

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE FORMATION OF THE RELIGIOUS CHARACTER OF THE STUDENTS IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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Abstract: This study aims to determine whether Islamic Religious Education is effective in shaping religious character. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has an important role in shaping students' religious character, including faith, piety and noble character. However, in the digital era, challenges such as exposure to negative content and the influence of popular culture threaten religious values. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method through interview techniques, observation and literature analysis, examining the effectiveness of PAI in shaping religious character amid technological advances. The results showed that PAI is able to shape religious character through the integration of cognitive, affective and psychomotor. Digital technology can be an effective tool if used optimally such as e-learning and educational social media. However, curriculum adaptation, teacher training and strict supervision of students' use of technology are needed. This study concludes that the synergy between PAI and digital technology as well as the support from various parties is very important to form a religious and characterful young generation despite some challenges of the digital era. However, the presence of PAI can form the religious character of students.

Keywords: Islamic Religious Education; Religious Character; Digital Age; Learners

Introduction

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is an essential component in the education system in Indonesia. Besides functioning to transfer knowledge about Islamic teachings, PAI also plays an important role in shaping students' religious character (Firmansyah, 2019). Along with the rapid development of technology and changes in people's lifestyles in the digital era, challenges in the implementation of Islamic religious education are growing. The digital world provides very broad access to various information, including those related to religion and morality (Mutmainnah, 2022).

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a very important role in shaping the character and morals of students. Amidst the development of globalisation and the rapid advancement of information technology, the challenges in maintaining learners' adherence to Islamic religious values are increasingly complex. Negative influences from the social environment, media, and culture that contradict Islamic teachings can cause a decrease in learners' awareness and compliance with religious values (Pasaribu, Zailani & Pohan, 2024).

Character is an abstract thing, but it is very important for every individual and characterises a person. Although it is abstract, when someone describes the character of an individual, we can imagine the person. This shows betapa berharga dan pentingnya karakter positif dalam diri a person. Unfortunately, character cannot be passed on directly from parents to children (Nurzannah et al., 2023).

In this situation, Islamic religious education is required to adapt to technological advances, as well as face challenges in shaping a strong religious character in the midst of globalisation and digitalisation. The desired religious character includes understanding and practising religious teachings correctly, as well as applying moral and ethical values in everyday life. This religious character also includes noble character, discipline, responsibility, and social care in accordance with Islamic teachings (Rachman, 2018). However, the digital era also provides opportunities for Islamic religious education to be more creative in delivering material and bringing religious teachings closer to students (Haq & Muyasaroh, 2023). In this case, teachers as part of the framework of the education system are required to always develop teaching skills in accordance with the progress of the times / digital era and the local environment, where the educational process is carried out (Harfiani & Setiawan, 2019).

The utilisation of technology in the learning process, such as e-learning, educational applications, and social media, allows the teaching of Islamic values and religious characters to be carried out more interestingly and effectively (Gafarurrozi, 2022). Therefore, we need to understand more deeply how Islamic religious education functions to shape students' religious character. It is crucial to think about how Islamic religious education can be optimised in the current technological era, and how technology can be used properly to strengthen students' religious character (Puspitasari et al., 2022). Islamic religious education is very effective in terms of building good morals, social responsibility and high discipline, all based on Islamic teachings. This is seen not only from an academic point of view (Haq & Muyasaroh, 2023). Apart from the existence of Islamic religious education, it is necessary to have an educator who is able to direct students to good morals in order to create good student character as well. Because parents / educators who have good morals will be able to direct students towards good and vice versa (Zailani, 2020).

Therefore, this paper aims to learn more about how effective Islamic religious education is in shaping the religious character of students in the digital age and to find solutions to existing problems.

Literature Review

Islamic religious education means teaching Islam or its teachings and values so that it becomes a person's outlook and attitude to life. The purpose of this activity is to help individuals or groups of students in spreading the teachings of Islam and its values to become their outlook on life. Meanwhile, according to Harun Nasution, quoted by Syahidin, the purpose of Islamic religious education (specifically in public schools) is to make people pious, that is, people who obey Allah and perform worship, by emphasizing the development of Muslim personality and akhlakul karimah. However, religious subjects are not replaced with ethics and morals subjects (Mahmudi, 2019). The same thing was also conveyed by Muhammad Fadhil al-Jamaly; defining Islamic education as an effort to develop, encourage and invite students to live more dynamically based on high values and noble life. With this process, it is hoped that a more perfect learner's personality will be formed, both with regard to the potential of reason, feelings, and actions (Rasyidin, 1995, 31-32; Mahmudi, 2019)

Religious character refers to traits and behaviours that reflect religious values in daily life. In the context of Islamic religious education, religious character can be interpreted as morals that are formed based on Islamic teachings, such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, compassion, and respect for others. Religious character also includes the

understanding and application of worship, as well as behaviour that reflects one's devotion and faith in Allah SWT (AhsanulKhaq, 2019).

Religious character building is the result of efforts to educate and train seriously the various spiritual potentials that are inherent in human beings, especially students. In Islam, character is behaviour and morality in accordance with what is taught in Islamic religious education. This religious character is a person's character, personality or personality that is formed through the internalisation of various principles based on religious teachings. Islamic religious education is one of the media that can be used in the world of education for the formation of students' character (Puspitasari et al., 2022).

Islamic Religious Education is a lesson that is considered effective in shaping the character of students, specifically religious character. This religious character has a great influence on students' lives both in this world and in the hereafter. The results showed that Islamic religious education has an important role in the formation of religious character rooted in belief learning. One of the most important pillars of character education is Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Character education will grow well if it starts with instilling a sense of diversity in children. As a result, religious education materials become one of the supports for character education. Learners are taught *aqidah* as the basis of their religion, *Al-Qur'an* and *Hadith* as guidelines for life, *fiqh* as rules for worship, Islamic history as an example of life, and morals as guidelines for human behaviour. Therefore, the main purpose of religious learning is the formation of personality in children, which is reflected in their behaviour and mindset in everyday life (Lubis et al., 2024).

Method

The method used is a qualitative descriptive approach. Qualitative research is a type of research conducted in the context of real (natural) life with the aim of investigating and understanding phenomena: what happens, why it happens and how the process takes place. In other words, this research focuses on in-depth exploration and case studies involving a number of specific cases. According to Denzin & Lincoln (1994), qualitative research is carried out in a natural setting to interpret the phenomena that occur using various relevant methods. This research seeks to find and narratively describe the activities that are carried out and the impact of these actions on the life of the community (Malahati et al., 2023).

This qualitative approach is also used with field research methods. This field research was conducted through direct observation and interviews with respondents at one of the Madrasah Aliyah in Sidikalang, Dairi Regency, North Sumatra. This research also uses an inductive approach, meaning that the data obtained will be useful as a basis for drawing conclusions. This study involved students from one of the madrasah aliyah located in Dairi Regency. The determination of the number of samples was carried out through deliberate sampling techniques. Data collection techniques used in this study include observation, and interviews. Observation was conducted to observe learners' activities and behaviour during Islamic Religious Education learning. Interviews were conducted with teachers to obtain information about their experiences in shaping adolescent character in the digital era. The collected data were then analysed using descriptive qualitative data analysis techniques, which included data grouping, classification and interpretation. The results of this data analysis were used to draw conclusions in the research.

Results and Discussion

Results

Based on the findings and research objectives regarding the title "The Effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education in Shaping the Religious Character of Students in the Digital Age" can be described as follows: One of the madrasah Aliyah which has several classes with 3 majors namely science, social studies, and religion. However, each class of the department is equipped with Islamic religious education subjects which are divided into several subjects, namely Fiqh, akidah akhlak, Al-Qur'an Hadith, and History of Islamic civilisation. Some of these Islamic-based subjects are taught by different teachers who are equipped with knowledge to convey to students, including one of them regarding religious character.

Therefore, teachers or schools have a vision not only to produce high-quality human resources but also to instil Islamic values / religious character in them, especially through the teachings of material in the field of Islamic religious education. Based on observations, documentation, and interviews related to the title of the effectiveness of Islamic religious education in shaping the religious character of students in the digital era, it is determined that it is revealed that Islamic religious education not only functions as teaching material in the classroom but also functions to help students learn and improve religious character even though there must be challenges in the process of shaping the character of students.

According to the results of interviews with several teachers at the Aliyah madrasah, educators who teach Islamic religious education admit that Islamic religious education is quite effective in increasing awareness of religious character in the digital era. This study aims to analyse the extent to which Islamic religious education (PAI) is effective in shaping the religious character of students in the digital era, using a qualitative approach. The following are the results obtained from observations and research interviews:

1. Islamic Religious Education in the Digital Age:

In the digital era, Islamic religious education (PAI) has undergone major changes, both in the way of teaching and the media used. Information technology, such as online learning applications and social media, makes it easier for PAI teachers to access and deliver religious materials to students through the web or YouTube. However, these advances also bring challenges for educators, including for Islamic religious education, especially in relation to the negative impact of uncontrolled digital content, which can affect the development of students' religious character.

2. The Role of Teachers in Religious Character Building:

PAI teachers play a very important role in shaping students' religious character. With an approach that prioritises religious values and character, teachers can utilise technology to provide better understanding to students. Based on interviews with teachers, they use digital media to teach religious values in an interactive and engaging way, while still reminding students of the importance of selectivity in the use of technology, so that teachers act as facilitators in shaping students' characters.

3. The Effect of Technology on the Religious Character of Learners:

Although technology has many benefits, such as the ease of obtaining information, it also has drawbacks. Many students receive information that goes against religious principles, such as materials that encourage negative behaviour. Therefore, schools and parents need more intensive guidance to help students choose the information they receive.

4. Teachers' strategies/methods in the formation of Religious Character in the Digital Era:

From the interview results, the strategies applied in Islamic religious education to form students' religious character include the use of religious learning applications, teaching that involves discussion and question and answer, and the application of religious values in students' daily lives. The school also runs a character strengthening programme involving parents and the community.

5. Challenges and Constraints:

Some of the challenges faced in shaping students' religious character in the digital era include limited supervision of the use of social media, parents' lack of understanding of the impact of technology on their children's religious development, and limited facilities that support religious learning outside of school hours.

So overall, Islamic religious education in the digital era can be effective in shaping students' religious character if supported by appropriate use of technology and intensive mentoring. Teachers, parents and communities have an important role in ensuring that religious education not only provides knowledge, but also forms strong religious characters that can be applied in daily life. However, challenges related to the negative impact of digital media need to be addressed with more appropriate policies and better supervision.

Discussion

Learning Islamic religious education in every school is indeed very important as in the results that have been analysed. This is related to the character of students including one of them religious character. This religious character can be instilled in students through religious activities obtained during material related to Islamic religious education. This is in line with the research of Basri et al., 2023 which discusses the formation of adolescent character. Character education should start at an early age, along with the development of science and technology. Currently, educators are not only required to have competencies that are relevant to the times, but also to be able to shape the character of students (Samani, 2013). This character building process is a shared responsibility between educators, parents, and the community, which is implemented through formal education institutions in schools, as well as non-formal institutions in families and communities.

Apart from the duties of PAI educators/teachers, schools and families also play an important role in the formation of students' religious character. One of them is by providing support to PAI teachers in the implementation of religious activities at school. This is in line with Oktaviyenna & Zailani, 2023 research, which explains that character education not only covers academic aspects, but also focuses on the formation of individual personalities, values, and ethics. Therefore, it is very important for educational institutions, families, and communities to work together in implementing character education that emphasises the cultivation of these values.

Another success factor in the formation of religious character in students is good communication or interaction, between students and teachers, between students and parents or between teachers and parents. Because if the lack of interaction is not well established, then the teacher cannot get to know the student's character well, especially since students are generally more silent and passive when the learning process takes place. This includes the challenge for teachers to deliver teaching material as a whole so that there is a lack of development of knowledge and understanding of religious character (Mutmainnah, 2022).

Based on this discussion, it can be concluded that the research conducted at one of the MAs as one of the effective educational institutions with the existence of Islamic religious education subjects at school. In addition, it can be ascertained that from the results

of observations and interviews that Islamic religious education plays an important role in the formation of adolescent character or ahklak, especially religious character.

Conclusion

Based on this article, it can be concluded that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a very important role in shaping the religious character of students, especially in the digital era. It is not just a subject matter and knowledge transfer, or not just knowledge about Islamic teachings, but also plays a role in shaping morals, discipline, responsibility, and social care in line with Islamic values. Although technological developments present new problems, such as access to information that can affect students' religious beliefs. In addition, technology allows for more innovative and efficient delivery of religious materials. PAI teachers are very important in building students' religious character, especially with the use of digital media and technology today. In addition, religious character building requires co-operation between the school, family and community. Orang tua, guru, dan masyarakat harus bekerja sama untuk membuat lingkungan yang mendukung the formation of students' religious character and provide appropriate guidance on how to avoid the adverse effects of using technology. Therefore, PAI is still successful in shaping students' religious character, despite the challenges in the process of religious character formation in the digital era, especially with the support of the right approach and intensive mentoring from all parties involved.

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