

Exploration Of The Experience Of Islamic Religious Education Teachers In Implementing Learning Based On Character Values

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ABSTRACT : This study aims to explore the experiences of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in implementing character values-based learning in schools. Character values such as honesty, responsibility, tolerance, and discipline are central to the learning process, aiming to shape students with noble character. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. The findings reveal that IRE teachers play a strategic role in instilling character values through exemplary behavior, integration of teaching materials, and contextual learning approaches. However, teachers face challenges such as limited environmental support and insufficient instructional time. This study recommends ongoing training and synergy between teachers, parents, and the school environment to strengthen character education.

Keywords: Experience of Islamic Education Teacher, Character-Based Learning.

INTRODUCTION

Education serves as the main pillar in shaping a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also spiritually and morally mature. Amid the challenges of globalization and rapid technological advancement, Islamic religious education plays a vital role in nurturing students' character (Fithri, R., Wilyanita, N: 2022). Particularly at the junior and senior high school levels in the Pekanbaru Kota District, Islamic education is not solely aimed at instilling religious knowledge, but also serves as a means of strengthening Islamic character values that form the foundation of students' personalities.

The development of Islamic character in education must be carried out strategically, structurally, and contextually (Baidarus: 2020). This strategy includes pedagogical approaches that are relevant to the needs of the times, interactive and applicable learning methods, as well as a school environment that supports the cultivation of noble character. Character education integrated with Islamic teachings can foster individuals who are honest, disciplined, responsible, and socially caring (Baidarus: 2024). Therefore, it is essential to conduct an in-depth analysis of the strategies implemented in educational institutions to assess their effectiveness and identify the challenges faced during the process.

The role of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in character-based learning is crucial, as they are not only conveyors of knowledge but also role models and facilitators in the formation of noble character. IRE teachers in junior and senior high schools in the Pekanbaru

Kota District face the complex task of integrating religious values into daily teaching practices that are relevant to students' development and the continuously evolving social dynamics. Hence, teachers' experiences in managing character-based learning become a rich source of data for understanding real-world practices, the challenges encountered, and the creative solutions developed during the teaching process.

Furthermore, the strengthening of character values through Islamic education should not be limited to cognitive aspects but must also involve the affective and psychomotor dimensions of students, so that consistent behavioral and attitudinal changes can emerge in social life. A learning approach that successfully internalizes values such as honesty, patience, justice, and responsibility in a concrete way will have a long-term impact on shaping students' moral integrity. Research that explores the experiences of IRE teachers in designing and implementing character-based education is therefore essential to uncover best practices that can be widely applied and to refine the Islamic education curriculum.

Thus, research and analysis of the development of Islamic education—particularly in the context of character formation at the junior and senior high school levels—are essential to evaluate how well the vision of Islamic education has been implemented. By examining the strategies used in Islamic religious instruction across these educational levels, it is hoped that effective learning models can be identified for shaping a Muslim generation that is not only intelligent but also morally upright and prepared to face the challenges of the times.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical method. A qualitative approach is chosen as it allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the strategies and practices implemented in Islamic religious education at the junior and senior high school levels. The descriptive-analytical method is used to systematically describe and analyze the strategies for Islamic character development based on empirical data collected from the field.

Data collection is conducted through in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis. Interviews are carried out with Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers, school principals, and students to gather information regarding teaching strategies and the implementation of Islamic character values. Observations are made of classroom learning activities as well as religious activities outside the classroom, such as congregational prayers, religious study sessions, and Qur'an memorization programs (tahfidz). Additionally, documents such as syllabi, lesson plans (RPP), and textbooks are analyzed to examine the integration of character values into the curriculum.

Data analysis is conducted using the techniques of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The collected data is systematically organized, categorized by specific themes, and then analyzed to identify patterns and trends in Islamic character-building strategies. The validity of the data is strengthened through source and technique triangulation, by comparing the results from interviews, observations, and document analysis. Through this method, the study aims to provide a comprehensive and in-depth depiction of the development of Islamic education focused on character formation among students.

DISCUSSION

Islamic religious education plays a crucial role in shaping students' character, particularly at the junior and senior high school levels (Latifah, 2023). During this adolescent stage, students are in a transitional phase that significantly influences their personality development. It is during this period that they begin to form their worldview, adopt personal values, and establish behavior patterns that will serve as the foundation for their adult lives (Yusri et al., 2024). Therefore, the teaching of Islamic education should not be viewed merely as a transfer of knowledge, but rather as a comprehensive and balanced process of character and moral formation grounded in Islamic values.

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) holds a strategic position in developing students who are morally upright, possess integrity, and have strong personalities. Within the context of the national curriculum, IRE emphasizes not only cognitive mastery of religious knowledge but also the internalization of character values such as honesty, responsibility, tolerance, and discipline (Firmansyah et al., 2023). This focus becomes even more relevant amid the various moral challenges faced by today's younger generation.

IRE teachers in the Pekanbaru Kota District, as key agents of the learning process, have diverse experiences in implementing character-based teaching. This area includes schools with varying social, cultural, and economic backgrounds, requiring adaptive and contextualized teaching approaches. Exploring these teachers' experiences is essential to understand the effectiveness of the strategies they employ and the challenges they face in the field (Fernando & Zumratun, 2025).

Character development in Islamic education requires an integrative approach that combines cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. This means that Islamic learning should not only focus on understanding religious texts such as verses from the Qur'an or Hadith, but also on shaping attitudes, behaviors, and habits that reflect these values (Muzaini & Salamah, 2023). As a result, Islamic character development should not remain as mere rhetoric but should be embodied in the students' identity and reflected in their daily lives.

In practice, the implementation of character-based learning faces several challenges, including:

1. Limited classroom time, which restricts in-depth exploration of character values.
2. Lack of training and technical guidance on integrating character values into IRE materials.
3. Diverse student backgrounds, influencing their understanding and acceptance of the values being taught.
4. Limited parental involvement in reinforcing character values outside of school.
5. Inadequate learning media that support contextual and participatory approaches.

In response to these challenges, IRE teachers in the Pekanbaru Kota District have developed various implementation strategies, including the use of character-based learning media (Tanjung & Namora, 2022). Examples include:

1. Audiovisual media, such as videos of prophetic stories and exemplary Islamic figures that relate to specific character values, presented during class sessions (Subagiya, 2023).
2. Interactive digital media, such as quizzes using apps like Kahoot or Quizizz, which link religious questions with real-life attitudes and behaviors.
3. Posters and infographics on Islamic character values, displayed in classrooms or shared via student digital groups.
4. Character-based project assignments, such as creating vlogs about practicing honesty in daily life.

By utilizing such media, IRE teachers can deliver material that is not only informative but also inspiring and contextual. In this way, character education becomes more than theoretical discourse—it can be internalized and manifested in students' daily behavior.

One of the key values emphasized in Islamic education is honesty. Honesty is not merely a spoken trait but serves as the foundation for all life activities, including learning, working, and interacting with others (Chairuna et al., 2023). When well-internalized, this value fosters trustworthy individuals who can become role models in society. Another foundational value is responsibility. Students are taught to be aware of their duties toward Allah SWT, parents, teachers, peers, and the surrounding environment (Sa'diyah, 2022). This awareness promotes discipline and a strong work ethic.

In reality, Islamic education in public schools often remains theoretical. Teachers predominantly deliver material through lectures or memorization, without concrete efforts to relate the lessons to real life (Auzahra, 2024). This creates a disconnect between what students learn in school and what they experience outside of it. Consequently, even if students can answer religious questions academically, they may lack the ability to apply this knowledge in everyday behavior. This challenge calls for more contextual and applicable strategies for Islamic character development.

In Integrated Islamic Schools (IIS), Islamic education strategies are typically more cohesive with students' daily routines. The integration of knowledge and practice becomes the key. Activities such as communal prayer, Qur'an reading routines, religious mentoring, and voluntary acts of worship (e.g., fasting on Mondays and Thursdays) are embedded in students' lives. These direct experiences not only foster understanding but also facilitate deep internalization of values, as students align what they learn with what they live (Kamila, 2023).

Teachers play a central role in character development strategies. A teacher is not only an information provider but also a role model whose behavior, speech, and attitude serve as examples for students. Teacher role-modeling is an effective way to implicitly teach Islamic values. Students are more likely to emulate behavior they witness directly rather than simply hearing

about it. This reflects the educational method of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who educated his companions not only through words but also through real-life actions (Balqis et al., 2024). Therefore, religious teachers must continually strive for self-improvement and maintain behavioral consistency to serve as genuine role models for their students.

In addition to modeling, contextual teaching is a vital strategy for grounding Islamic values among students. Religious education should connect with social realities and current challenges. For example, when teaching the importance of *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood), educators can relate it to modern issues such as bullying, intolerance, or radicalism. This helps students see that Islamic values are not just relevant to the past but are also solutions to present-day problems. It also fosters pride and love for Islam as a universal and solution-oriented religion.

Another modern challenge is the rapid advancement of digital technology and media. The internet and social media expose students to various foreign values and cultures that may conflict with Islamic teachings. Therefore, strategies for Islamic character development must be adaptive, using technology to promote positive values. Integrated Islamic Schools, for instance, have begun using digital platforms to present religious content in the form of videos, podcasts, or engaging creative content. Students are even encouraged to create Islamic-themed digital projects, such as *dakwah* videos or Islamic values campaigns on social media (Imamah et al., 2021). As a result, they not only become consumers of technology but also producers of positive, value-driven content.

Besides curricular learning, co-curricular and extracurricular activities play a significant role in strengthening Islamic character development (Putri et al., 2023). Activities such as Ramadan spiritual camps (*pesantren kilat*), *mabit* (overnight spiritual gatherings), social service events, charity for orphans, and community programs allow students to practice empathy, solidarity, and social concern. These initiatives also foster a spirit of cooperation, teamwork, and mutual respect. By directly experiencing service and collective effort, students better understand the meaning of social worship as taught in Islam.

However, implementing these strategies is not without obstacles. A major challenge is the lack of continuity between school education and parenting at home. Family environments that do not support Islamic character formation can hinder the internalization of values learned at school. Thus, synergy between school and parents is essential, through parenting programs, family forums, or parent-involvement initiatives (Rahmadani & Malik, 2024). This ensures that the values cultivated at school are reinforced at home, creating a harmonious environment for Islamic character development.

Another determining factor is the quality of educators. Teachers who lack a comprehensive understanding of Islamic character education may struggle to formulate effective teaching strategies (Julaeha, 2019). Hence, there is a pressing need for continuous professional development and training that goes beyond cognitive religious knowledge to include psychological approaches, creative methodologies, and technology integration aligned with Islamic values.

Ultimately, Islamic character development strategies in junior and senior high school education should be viewed as a collective effort requiring collaboration among schools, teachers, parents, and the wider community. Islamic education must be a transformative process that

prepares students to be not only knowledgeable but also morally and spiritually strong (Rio, 2023). These students are expected to become agents of change in society, reflecting the spirit of Islam as a mercy to all creation (*rahmatan lil 'alamin*) and contributing positively to national and global progress (Jannah, 2023).

Thus, Islamic religious education in secondary schools is not merely an academic activity but a long-term process aimed at preparing students to become *insan kamil*—complete human beings who are faithful, knowledgeable, and action-oriented. This education is part of the broader mission of the Muslim community to build a civilization that is just, moral, and compassionate (Mayasari & Arifudin, 2023). Through the holistic and sustainable strengthening of Islamic character development strategies, this aspiration can move from hope to realization in everyday life.

CONCLUSION

Based on the exploration of the experiences of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in implementing character-based learning, it can be concluded that IRE teachers play a highly significant role in shaping students' character in schools. IRE teachers are not only responsible for delivering religious material, but also serve as role models, motivators, and facilitators in instilling character values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, tolerance, and social care (Baidarus et al., 2020). In practice, IRE teachers integrate these values into every aspect of the learning process—through teaching materials, diverse teaching methods, and by exemplifying these values in their daily attitudes and behavior. Teachers also strive to create a conducive classroom atmosphere that nurtures positive character development and involve students in various activities that support the growth of these values.

However, in implementation, IRE teachers face several challenges, such as limited class time, lack of support from families and communities, and the diverse backgrounds of students (Ismail, 2021). Despite these challenges, IRE teachers make continuous efforts to overcome them through instructional innovation, improving communication with parents, and fostering collaboration with schools and the wider community. Overall, the implementation of character-based learning by IRE teachers has had a positive impact on students' character development. This is evident in students' growing awareness of the importance of moral and religious values in their daily lives. Therefore, the experiences of IRE teachers in implementing character-based education are essential to be further developed and supported in order to nurture a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also morally upright.

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