



The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Instilling Religious Character in Students at the Rammatul Asri Islamic Boarding School Junior High School, Enrekang Regency

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ABSTRACT

Education is the main foundation in the formation of quality human resources, not only intellectually, but also morally and spiritually. This study uses a qualitative research method that aims to explore and understand in depth the phenomenon of the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in instilling religious character in students at Islamic Boarding Schools. This study shows that Islamic Religious Education teachers at SMPS Pondok Pesantren Rahmatul Asri play a strategic role as educators, guides, and role models for students. The instillation of religious character is carried out through various methods, including PAI teachers who lead by example, habituate worship, advice (mau'izhah hasanah), the provision of educational punishment, and the involvement of students in religious activities. Students show positive changes in their worship habits, ability to maintain morals, and a sense of responsibility towards themselves and their environment. This success is inseparable from the collaborative role of PAI teachers, the support of the principal, the head of the Islamic boarding school, and the active participation of students.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is the main foundation in the formation of quality human resources, not only intellectually, but also morally and spiritually. In the context of Indonesian national education, the aspect of religious character is one of the main dimensions that must be instilled in students from an early age. Religious character not only reflects an individual's relationship with God, but also manifests in everyday attitudes and behaviors that are in harmony with religious values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, tolerance, and compassion.

However, in the midst of modernization and value disruption, educational institutions face great challenges in maintaining and instilling religious values in students. Religious values as part of the nation's character are degraded along with the entry of foreign cultures, which are often not in line with Islamic values. This encourages the need to revitalize the function of religious education, especially the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in shaping the religious character of students.

Religious character is not solely related to aspects of religious rituals such as prayer, fasting, or reading the Qur'an. More than that, religious character includes daily attitudes and behaviors that reflect faith values such as honesty, sense of responsibility, discipline, empathy, and tolerance. Religious education in this context is not just the delivery of material,

but also the process of internalizing values through example, habituation, and spiritual coaching. According to Yusri and Fahrudin, religious education that is only cognitive is not enough to form a strong religious character without intense emotional and spiritual involvement.

The importance of cultivating religious character is increasingly urgent in the midst of the challenges of modern times, where moral crises and the degradation of religious values are increasingly visible, especially among the younger generation. Technological developments, cultural globalization, and unlimited access to information are challenges for the world of education. Not a few students experience disorientation in values due to the lack of solid character development, especially in terms of religious values that are a guideline for life.

In the Islamic education system in Indonesia, the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers is central in instilling religious character. PAI teachers not only play the role of teachers, but also as educators, guides, role models, and motivators. In this context, teachers not only deliver teaching materials, but also shape students' personalities through habituation, internalization of values, and exemplary attitudes. As stated by Safitri and Suryadi, PAI teachers have a great moral responsibility in shaping the morals and personalities of students through a holistic pedagogical approach based on Islamic values.

PAI teachers have a complex and crucial role. He is not only a teacher who conveys theories, but also an agent of moral and spiritual change. In an Islamic educational environment such as Islamic boarding schools, PAI teachers are required to be able to touch the affective aspects of students, inspiring them to not only understand religious values, but also to practice them in real life. Teachers become figures who are seen, imitated, and emulated. In this case, teachers are not only the conveyors of teachings, but also real role models.

Data from the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) in 2020 shows that violations of order, such as fights, skipping school, smoking, and involvement in student gangs, still occur in many schools. This phenomenon does not only occur in public schools, but also begins to penetrate religious-based educational institutions, including Islamic boarding schools. This shows that the cultivation of religious values is not enough through cognitive learning alone, but must be through a more in-depth, systemic approach and real example from teachers.

In this context, the Rahmatul Asri Islamic Boarding School in Enrekang Regency is one of the Islamic educational institutions that not only emphasizes the academic aspect, but also pays great attention to the formation of students' religious character. SMPS, which is under the auspices of the Islamic boarding school, is a strategic space to explore the role of PAI teachers in carrying out the function of character education in real life. The existence of Islamic boarding schools with a dormitory pattern allows for intense interaction between teachers and students, both formally and informally.

The results of a study conducted by Rahayu and Hasim in several Islamic boarding schools show that the role of PAI teachers is very significant in shaping students' religious attitudes through three main approaches, namely: exemplary (*uswah*), habituation (*habituation*), and giving advice (*mau'izhah*). These three approaches are part of the character education strategy in Islam that has been implemented since the time of the Prophet PBUH.

But in reality, even though they are in a *pesantren* environment, not all students show religious character that meets expectations. There are still behaviors that deviate from Islamic values, such as lack of awareness of worship, declining ethics in speaking, and weak responsibility for duties. According to Syahrir and Astuti, the main challenge in cultivating religious character is not the absence of a curriculum, but in the weak implementation and the lack of optimal role of teachers as value guides.

This reality shows that the role of PAI teachers needs to be more than textual teaching. Teachers must be value educators who use innovative methods, personal approaches, and are able to integrate character education into all learning activities. Example is the most effective method. A PAI teacher who is disciplined, diligent in worship, humble, and open, indirectly instills religious values in his students. As explained in the research by Wulandari and Putra, students tend to absorb grades more easily when they see firsthand the consistent example of their teachers.

However, the role of PAI teachers in instilling religious character does not always run smoothly. There are various challenges faced, both from the internal teachers themselves such as limited pedagogical abilities, and from external such as lack of environmental support and the negative influence of social media. In the research conducted by Zulkifli and Anwar, it was found that many PAI teachers experience obstacles in conveying religious values effectively because not all students have a supportive family background or an environment conducive to character strengthening.

In addition, there is still a gap between the ideals of the role of PAI teachers and the reality of their implementation in the field. Many teachers focus more on curriculum achievement and test scores, so they pay less attention to the dimension of character formation which is actually the core of Islamic education. Therefore, an in-depth study is needed that not only describes the role of PAI teachers theoretically, but also explores how it is implemented in the field, especially in Islamic educational institutions such as SMPS

Pondok Pesantren Rahmatul Asri.

The empirical foundation also shows the importance of this research. A study by Hidayat and Wahyuni in pesantren-based schools in East Java shows that the implementation of strong religious character education has a positive impact on students' social behavior, such as increased discipline, social concern, and honesty. Thus, the role of PAI teachers is not only normatively and juridically important, but also proven to have a real impact on the lives of students.

Based on the observations of prospective researchers when conducting research at SMPS Pondok Pesantren Rahmatul Asri is different from when prospective researchers were students in 2016 where at that time some students often skipped and entered the forest during class hours, and at this time students rarely skip and on time participate in congregational prayers.

RESEARCH METHODS

Types and Approaches to Research

This study uses a qualitative research method that aims to explore and understand the phenomenon in depth of the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in instilling religious character in students in Islamic Boarding Schools. The qualitative approach was chosen because it was considered the most appropriate to explore the experiences, perceptions, and views of the research subjects regarding religious values instilled through the example of teachers. According to Sugiyono, qualitative research aims to gain a holistic understanding of the phenomena being studied in a natural context, so that researchers can interpret the meaning from the perspective of the respondents.

In this study, a phenomenological approach is used as part of a qualitative method to understand and interpret the experiences of research subjects. Through this approach, the researcher seeks to enter the world of experience of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers and students to understand the meaning they give to the example in the process of cultivating religious character in Islamic Boarding Schools. According to Creswell, the phenomenological approach focuses on the subject's direct experience so that it can explore the deep meaning of the phenomena they experience. Thus, the use of qualitative research methods in this study is expected to provide comprehensive insight into the influence of PAI teachers' exemplary in the formation of students' religious character, as well as a reference for the development of PAI teaching strategies in schools and Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. This approach not only allows researchers to understand phenomena in depth but also provides an opportunity to interpret the meaning from the perspective of the subject being studied, so that the results of this research can make a valuable contribution to the development of character education in Indonesia. This research has qualitative data carried out at SMPS Pondok Pesantren Rahmatul Asri, Enrekang Regency.

Data Source

The primary data source in this study was obtained directly from the results of interviews, observations, and documentation with Islamic Religious Education teachers at the Rahmatul Asri Islamic Boarding School, Enrekang Regency. These teachers are the main subjects who provide in-depth information about exemplary practices in instilling religious character. This primary data is important to understand how teachers apply Islamic religious values in their interactions with students, as well as how the teaching methods they use can affect the formation of students' religious character in the Islamic boarding school environment.

Secondary data sources in this study include various literature relevant to the topic of the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in instilling students' religious character. This data was obtained from books, journals, scientific articles, as well as the results of previous research related to religious character education, religious values in learning, and Islamic Religious Education teaching methods. This secondary data serves to provide a broader context, so that the results of primary data analysis can be compared and studied in an in-depth theoretical perspective.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis technique in this study focuses on processing qualitative data obtained through observation, in-depth interviews, and document studies. The analysis process is carried out by organizing, interpreting, and compiling data into meaningful information, in order to understand the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in instilling religious character in students. The analysis stages include coding the data to find key themes, identifying relationships between themes, and drawing conclusions based on organized findings. This technique allows researchers to examine phenomena in depth and detail, as well as to produce conclusions that can explain the contribution of teachers' exemplary in the development of students' religious character in Islamic Boarding Schools. This approach aims to identify patterns, themes, and meanings that are relevant to the formation of religious character and student learning motivation. The right data analysis technique ensures that the research results are reliable and valid in answering the research questions, namely:

Data reduction, filtering process and finesse of raw data obtained from observation, interviews, and document studies. This step aims to sort out data that is relevant to the focus of the research, namely the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in instilling religious character in students, so that only important information is retained for further analysis.

Data presentation involves organizing information in the form of narratives, tables, or diagrams that facilitate the interpretation of findings. Thus, the main patterns or themes that emerged from the data regarding the role of exemplary Islamic Religious Education teachers in instilling religious character in students became more visible, so that researchers can understand the relationship between data and identify trends in exemplary practices in Islamic Boarding Schools.

Conclusion and verification, analyzing the final results of the data that has been filtered and presented to draw conclusions. This process includes re-checking the findings and triangulating the data to ensure the validity and accuracy of interpretation regarding the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in instilling religious character and morals of students in Islamic Boarding Schools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Religious Character of Students of Rahmatul Asri Enrekang Islamic Boarding School

Based on the results of research at the Rahmatul Asri Enrekang Islamic Boarding School, it was found that the pesantren environment systematically shapes the religious character of students through various religious activities and habituation of Islamic values. Students not only receive religious learning materials theoretically, but also experience the internalization of these values in daily life, such as the regularity of congregational prayers, maintaining good manners, and active involvement in social religious activities.

These findings are in line with the theory of character formation which states that character is not sufficiently taught, but rather must be instilled through a supportive environment and real examples. According to Lickona, important aspects in character formation are moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action, all three of which are clearly seen in the pesantren environment, where students not only know religious teachings, but also live them emotionally and practice them in real life.

Furthermore, the results of this study also strengthen the theory of the educational environment in Islam. In an Islamic perspective, the environment is one of the main factors in shaping the personality of a Muslim. Ibn Khaldun in Muqaddimah emphasized that human beings are greatly influenced by their social environment, and effective education is one that creates an environment full of moral and religious values.

Hasbullah in the Basics of Education also mentions that the educational environment (including the pesantren environment) functions as an agent for the socialization of values and norms. An environment full of religious activities will make it easier for students to internalize these values into daily behavior.

More specifically, from the perspective of Islamic education, the religious character of students is a manifestation of the process of tazkiyatun nafs (purification of the soul) which is the main goal of Islamic education. As affirmed in the Qur'an surah Ash-Shams:

In the family environment

Based on the results of interviews with parents of students and students at the Rahmatul Asri Enrekang Islamic Boarding School, as well as the results of the author's observations, it was found that the family environment has a very strong influence on the formation of students' religious character. Parents play an active role as the first and main educator in getting used to religious values, such as guiding prayers, reminding in reading the Qur'an, instilling manners, and setting an example in daily life.

Most of the parents interviewed emphasized that they consistently try to create a religious atmosphere at home, either through the habit of congregational worship at home, guiding children in memorizing the Qur'an, and by setting an example of Islamic behavior.

These findings are in line with family education theory, which states that the family is the first social environment that influences the development of children's character, especially in shaping moral and religious values. In the family, children gain their first experience of right and wrong, good and bad, through interactions with parents and other family members.

In addition, Islamic education theory also emphasizes the importance of the role of the family in shaping children's character. In the Qur'an surah At-Tahrim verse 6 Allah says:

Translation:

"O you who believe! Protect yourself and your family from the fire of Hell" (QS, At Tahrim/28:6)

This verse is the basis that religious education in the family is the primary responsibility of parents before formal educational institutions play a role.

Ibn Sina in Kitab al-Siyasah states that the first education of children is carried out in the family environment, where parents must be examples in noble morals, guide children in worship, and accustom them to good social life.

The results of the author's observations also show that students who come from families with a strong religious atmosphere tend to adapt more quickly and be active in religious activities at Islamic boarding schools, such as congregational prayers, reading the Qur'an, and maintaining manners towards teachers and friends.

in the Fundamentals of Educational Sciences adds that the family is not only a biological institution, but also an institution of moral and spiritual education. Therefore, the religious character formed in the family is the main provision for children in undergoing education in other environments such as Islamic boarding schools.

The role of Islamic religious education teachers in the cultivation of religious character of students at the Rahmatul Asri Enrekang Islamic Boarding School

Example

Based on the results of the research through interviews with the leaders of the boarding school and Islamic Religious Education teachers, it was found that the example of PAI teachers has a fundamental role in instilling the religious character of students at the Rahmatul Asri Enrekang Islamic Boarding School. This example is realized through consistency between teachers' words and deeds in carrying out religious values in daily life, both in the context of worship and social interaction.

This finding is in line with the modeling theory put forward by Albert Bandura in Social Learning Theory which emphasizes that a person's behavior is learned through the process of observation of models or figures that are considered important. In this context, PAI teachers function as the main model for students; Students observe and imitate the behavior of teachers in terms of worship, discipline, honesty, and other socio-religious attitudes.

In addition, from an Islamic perspective, exemplary (*uswah hasanah*) is a basic principle in moral education. Allah SWT. said in QS. Al-Ahzab verse 21:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

Translation:

"Indeed, the Messenger of Allah (a) has a good example for you (i.e., for those who hope for Allah and the Day of Resurrection) and he calls Allah many times." (QS, Al Ahzab/33:21).

This verse emphasizes that example is a very effective method in shaping human character. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is an example par excellence for his people, and in education in Islamic boarding schools, teachers are expected to represent the values of the Prophet in their daily behavior.

Imam Al-Ghazali in the monumental work *Ihya' Ulumuddin* also emphasized that one of the effective methods of educating is through example (*al-qudwah*). According to Al-Ghazali, an educator must first adorn himself with good morals, before teaching morals to students. This is important because students' character is formed more quickly through observation and imitation of behavior than with verbal advice alone.

The results of the interviews show that teachers, and students all agree that the real behavior of teachers in carrying out Islamic values, such as maintaining congregational prayers, being polite, maintaining cleanliness, and time discipline, is a strong factor in encouraging the internalization of religious character in students. This example not only shapes the outward attitude of the students, but also deepens the appreciation of religious values in their daily lives.

Thus, the example of PAI teachers at the Rahmatul Asri Enrekang Islamic Boarding School is an essential factor that contributes to the cultivation of religious character of students, through the mechanism of observation, imitation, and internalization of values, as understood in modern social psychology theory and in the concept of classical Islamic education.

Advisor

Based on the results of interviews with Islamic Religious Education teachers, it was found that the role of teachers as advisors is a crucial aspect in shaping the religious character of students. PAI teachers at the Rahmatul Asri Enrekang Islamic Boarding School not only play the role of delivering Islamic teaching material, but also as spiritual companions who provide advice and guidance in dealing with various problems in the lives of students, both in the realm of worship and social.

This finding is closely correlated with the concept of the function of guidance and counseling in education put forward by Gazda (1989), who states that the role of educators is not only as a facilitator of learning, but also as a counselor who helps students understand themselves, overcome problems, and develop their potential optimally. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, this role is realized through providing advice based on religious values to form a solid religious character.

The results of the interviews also showed that students felt stronger spiritually and emotionally after receiving advice from their teachers. The advice given by the teacher not only clarifies the religious principles that must be held, but also provides direction in applying these values in the context of the challenges of daily life.

Therefore, the role of PAI teachers as advisors at the Rahmatul Asri Enrekang Islamic Boarding School is an effective instrument in the process of instilling the religious character of students. Advice delivered individually and collectively serves as a means of building spiritual awareness, strengthening moral resilience, and fostering students' commitment to live a life based on Islamic values.

Motivator

Based on the results of interviews with Islamic Religious Education teachers, it can be concluded that the role of PAI teachers as motivators is very vital in shaping the religious character of students. Teachers are not only tasked with teaching religious materials, but also play a role as a motivator, especially in maintaining the consistency of students in worship, improving morals, and building their spiritual resilience in facing various challenges.

These findings are relevant to the theory of learning motivation put forward by McClelland in Achievement Motivation Theory, which states that the intrinsic motivation of the drive from within the individual to excel needs to be cultivated through environmental stimuli, including from the role of educators as a source of inspiration. In this context, PAI teachers act as agents who stimulate the needs of students to achieve their spiritual goals.

In addition, according to Woolfolk in Educational Psychology, motivation plays an important role in directing, maintaining, and regulating students' learning behavior. Teachers who are able to motivate will increase the active participation of students in carrying out learning activities, including in religious practices such as daily worship and the development of moral *karimah*.

The results of the study show that the motivation given by teachers, both through words of encouragement, spiritual advice, and behavioral examples, has a positive influence in maintaining the integrity of students in worship and improving their morals. PAI teachers are figures who build hope, instill religious optimism, and direct students to keep striving to achieve the glory of life in this world and the hereafter.

Thus, the role of PAI teachers as motivators at the Rahmatul Asri Enrekang Islamic Boarding School has proven to be a key factor in forming the religious character of the students as a whole, namely a character who not only understands religious values theoretically, but also applies them consistently in daily life

The Results of Religious Character Cultivation of Students at the Rahmatul Asri Islamic Boarding School, Enrekang Regency

Based on the results of interviews with the head of the boarding school, the head of the PAI teacher's school and students, the cultivation of religious character at the Rahmatul Asri Enrekang Islamic Boarding School is carried out through a holistic approach, including formal and informal education, and involves all elements of the Islamic boarding school, ranging from teachers, cottage leaders, parents, to the community. The cultivation of these religious values is carried out not only through classroom learning, but also through example, advice, motivation, and religious activities involving all students.

Based on an interview with Mrs. Nur Asia, the cultivation of religious character is carried out thoroughly, by combining religious education and social activities. This shows the application of the concept of religious character education initiated by Lickona, who stated that character education must be carried out in three aspects: knowledge, feelings, and actions. Lickona explained that character education is not enough just to provide knowledge about morality and religious values, but it must also be accompanied by emotional and behavioral experiences that are reflected in daily life. Therefore, the example of teachers and leaders of the *pesantren* is very important to strengthen religious character education at the Rahmatul Asri Islamic Boarding School.

Mrs. Nur Asia, a PAI teacher at the *pesantren*, explained that the cultivation of religious character is carried out both in the classroom and outside the classroom, with a more in-depth personal approach. PAI teachers not only deliver religious material, but also provide direct examples in daily life, such as performing solemn congregational prayers and maintaining good manners and morals. This supports Al-Attas's view in the concept of Islamic education which emphasizes the importance of the formation of morals and behavior through the example of teachers. Al-Attas argues that Islamic education aims to shape the character of students so that they have high morality, which is reflected in all aspects of their lives, both in the *pesantren*, family, and community environment.

In addition, religious activities that are routinely carried out in Islamic boarding schools, such as congregational prayers, *tadarus*, and recitation, are also very useful for strengthening the faith and religious character of students. These activities support the theory of Moral Development put forward by Kohlberg, which explains that individual moral development can be driven through social experiences that involve interaction with others in the group. In Islamic boarding schools, students not only learn religious theory, but also interact in an environment that strengthens their religious values through joint religious practices.

Based on the author's observations at the Rahmatul Asri Islamic Boarding School, it can be concluded that the cultivation of the religious character of the students is going well and effectively. Routine religious activities, such as congregational prayers, tadarus, and recitation, are not only carried out as a routine, but also used as a means to strengthen religious understanding and practice. In addition, a good relationship between teachers and students and the involvement of parents in supporting pesantren activities also support the achievement of religious character education goals. This reflects an integrative approach in character education that involves various elements of the environment to create a well-rounded educational process.

Students at the Rahmatul Asri Islamic Boarding School show good behavior in daily life, such as time discipline, maintaining cleanliness, and behaving politely. This is the result of the cultivation of religious character carried out by the Islamic boarding school, which integrates religious education with the development of practical and applicable character in their lives.

In essence, the cultivation of religious character at the Rahmatul Asri Islamic Boarding School, Enrekang Regency is carried out through a comprehensive approach, involving education in the pesantren, the role of PAI teachers, leaders in creating an environment that supports the formation of religious character of students. Based on the results of interviews and observations, it can be concluded that the process of cultivating religious character at the Rahmatul Asri Enrekang Islamic Boarding School is running well and effectively, which can be seen from the positive changes in the behavior of students both in the pesantren and outside the pesantren. The educational model that combines character education theories and practical approaches involving examples, advice, and motivation has proven effective in shaping the religious character of students in this pesantren.

CONCLUSION

Islamic Religious Education Teachers at SMPS Pondok Pesantren Rahmatul Asri play a strategic role as educators, guides, and role models for students. This role is realized through formal learning in the classroom, moral development outside of class hours, and involvement in Islamic boarding school religious activities. PAI teachers not only transfer religious knowledge, but also shape the attitudes, behaviors, and religious habits of students through an exemplary, habitational, and motivational approach.

The cultivation of religious character is carried out through various methods, PAI teachers include example, habituation of worship, advice (mau'izhah hasanah), the provision of educational punishments, and the involvement of students in religious activities. The method is integrated into daily routines such as congregational prayers, Qur'an recitals, book studies, and socio-religious activities. The application of this method has proven to be effective in forming religious character, because it takes place consistently, directed, and receives support from a conducive pesantren environment.

The religious character that has been successfully instilled includes increasing faith and piety, discipline in compulsory worship and sunnah, tolerance between students, and compliance with the rules of the Islamic boarding school. Students show positive changes in worship habits, the ability to maintain morals, and a sense of responsibility towards themselves and the environment. This success is inseparable from the collaborative role of PAI teachers, the support of the principal, the head of the boarding school, and the active participation of students

SUGGESTION

It is expected to continue to improve their competence in the method of instilling religious values, as well as strengthen their role as role models for students both inside and outside the classroom. Innovations in learning religious values also need to be developed to make them more interesting and contextual.

It is necessary to strengthen the synergy between school programs and religious activities in Islamic boarding schools so that the formation of religious character can run more effectively and thoroughly. Supervision of student activities outside of learning also needs to be improved.

It is expected to be able to internalize religious values not only when in the school/pesantren environment, but also in daily life in the community.

It is expected to research more about other factors that influence the success of religious character cultivation, such as the role of media, technology, or psychological approaches in character formation in adolescents.

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