaping the character of students with noble character. Various learning strategies, such as the integration of religious values in the material, contextual methods, interactive learning, teacher examples, and habituation of religious rituals, allow for the effective internalization of religious values. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) not only transfers religious knowledge, but also forms attitudes and behaviors that are in line with Islamic teachings. These findings support a theory of value-based learning that involves moral knowledge, moral feelings, and moral actions. In addition, the results of the study emphasized the importance of collaboration between schools, teachers, parents, and the community in supporting religious character education. However, challenges such as low parental involvement and limited learning support facilities require special attention. The proposed solutions include increasing the role of parents, strengthening synergy between schools and communities, and providing adequate learning facilities. This research makes a theoretical and practical contribution in improving the implementation of religious character values in elementary schools, which is not only relevant to the challenges of the modern era, but also important to form a generation that is academically intelligent, has noble character, and contributes positively to social life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research was carried out well thanks to the contributions of various authors and researchers whose work was listed in the literature used as the basis for this study. Therefore, the researcher would like to thank the authors and previous researchers, whose research results have provided a solid foundation, broadened insights, and deepened researchers' understanding of the role of religious education in shaping students' character. This research is entirely based on an in-depth literature review that allows researchers to identify various perspectives as well as important findings related to the topic being studied. The researcher also appreciates the opportunity to develop this research, which is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of character education in Indonesia.

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