

Implementation of Islamic Religious Education Based on Local Culture to Enhance Students Understanding of Religious Values

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of Islamic religious education based on local culture in improving students' understanding of religious values at MI NU Mokaha. The Islamic religious education curriculum developed integrates local cultural values and community traditions into the learning process, making learning contextual, meaningful, and relevant to students' daily lives. This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach using observation, interviews, and documentation to explore learning practices, teacher strategies, and the role of the community in supporting the learning process. The results of the study show that the integration of local culture in religious education can enhance students' understanding of the religious values embedded in the local cultural practices surrounding the school, strengthen cultural identity, and foster positive attitudes in social interactions. In addition, the involvement of community leaders, parents, and teachers is an essential factor in the successful implementation of the culture-based curriculum. The study concludes that religious education based on local culture is an effective strategy for internalizing religious values while simultaneously preserving local culture among students.

Keywords: religious education, local culture, religious values, contextual learning, cultural identity

Introduction

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a strategic role in shaping students personalities, character, and morals through the internalization of religious values. In the context of basic education, the success of religious education is not only determined by the delivery of teaching materials, but also by the teacher's ability to connect religious teachings with the socio-cultural realities surrounding students lives. Therefore, the integration of religious education with local culture has become an increasingly utilized approach to present meaningful and contextual learning. Such integration is expected to bridge Islamic values with cultural practices embedded in society, enabling students to understand religious teachings holistically (Azra, 2014).

Education gives birth to culture, and culture subsequently influences the education of a society in shaping its cultural behavior. Education is essential because through education, human culture and the dignity of humankind with its surrounding natural environment can be preserved. The process of education in developing and socializing culture can occur through formal, non-formal, and informal settings. In other words, education takes place in society, in schools, and in families. In this context, Islamic education rooted in local culture becomes

particularly significant.

Islamic education grounded in culture refers to education that does not abandon historical roots, whether the history of humanity in general or the cultural history of a nation, an ethnic group, or a particular community. Thus, Islamic education rooted in culture is expected to shape individuals who possess strong personality, dignity, confidence, and the ability to build civilization based on their own cultural heritage an inheritance from their ancestors not that of other nations. However, this does not mean rejecting modernity, change, reform, or the flow of external cultural transformation without careful selection and strong consideration. Islamic education based on local cultural values has the potential to strengthen national identity, nationalism, and the character of the nation, considering that local culture embodies value systems, expressive systems, and productive systems rooted in indigenous wisdom that contributes to national culture.

Local culture represents the identity of a community that is passed down from generation to generation and contains moral values, ethics, and local wisdom that can synergize with religious values. In educational perspectives, local culture is not merely an object of learning, but can also serve as a source, medium, and effective learning context (Sartini, 2017). When religious learning is contextualized through local culture, students not only understand religious teachings theoretically but also witness their practical expression in real-life community contexts. This strategy aligns with the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach, which positions students' experiences as the foundation of meaningful learning (Johnson, 2011).

Education based on local culture plays an important role in the education system because it integrates traditional values and knowledge into modern learning processes. Local wisdom refers to knowledge, habits, and practices developed and inherited by local communities, reflecting their ways of life, cultures, and unique values (Setiyawan, 2012). Integrating local wisdom into education not only enriches the curriculum with broader perspectives but also strengthens cultural identity and awareness of local heritage among students.

The importance of education based on local wisdom lies in its ability to create relevant and contextual learning (Suryana & Hijriani, 2022). By connecting learning materials with local contexts and students' everyday experiences, local wisdom based education helps students understand and appreciate their environment. It also supports the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills closely related to local challenges and needs. Moreover, this form of education can foster pride and love for their own culture vital for preserving cultural heritage amid globalization.

The concept of culturally rooted PAI development is also closely linked to curriculum development that accommodates Indonesia's cultural diversity. Verona (2023) explains that developing a multicultural-based PAI curriculum is essential to creating inclusive education, where every student can experience harmony between the religious teachings they receive and their cultural background. In this context, religious teaching is not limited to understanding religious texts but also involves how religion can be practiced in ways that accommodate cultural diversity. This makes culturally based PAI development a strategic step toward creating

harmonious and broadly acceptable education.

In various Islamic educational institutions, integrating local cultural values into the curriculum has proven to enhance the relevance of learning, strengthen students' cultural identity, and foster appreciation for community traditions (Hidayat, 2019). Furthermore, the development of culturally based PAI materials at the school level serves as a means to introduce and preserve local culture while deepening religious understanding. In MI NU Mokaha, for example, the implementation of culturally rooted religious education is important due to the strong religious and sociocultural traditions surrounding the school. In the case of local cultural traditions such as the *khaul sesepuh* in Mokaha, PAI teachers encourage students to participate in the ritual to explore the Islamic educational values embedded in the tradition. A PAI curriculum that integrates local culture is believed to help students understand Islamic values through everyday practices, such as religious traditions, community rituals, local arts, and other forms of local wisdom.

However, the success of integrating local culture into religious education is influenced by several factors, including teachers' instructional strategies, curriculum readiness, and community support, such as that from local leaders and parents (Nurdin, 2018). Therefore, this study is important to examine how the integration of local culture into religious learning is implemented in MI NU Mokaha and how it contributes to enhancing students' understanding of religious values.

This research is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of culturally based Islamic education models, strengthening the position of PAI as a subject that not only teaches religious concepts but also shapes students' character through cultural identity and local wisdom. Thus, culturally rooted PAI development is not limited to curriculum or teaching material reform, but also includes reinforcing cultural values that enrich religious understanding and strengthen students' character. Such development is anticipated to create religious education that is more relevant, contextual, and socially accepted, and capable of shaping individuals who are morally upright, appreciative of diversity, and adaptive to the changing times.

Methods

Research Design

Based on the type of data used, this study employs a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is defined as a method used to understand phenomena experienced by research subjects holistically and descriptively through the use of words and language, within a specific natural context, and by utilizing various scientific methods.

Data Collection Technique

The data used in this research consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data refer to information obtained directly by the researcher during the investigation.

Secondary data refer to sources that do not directly provide the data to the researcher, such as information obtained through other individuals or existing

documents.

The researcher employed three techniques for data collection:

1. observation, which is a method of gathering data by observing ongoing activities directly.
2. Interviews, which are a form of verbal communication conducted as a conversation aimed at obtaining information.
3. Documentation, which involves recording data obtained directly from sources relevant to the research object.

Since this study is qualitative in nature, the data analysis techniques used include data reduction, data display, and data verification. The following are the data analysis procedures employed by the researcher:

1. Data Reduction

At this stage, the collected data are processed with the aim of identifying key points related to the analysis of the implementation of culturally based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at MI NU Mokaha.

2. Data Display

At this stage, the researcher organizes and presents a systematic summary of the research findings so that patterns and focuses of implementation become clear. Through this process, the data are given meaningful interpretations relevant to the research focus.

3. Verivication

This stage involves examining the conclusions that have been formulated and comparing them with relevant theories. Verification is carried out through continuous checking and validation of early data, guidance, and triangulation, thus producing conclusions that are accurate and meaningful

Results and Discussions

Islamic Education

Education is the process of internalizing culture into individuals and society so that they become civilized. Education is not merely a means of transferring knowledge but also a medium for cultural formation and the transmission of values (enculturation and socialization). Therefore, children must receive education that touches the essential dimensions of humanity. Education can also be understood as a process of nurturing and developing the students' potential physical, intellectual, social, aesthetic, and spiritual so that these potentials can grow and develop optimally through nurturing, guiding, caring, improving, and organizing them.

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is a conscious and planned effort to prepare students to recognize, understand, internalize, and ultimately believe in the teachings of Islam, accompanied by guidance to respect the adherents of other religions in order to promote interreligious harmony that leads to national unity and cohesion. In general, education is a conscious form of guidance provided by educators to develop the physical and spiritual aspects of learners toward the formation of noble character (Hermawan et al., 2021).

Learning Islamic Religious Education (PAI) based on local wisdom integrates religious values with the wisdom and traditions found within a particular

community. Its technical implementation involves several key steps to ensure that learning is not only religiously relevant but also aligned with the local cultural context. In educational theory, local wisdom can serve as a source of learning because traditions contain numerous educational values (Napitupulu & Nasution, 2022).

The process begins with the selection of learning materials relevant to local wisdom. PAI teachers must understand and identify cultural values that are strongly rooted in their communities and determine how these values can be integrated into the PAI curriculum. For instance, in regions with particular traditions such as customary ceremonies or community activities—teachers can relate Islamic teachings to such practices, such as explaining Islamic values within the context of local traditions like *selamatan* or *kenduri*.

Next, in the teaching–learning process, teachers may apply methods that emphasize the connection between religious teachings and local cultural practices (Ajam & Alhadaar, 2019). For example, if there are customary rituals practiced in the community, teachers can relate these rituals to relevant Islamic teachings, discussing how religious values can reinforce and refine these traditions. This can be done through discussions, case studies, or group projects that encourage students to explore how Islamic values and local wisdom complement one another.

In addition, the use of instructional materials that reflect local wisdom is highly important. These may include textbooks, multimedia materials, or teaching aids that integrate local cultural elements with religious teachings. For example, storybooks or comics combining stories of the Prophets with local cultural settings can help students understand Islamic teachings in a context familiar to them.

Learning assessment must also consider students' understanding of the relationship between religious teachings and local culture. Evaluations may take the form of community-based projects, presentations exploring how religious teachings are applied in daily life connected to local culture, or personal reflections on how students perceive the relationship between Islamic values and local wisdom.

Through this approach, PAI learning based on local wisdom not only teaches religious values but also strengthens and preserves local culture, creating a more relevant and meaningful learning experience for students. Such an approach helps students see religious teachings as an integral part of their lives and reinforces their cultural identity within a religious framework.

Local Culture

The term *local culture* or *local wisdom* consists of two words: *wisdom* and *local*. Etimologically, *local* means “situated in a particular place,” while *wisdom* refers to the quality of being wise. Thus, *local wisdom* can be understood as ideas, values, and views that are wise, prudent, and considered good by a local community, and which serve as a collective guide for its members (Sartini, 2022). Local wisdom is inherently connected to noble values inherited from past generations and used as a foundation for daily life. Therefore, local wisdom holds an important role in character education, as it represents truths that have become deeply rooted and traditionally upheld within a community.

Local wisdom is a cultural product from the past that remains relevant as a

guide for living. Although it is local in nature, the values embedded within it are universal; thus, integrating local wisdom into character development helps learners gain a holistic understanding of their identity, both as individuals and as members of a community with its own distinct cultural heritage (Wagiran, 2011).

Furthermore, local wisdom can be viewed as a foundational element in the formation of national identity. From an etymological perspective, local wisdom consists of two components: *wisdom*, meaning the ability to think and act based on one's judgments of events and objects, and *local*, meaning "set within a particular community" (Ridwan, 2007). Accordingly, local wisdom refers to ideas or ways of thinking held by a local community that are good, wise, and adhered to by its members. This aligns with the understanding presented by Sumarni and Amirudin (2004), who state that local wisdom is the knowledge possessed by a local community to sustain life within a particular environment, shaped by long-standing beliefs, traditions, norms, myths, and cultural practices.

Geertz (1992) further explains that local wisdom is an entity that significantly influences the dignity and worth of individuals within a community. Similarly, Keraf (2010) defines local wisdom as all forms of knowledge, beliefs, insights, customs, and ethics that guide human behavior within an ecological community. Thus, local wisdom not only concerns relationships among humans but also encompasses understanding, practices, and customs regarding the relationships between humans, nature, and all beings sharing the same ecological system.

These traditional forms of wisdom are lived, practiced, taught, and passed down from one generation to another, forming patterns of daily behavior. Teezzi et al. argue that the sedimentation of local wisdom eventually crystallizes into tradition or even religion. In Indonesian society, local wisdom can be found in songs, proverbs, sayings, advice, mottos, and ancient manuscripts that manifest in daily behavior. Local wisdom is reflected in long-standing community habits and is expressed through the values that serve as guiding principles for specific social groups (Ridwan, 2007).

Culture, more broadly, encompasses everything learned and shared collectively by members of society. Koentjaraningrat identifies seven universal elements of culture, namely:

1. Religious systems and religious ceremonies
2. Social systems and social organization
3. Systems of knowledge
4. Language
5. Art
6. Livelihood systems
7. Technology and material tools

Implementation of Islamic Religious Education Based on Local Culture at MI NU Mokaha

MI NU Mokaha is an Islamic primary school located in Mokaha Village, Jatinegara District, Tegal Regency—an area where various forms of local culture remain preserved by the community. These include traditions such as *khaul sesepuh*, *metik*, *tingkeban*, *munggah molo*, and many others. The residents of

Mokaha still practice numerous local cultural traditions that have been transmitted across generations.

The implementation of Islamic religious education (PAI) at MI NU Mokaha involves engaging students directly in observing cultural practices around the school environment. According to the Islamic education teacher at MI NU Mokaha, these activities are conducted annually and all students are required to participate. The series of events in the *khaul sesepuh* tradition typically includes the collective recitation of *tahlil* and *Yasin* at the village cemetery, followed by the recitation of *Maulid Dziba*, a religious sermon (*mau'izhah hasanah*), and closing prayers. These activities function as a medium for integrating Islamic values embedded within these cultural traditions. Students are taught to pray for those who have passed away rather than asking for intercession from them solely as an act of worship to Allah SWT. Thus, the implementation of Islamic values within the tradition of *ziarah* and *khaul sesepuh* manifests through religious and social practices performed by the community, serving as a means of preserving Islamic teachings in harmony with local culture.

Regarding the implementation of character education strategies through the local wisdom approach, technical execution can involve exemplary behavior, spontaneous activities, corrective guidance, environmental conditioning, and routine practices performed by teachers, principals, and administrative staff with an attitude of compassion toward students. These activities are expected to empower educators in integrating local wisdom values into the character formation of learners.

Islamic Values Contained in Local Cultural Tradition

1. Tawadhu (Humility)
Visiting graves and performing *khaul* instill humility, reminding individuals of human limitations and encouraging respect for predecessors who contributed to Islamic teachings.
2. Taqarrub Ilallah
Through activities such as *tahlil*, *dzikr*, prayers, and Qur'an recitation.
3. Gratitude to Allah
Honoring scholars and local elders reflects gratitude for the inheritance of faith, knowledge, and guidance.
4. Mahabbah
Loving and honoring religious scholars is part of Islamic teaching. The *khaul* serves as a means to emulate their character and preserve spiritual connection
5. Silaturahmi
Khaul traditions bring together diverse members of the community, strengthening Islamic brotherhood, social solidarity, and communal harmony.
6. Tabarruk
Learning from the lives, works, and exemplary actions of scholars as sources of moral and spiritual insight.

Overall, implementing Islamic values within the tradition of *ziarah* and *khaul sesepuh* enriches the religious life of the community and strengthens

religious, social, and cultural character formation aligned with Islamic principles.

Furthermore, family involvement plays a crucial role since the household is the primary and most influential environment for shaping children's character, including locally rooted values. Thus, efforts to enhance parents' capacity in nurturing and developing children's character are essential.

Another supporting factor in character formation based on local wisdom is community empowerment. This aligns with Tadjab's explanation of the functions of Islamic education, which include:

1. transmitting cultural values from generation to generation; and
2. developing inherent individual potentials (*fitrah*) to be utilized for personal and societal needs in facing ever-evolving environmental challenges (Tadjab, 1994).

Thus, the transmission of cultural values does not necessarily conflict with local wisdom traditions, especially considering that Mokaha's cultural identity is deeply infused with religious nuances.

Local content taught in schools should contain pedagogical components. Positive systems of life that align with Islamic values and norms can be shaped through culture, as culture influences sociocultural conditions within society. Islamic norms and values that are internalized into Minangkabau culture, for example, distinguish it from other cultural systems.

Ontologically, culture refers to humanity itself. Humans are manifestations of the *nafs* the essence of human existence as the subject of creation and as Allah's vicegerent (*khalifatullah*) on earth. Thus, "Culture is the process of integrating faith and creativity in responding to reality through righteous action. Through this, humans determine their degree in life" (Fithri, 2013).

Based on this explanation, local wisdom should become a primary aspect integrated with Islamic religious education in schools, particularly in the educational practices of MI NU Mokaha. The local wisdom of the Mokaha community resonates harmoniously with Islamic educational values, demonstrating clear interconnectedness and compatibility.

Therefore, channeling inherent potentials infused with Islamic values becomes an effective strength for developing Islamic culture. Through local wisdom that aligns with Islamic cultural values, the development of Islamic teachings can be enriched. Such culturally rooted Islamic values are expected to grow and develop through existing potentials, eventually forming a causal relationship between foundational human potential and Islamic culture.

By integrating local wisdom into Islamic religious education particularly within the learning process at MI NU Mokaha it is expected to serve as a filter against negative influences in an increasingly globalized era.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) based on local culture at MI NU Mokaha significantly enhances students' understanding of Islamic values. The integration of local cultural

traditions such as the *khaul sesepuh* and various customary practices of the Mokaha community makes PAI learning more contextual, meaningful, and closely connected to students' daily lives. Through direct observation and participation in activities such as the recitation of *tahlil*, *Yasin*, *Maulid*, and other religious practices embedded in local culture, students are able to understand Islamic values not only theoretically but also through practical experience.

Islamic values such as humility (*tawadhu'*), gratitude, *taqarrub ilallah* (drawing closer to Allah), love for scholars (*mahabbah*), social unity (*silaturahmi*), and *tabarruk* (learning from the legacy of righteous individuals) are effectively internalized through traditions practiced within the community. This process strengthens students' religious character, cultural identity, and positive social attitudes. The success of this implementation is also supported by the essential roles of teachers, curriculum design, community leaders, and family involvement, all of whom serve as pillars in culturally rooted education.

Thus, Islamic Religious Education based on local culture proves to be an effective strategy for connecting Islamic teachings with local wisdom, preserving community traditions, and serving as a filter against the negative impacts of globalization. Such an educational model not only enriches the PAI curriculum but also shapes students to become morally upright individuals who are grounded in their cultural heritage while remaining capable of navigating contemporary developments without losing their religious identity.

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