



The Efforts of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Shaping Students' Religious Character

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ABSTRACT

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This study discussed the efforts of Islamic Religious Education teachers to shape students' religious character at SDN Inpres Silae. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, and analyzed through data reduction, presentation, and verification. Findings revealed that teachers foster students' religious character through role modeling and habituation, supported by activities such as congregational and Duha prayers, daily Quran recitation, dzikir, weekly almsgiving, monthly Islamic parenting sessions, and annual events, including short-term Islamic boarding programs, communal iftar, and Prophet Muhammad's birthday celebrations. This study emphasized that teachers' efforts, combined with school-based religious activities, play a vital role in strengthening students' religious values and require support from the wider community.

1. Introduction

Education is a conscious and planned process aimed at developing students' potential so that they possess spiritual and religious strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and the skills needed in life. Education does not only function as the transfer of knowledge but also as a means of shaping character and individual personality as a whole (Sugiyono, 2019).

In a general perspective, education is understood as human effort to develop and nurture individual potential, both physical and spiritual, in accordance with the values that exist in society. The educational process takes place throughout life (lifelong education) and occurs in various environments such as family, school, and community. Therefore, education plays an important role in improving the quality of human resources (Moleong, 2017).

Meanwhile, in the Islamic education perspective, education is defined as a process of guidance and direction for students' development so that they become individuals who are faithful, pious, and have noble character. Islamic education is not only oriented toward worldly life but also the hereafter. Its ultimate goal is to form balanced human beings in intellectual, emotional, and spiritual aspects (Muhaimin, 2015).

Furthermore, Islamic education emphasizes the formation of *insan kamil* (the perfect human being), namely a person who is complete in faith, knowledge, and good deeds. Therefore, the educational process must be carried out in an integrated manner by incorporating religious values into every aspect of learning. In this way, education does not only produce intelligent individuals but also those who possess strong moral and spiritual integrity (Majid & Andayani, 2012).

Islamic Religious Education teachers serve as central figures in shaping students' religious character. Their role extends beyond merely delivering subject matter; they also act as role models in practicing religious values. The moral responsibility of an Islamic Religious Education teacher is to guide students in understanding, internalizing, and implementing Islamic teachings in their daily lives. This responsibility is reinforced in the words of Allah SWT in Q.S. Al-Baqarah, verse 31:

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

"He taught Adam the names—all of them. Then He presented them to the angels and said, 'Inform Me of the names of these, if you are truthful.'"

It explained the importance of knowledge, guidance, and moral responsibility. Just as Allah entrusted Adam with knowledge and understanding, teachers are entrusted with the moral and spiritual development of their students. They are expected not only to impart religious knowledge but also to exemplify the values of Islam through their behaviour, thereby fostering students who are capable of applying Islamic principles in everyday life.

It also implies that the process of education and teaching is part of *sunnatullah*, emphasizing the importance of knowledge transfer in shaping human character. Consequently, teachers have a responsibility not only as knowledge instructors but also as spiritual and moral guides, instilling religious values so that students grow into knowledgeable, faithful, and morally upright individuals.

The development of students' religious character in elementary schools holds high urgency because this period represents the golden age for personality formation. Elementary school serves as the first environment to introduce fundamental values such as honesty, discipline, and responsibility, which form the foundation of religious character. Religious character education in elementary schools' functions to integrate cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects within students. This aligns with Lickona's (2012) view that effective character education does not only impart moral knowledge but also habituates consistent moral behaviour in daily life.

In Islam, religious character reflects the unity of faith, knowledge, and action, manifested in noble behavior (*akhlakul karimah*) according to the guidance of the Qur'an and Sunnah. However, field realities show that some students still exhibit behaviors far from religious values, such as a lack of respect for teachers, poor discipline in worship, and low social awareness toward the surrounding environment. This condition indicates that the development of religious character requires a more comprehensive strategy from Islamic Religious Education teachers. Teachers serve not only as instructors but also as moral guides and role models (*uswah hasanah*) who can instill religious values through habituation and exemplary approaches (Zubaedi, 2011). Through these two approaches, Islamic Religious Education teachers can gradually and sustainably instill Islamic values, shaping positive behaviors in students both inside and outside the school environment.

Based on this background, this study focuses on two research questions:

1. How do Islamic Religious Education teachers strive to develop the religious character of students at SDN Inpres Silae?
2. What challenges do Islamic Religious Education teachers face, and what solutions are implemented to overcome these challenges in developing students' religious character at SDN Inpres Silae?

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Efforts of Islamic Religious Education Teachers

The word "Effort" in Indonesian Language Dictionary defined as an endeavour or activity that directs energy and thought to achieve a certain goal. It can also be interpreted as an attempt, intellectual endeavour, or initiative to achieve a purpose or solve a problem. Dessy Anwar, as cited in Zulkifli, defines effort as an activity that directs energy and thought toward achieving a desired objective. Effort can also be understood as an initiative or attempt to reach a goal, find a solution, and resolve problems.

Based on these explanations, it can be concluded that effort is a conscious form of action involving the mobilization of energy, thought, and strategies in a planned manner to achieve specific objectives. In the definition of the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*, effort is an activity directed at achieving a particular purpose,

while according to Dessy Anwar in Zulkifli, it encompasses initiative and attempts to find solutions and resolve problems. Thus, effort not only involves physical action but also includes intellectual and spiritual dimensions that require dedication, planning, and moral responsibility. In the context of education, the term represents directed and sustained endeavours by educators to achieve desired outcomes, such as shaping students' religious character through learning, habituation, and exemplary behaviour. Effort demands awareness and consistency, as success can only be achieved through hard work accompanied by good intentions, careful thought, and sustained practical action.

In the context of Islamic education, several terms refer to teachers, such as *murabbi*, *mu'allim*, and *mu'addib*. Teachers may also be addressed by titles such as *al-Ustadz* or *asy-Syaikh*. As discussed by Abuddin Nata, the term *'alim* (plural: *ulama*) or *mu'allim* refers to someone knowledgeable, while *mudarris* means an instructor or teacher. The term *mu'addib* refers to a teacher who specifically instructs in a palace, whereas *ustadz* denotes a teacher specializing in Islamic religious education, and *syaiikh* refers to a teacher in the field of Sufism.

According to Dakir and Sardimi, Islamic Religious Education is a planned and comprehensive process aimed at transferring religious values to students, developing their potential, and guiding them to live in accordance with divine values derived from the Qur'an and Hadith. Similarly, Ainiyah views Islamic Religious Education as a mandatory subject at every educational level, functioning to install spiritual values so that students grow into individuals with noble character, ethics, and culture, aligned with national educational goals.

It can be concluded that Islamic Religious Education teachers are educators who equip students with an understanding of religious teachings while also actively instilling religious values. As a result, students are expected not only to comprehend religious knowledge but also to practice it in daily life, producing outcomes in the form of both character and moral integrity.

2.2 Religious Character

From an etymological perspective, the term "character" originates from the Greek language, meaning "to engrave a pattern" or "to implement virtuous values in actions according to moral norms," thus describing an individual known for noble character. Terminologically, character is understood as "the way of thinking and behaving that becomes the distinctive traits of an individual in daily life and interactions within the family, school, and community."

Character serves as a bridge between knowledge and skills. Knowledge without a foundation of good personality, and skills without self-awareness, can mislead and cause harm. Therefore, character can be defined as a collection of positive behaviours possessed by an individual. These behaviours manifest the awareness and responsibility in fulfilling one's roles and duties.

According to Muslimah, the term "religious" derives from the Latin word *religio*, which comes from the root word *religare*, meaning "to bind." This term is similar to "religious" in English and *religion* in Dutch. According to Kusno, religious character refers to traits inherent in an individual that reflect Islamic characteristics, obedience, or messages. The religious character of an individual can influence those around them to also behave in a religious manner.

Based on the above definitions, it can be concluded that religious character is the behaviour exhibited by a person in practicing the teachings of their religion. Undoubtedly, religious character is a fundamental trait that should be habituated in students' daily lives. Possessing religious character guides and directs an individual toward a better life, as love, faith, and piety toward Allah SWT lead a person to implement Islamic teachings properly.

2.3 Students

Etymologically, student refers to a learner or pupil who receives instruction in knowledge. Terminologically, it is understood as a learner or individual who undergoes developmental changes and still requires guidance and direction in shaping their personality, forming an integral part of the structured educational process. Students are a crucial component of Islamic education, as they actively participate in educational systems and programs designed to nurture and develop their potential.

Formally, students are human beings in both physical and spiritual dimensions who are in phases of growth and development. Growth refers to physical development, while development encompasses mental and psychological progress. These stages of growth and development characterize a student who requires guidance from an educator.

From the perspective of Islamic Educational Philosophy, students are individuals in the process of progressing toward betterment in physical, spiritual, and other virtuous aspects. Similar to a young child who gradually learns to crawl, walk, and perform other basic activities, students, through learning (*ta'lim*), nurturing (*tarbiyah*), discipline (*ta'dib*), and other educational processes, are guided to develop rational, logical, and responsible thinking, enabling them to distinguish between right and wrong.

Based on the above understanding, it can be concluded that students (*peserta didik*) are learners who require guidance and direction to acquire knowledge, undergo physical and psychological development, shape their personality, character, and attitudes, mature socially and morally, and fulfill human responsibilities, whether in formal or non-formal educational settings.

2.4 Previous Study

The first study, entitled "*Problematics of Developing Students' Religious Character in Islamic Religious Education at SMP Negeri 1 Sei Kepayang Timur*", aimed to identify the factors inhibiting the development of students' religious character at school and to formulate solutions to these problems. The findings revealed that the main obstacles were a lack of parental attention to children's religious education, inadequate school facilities, and a shortage of professional teachers in the religious field. The similarity between this study and the current research lies in their shared focus on developing students' religious character. However, the difference lies in context and scope: Miftah and Nurmawati focused on challenges at the junior high school level, while this study emphasizes the efforts of Islamic Religious Education teachers at the elementary school (SD) level. Their findings reinforce the importance of synergy among teachers, parents, and educational institutions in shaping students' religious character.

The second study, entitled "*The Implementation of Religious Values in Shaping Students' Character at SDN Jambean 01 Pati*", examined how religious values were applied in teaching and learning activities at the elementary school level. The results showed that the development of religious character was carried out through habituation, such as praying before studying, reciting *Asmaul Husna*, and upholding honesty in exams and learning activities. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, using observation, interviews, documentation, and questionnaires. The similarity to the current study lies in its focus on developing religious character through the application of Islamic values in the elementary school environment. The difference is that Kurniawan's study emphasized the implementation of religious values in various school settings, whereas the current research highlights the concrete strategies and efforts of Islamic Religious Education teachers in shaping students' religious character at SDN Inpres Silae.

The third study, entitled "*Strategies of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Shaping Elementary School Students' Religious Character*", aimed to describe the strategies employed by Islamic Religious Education teachers to develop students' religiosity at SDN 2 Kesumadadi. The findings indicated that the strategies included habituating students to recite *Asma' al-Husna* in every Islamic lesson and reading short surahs before starting lessons. The research used a qualitative field approach, employing interviews, observation, and documentation. This study closely relates to current research in both the subject—Islamic Religious Education

teachers—and the object—the development of students' religious character. The difference lies in the focus: Astriana's study emphasized teacher strategies, while the current study examines more broadly the efforts of Islamic Religious Education teachers, including strategies, methods, and habituation activities in the elementary school context.

These previous studies provide an important foundation for further research into the efforts of Islamic Religious Education teachers to shape students' religious character. Based on the findings of Miftah Ilham Mazid and Nurawati (2024), Mochamad Azis Kurniawan et al. (2021), and M. Tiara Ayu Astriana et al. (2023), it is evident that the success of developing students' religious character is largely determined by teachers' consistent efforts to instill religious values through habituation and exemplary behavior. Therefore, this study focuses on how Islamic Religious Education teachers strive to develop students' religious character at the elementary school level, particularly at SDN Inpres Silae, through activities that foster religious habits and the practice of Islamic values in daily life. This research is expected to strengthen the understanding of the importance of teachers' concrete efforts in nurturing students' religious character from an early age, forming a fundamental foundation for noble character development.

3. Methodology

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the social phenomenon of Islamic Religious Education teachers' efforts to shape students' religious character. The study does not use statistical procedures but instead emphasizes the meaning and context of the situation under investigation. The case study design was chosen to allow the researcher to explore in detail the various efforts, challenges, and solutions implemented by teachers in developing religious character within the school environment.

A descriptive qualitative approach is a research method used to understand phenomena in depth by collecting non-numerical data, such as words, behaviors, and documentation. This approach aims to describe, systematically, factually, and accurately, the facts and relationships among the phenomena being studied. In descriptive qualitative research, the researcher acts as the main instrument, directly involved in the process of collecting and analyzing data in the field (Moleong, 2017).

The research was conducted at SDN Inpres Silae, selected as the locus due to observed low levels of students' religious character, including disrespectful behaviour toward teachers, lack of discipline in worship, poor social attitudes, and bullying among students. The researcher acted as the main instrument and served as a non-participant observer, meaning they were present in the field to observe phenomena without directly engaging in the subjects' activities (Moleong, 2019).

Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Informants included Islamic Religious Education teachers, homeroom teachers, students, and students' parents. In addition to primary data, secondary data were obtained from school archives, vision and mission statements, activity reports, and other relevant administrative documents.

Data analysis was conducted qualitatively and descriptively through three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction involved selecting relevant data, and data presentation was carried out through narrative descriptions. Verification was conducted to ensure the validity of the findings. To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the data, this study employed triangulation of sources, techniques, and time, enabling the researcher to compare results across various informants and data collection methods (Sugiyono, 2018).

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Efforts of Islamic Religious Education Teachers

According to the *Big Indonesian Dictionary (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia)*, "effort" is defined as an attempt or activity that directs energy and thought to achieve a specific goal. Effort is also understood as endeavor or initiative to reach a certain purpose, solve problems, and find solutions. According to Dessy Anwar in Zulkifli, effort refers to activities that involve the exertion of energy and thought in order to achieve a desired goal, including the process of finding solutions to problems.

Based on these definitions, it can be concluded that effort is a form of conscious endeavor involving energy, thought, and well-planned strategies to achieve specific objectives. Effort includes not only physical actions but also intellectual aspects and seriousness in planning and implementation. In the context of education, effort refers to the directed, continuous actions undertaken by educators to achieve educational goals, such as developing students' religious character through learning, habituation, and role modeling.

In the context of Islamic education, teachers are referred to by various terms that reflect their roles and functions, such as *murabbi*, *mu'allim*, and *mu'addib*. In addition, teachers are also referred to by titles such as *al-ustadz* and *asy-syaikh*. Abuddin Nata explains that the term *'alim* (plural: *'ulama*) or *mu'allim* refers to someone who possesses knowledge and teaches it. The term *mudarris* refers to a teacher or instructor who delivers lessons, while *mu'addib* refers to a teacher who focuses on teaching manners, particularly in specific environments such as royal courts. Meanwhile, *ustadz* refers to an Islamic religious teacher, and *syaiikh* is often used to refer to teachers in the field of Sufism.

According to Dakir and Sardimi, Islamic education is a planned and comprehensive process aimed at transmitting religious values to students, developing their potential, and guiding them to live in accordance with divine values derived from the Qur'an and Hadith. Meanwhile, Ainiyah views Islamic education as a compulsory subject at every level of education, serving to instill spiritual values so that students grow into individuals with noble character, ethics, and culture in accordance with national education goals.

Thus, Islamic education teachers are educators who are responsible not only for delivering religious knowledge but also for instilling Islamic values in students. Through this role, students are expected not only to understand religious teachings theoretically but also to practice them in daily life, thereby forming good character and morals.

4.2 Religious Character

From an etymological perspective, the term "character" originates from Greek, meaning "to engrave a pattern" or "to implement values of goodness into actions in accordance with moral norms," so that a person can be recognized as an individual with noble character. Meanwhile, in terms of terminology, character is understood as "the way of thinking and behaving that becomes a distinctive feature of an individual in daily life and in interactions within the family, school, and society."

Religious character is one of the main values in character education that reflects a person's attitudes and behaviors in obeying the teachings of their religion. This character is not only related to the relationship between humans and God but also includes relationships with other people and the surrounding environment. Individuals with religious character will demonstrate traits such as honesty, trustworthiness, tolerance, and a high level of social concern (Majid & Andayani, 2012).

In the context of school education, religious character is reflected through various indicators such as obedience in worship, honesty, discipline, and mutual respect among individuals. Teachers play an important role in instilling these values through both instructional and non-instructional activities. Consistent habituation helps students internalize religious values so that they become part of their personality (Suyadi, 2013).

Furthermore, according to Lickona, religious character is part of moral education that emphasizes the importance of universal values such as goodness, honesty, and responsibility. These values are in line with religious teachings and serve as the foundation for forming individuals with noble character. Therefore, strengthening religious character in education is very important to produce a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also possesses strong moral integrity (Lickona, 2013).

Character serves as a bridge between knowledge and skills. Knowledge that is not based on good personality, as well as skills that are not accompanied by self-awareness, can lead to harmful consequences. Therefore, character can be understood as a set of positive behaviors possessed by an individual. These behaviors are a manifestation of awareness in carrying out one's roles, functions, and responsibilities.

According to Muslimah, the term "religion" originates from the Latin word *religio*, which comes from the root *religare*, meaning "to bind." This term is similar to "religious" in English and "religie" in Dutch. According to Kusno, religious character is a trait inherent in an individual that reflects Islamic characteristics, obedience, or messages. A person's religious character can influence those around them to behave in a religious manner as well.

4.3 Students

Etymologically, "students" refer to learners who receive knowledge and instruction. Terminologically, students are individuals undergoing developmental changes and therefore still require guidance and direction in shaping their personalities as part of the structural educational process. Students are an essential component of the Islamic education process. The term refers to individuals who participate in education within a particular educational system to develop and nurture themselves.

Formally, students are human beings in their physical and spiritual phases of growth and development. Growth refers to the physical aspect, while development refers to the mental aspect. These processes characterize learners who require guidance from an educator.

In the perspective of Islamic Educational Philosophy, students are creatures of Allah who are undergoing a process of growth and development, both physically and spiritually, and who require guidance, direction, and education to achieve human perfection (*insan kamil*). Students are viewed as individuals who possess potential (*fitrah*) that must be developed optimally through education based on Islamic values. This *fitrah* includes intellectual, spiritual, and moral potentials that must be directed in accordance with religious teachings (Muhaimin, 2015).

In addition, in Islamic education, students are regarded as both subjects and objects of education. As subjects, they play an active role in the learning process; as objects, they are the targets of educational efforts by educators. Therefore, Islamic education emphasizes the importance of considering students' needs, characteristics, and developmental stages so that the educational process runs effectively and in accordance with its intended goals (Ramayulis, 2014).

Furthermore, from the perspective of Islamic educational philosophy, students are not only directed toward achieving worldly success but also toward attaining happiness in the hereafter. Islamic education aims to form individuals who are faithful, pious, and possess noble character, enabling them to fulfill their role as vicegerents (*khalifah*) on earth. Thus, students must be developed to achieve a balance between intellectual, emotional, and spiritual intelligence (Majid & Andayani, 2012).

Based on the above explanation, it can be concluded that students are learners who require guidance and direction from educators to acquire knowledge, experience physical and psychological development, shape personality, character, and attitudes, achieve maturity, and fulfill their human responsibilities, both in formal and non-formal educational institutions.

Religious character can also be understood as the internalization of faith values, reflected in one's mindset, attitudes, and daily actions. The process of forming this character does not occur instantly, but through continuous guidance in the family, school, and community environments. Religious education plays an important role in laying

the foundation of religious character by providing both understanding and spiritual experience for students (Muhaimin, 2015).

4.4 The Efforts of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Shaping the Religious Character of Students at SDN Inpres Silae

The efforts of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in shaping students' religious character are an important part of the educational process, which not only emphasizes cognitive aspects but also affective and psychomotor domains. PAI teachers have a strategic role as role models (*Uswah Hasanah*) in instilling Islamic values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, and sincerity. Teacher role modelling is a key factor in the success of character formation, as students tend to imitate the behaviour they observe in their daily lives (Majid & Andayani, 2012; Lickona, 2013).

In addition, the formation of religious character is also carried out through the habituation of religious activities in schools. Activities such as congregational prayers, Qur'an recitation before learning begins, and Islamic holiday commemorations are effective means of instilling religious values. Continuous habituation can shape students' attitudes and behaviours, making these values part of their personality (Muhaimin, 2015).

The learning methods used by PAI teachers also greatly influence the development of religious character. The use of methods such as role modelling, advice, discussion, and contextual approaches can help students understand and internalize religious values in daily life. Thus, learning is not only theoretical but also practical (Ramayulis, 2014; Suyadi, 2013).

On the other hand, the success of religious character development cannot be separated from the support of the school environment and families. Synergy between teachers, parents, and the surrounding environment is essential in creating a consistent religious culture. A conducive environment will strengthen the values taught by teachers at school, enabling students to apply them sustainably in their daily lives (Lickona, 2013).

This section presents the research findings from observations, interviews, and documentation conducted at SDN Inpres Silae. All collected data are elaborated to provide a clear depiction of the research implementation in accordance with the established focus.

1. Exemplary Behavior and Habituation

Through exemplary behavior, teachers strive to serve as concrete role models for students in their daily conduct. Teachers consistently greet students, use polite language, and demonstrate friendly and courteous attitudes in their interactions. In addition, teachers actively involve students in various religious activities, such as congregational prayers, *tadarrus* of the Qur'an, and collective prayers. Through this modeling, students gain tangible examples of religious behavior that they can emulate in daily life.

Habituation focuses on religious routines carried out consistently, such as praying before and after learning activities and reciting short surahs every morning. This practice helps students internalize religious values through regular activities, promotes discipline, and creates a conducive spiritual environment in the school.

These two approaches illustrate that Islamic Religious Education teachers act not only as instructors but also as moral and spiritual guides, integrating religious values into all aspects of learning. Therefore, exemplary behavior and habituation serve as the main foundation for developing students' religious character.

2. Religious Activities

Religious activities at SDN Inpres Silae are categorized as daily, weekly, monthly, and annual. Each activity strategically instills religious values in students sustainably.

- a. Daily religious activities include congregational *Zuhr* prayer, *tadarrus* of the Qur'an, and short Islamic lectures (*kultum*). The *Zuhr* prayer is performed daily at 12:00 PM in the school prayer room (*musholla*), with students guided to perform ablution and form orderly lines. This activity aims to habituate students in worship, foster discipline, and promote a sense of togetherness.
- b. Weekly activities include *Duha* prayer, *infak* (charitable giving), and collective *dhikr* every Friday. *Duha* prayer is performed at 7:00 AM in the school *musholla* by students from grades 1 to 6, instilling discipline, togetherness, and the habit of performing Sunnah prayers.

Afterward, students participate in *infak* by donating a portion of their allowance, which is then allocated for social activities such as humanitarian aid or assistance to students in need. This habituation nurtures sincerity, social concern, and responsibility toward others.

Weekly activities conclude with collective *dzikir*, led by teachers and performed simultaneously by all students. This fosters spiritual awareness and creates a calm, reverent learning environment.

- c. Every month, the school organizes Islamic Parenting (*Parenting Islami*), involving teachers, students, and parents. Religious scholars (*ustadz*) provide lectures on character education, Islamic parenting, and moral development. Interviews indicate that parents respond positively, as this activity not only provides insights but also creates an effective discussion forum regarding value education at home. Monthly activities play a crucial role in strengthening synergy between school and family in developing students' religious character.
- d. Annual religious activities at SDN Inpres Silae include the Short Islamic Boarding (*Pesantren Kilat*) and the commemoration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday (*Maulid Nabi*). *Pesantren Kilat* is held every Ramadan for two days, comprising worship, religious learning, *tadarrus*, fiqh lectures, stories of prophets, Islamic games, and communal breaking of the fast (*iftar*). Its purpose is to deepen religious understanding, instill discipline, and cultivate a sense of togetherness among students.

Maulid Nabi celebration includes reciting *shalawat*, lectures, collective prayers, and creative competitions such as decorating a "Maulid tree." These activities encourage students to emulate the Prophet Muhammad's character and cultivate love for him in an engaging and enjoyable manner. Both annual activities serve as effective means to instill religious values deeply through direct experiences and contextual learning.

Overall, these activities play a crucial role in supporting the development of students' religious character. Through structured and diverse approaches, students are not only taught religious teachings but also guided to internalize these values in daily life. Consequently, they are expected to grow into individuals who are academically competent, possess good morals, and demonstrate a strong commitment to religious values. This effort represents a long-term investment in cultivating a morally upright and responsible generation.

Activities carried out in schools to develop students' religious character include various routine, programmed, and habituation-based activities. Commonly conducted activities include reciting prayers before and after learning, collectively reading the Qur'an (*tadarus*), and performing congregational Dhuhr prayer at school. These activities aim to habituate students to remember Allah in every activity and to develop a consistent awareness of worship.

In addition to routine activities, there are also programmed activities, such as Islamic holiday celebrations (PHBI), including the Prophet Muhammad's Birthday (Maulid Nabi Muhammad SAW), Isra Mi'raj, and Islamic boarding-school-style activities (*pesantren kilat*) during the month of Ramadan. These activities not only provide religious knowledge but also foster love for Islamic teachings and strengthen students' spiritual values through direct experience in religious activities.

Furthermore, schools implement habituation activities such as greeting with peace, smiling, and saying hello (3S), dressing modestly in accordance with school regulations, and maintaining environmental cleanliness as part of implementing Islamic values in daily life. These habits are practiced continuously so that they become inherent traits in students.

Through these various activities, it is expected that students will not only understand religious teachings theoretically but also practice them in daily life, thereby developing strong religious character, discipline, and noble morals.

4.5 Challenges and Solutions in Developing Students' Religious Character at SDN Inpres Silae

Based on research conducted at SDN Inpres Silae, it was found that in developing students' religious character, Islamic Religious Education teachers face complex challenges. The main obstacle is the limited time allocated to Islamic Religious Education, which is taught for only a few hours per week. This limited time hinders the character-building process from being conducted thoroughly and continuously, resulting in religious values taught at school not being fully internalized by the students.

Religious character is one of the main values in character education, reflecting a person's attitudes and behaviors in obeying their religion's teachings. This character is not only related to the relationship between humans and God, but also includes relationships with other people and the surrounding environment. Individuals with strong religious character will demonstrate traits such as honesty, trustworthiness, tolerance, and a high sense of social concern (Majid & Andayani, 2012). It can also be understood as the internalization of faith values, reflected in one's mindset, attitudes, and daily behavior. The process of character formation does not occur instantly, but through continuous guidance in the family, school, and community environments. Religious education plays an important role in building the foundation of religious character, as it provides both understanding and spiritual experience for students (Muhaimin, 2015).

In the context of school education, religious character is reflected through various indicators such as obedience in worship, honesty, discipline, and mutual respect among individuals. Teachers play an important role in instilling these values through both instructional and non-instructional activities. Consistent habituation helps students internalize religious values, making them part of their personality (Suyadi, 2013).

Furthermore, according to Lickona, religious character is part of moral education that emphasizes universal values such as goodness, honesty, and responsibility. These values align with religious teachings and serve as the foundation for cultivating morally upright individuals. Therefore, strengthening religious character in education is very important for producing a generation that is not only intellectually capable but also morally upright (Lickona, 2013).

In addition, the influence of social environment and peer groups also constitutes a significant hindrance. Students tend to be easily influenced by classmates who display less religious behaviour. This situation often leads to a lack of seriousness in religious learning activities and reduces motivation to act in accordance with religious values. The home and family environment also plays a role in either reinforcing or weakening students' religious character. Values instilled at school are not always complemented by consistent role modelling at home, creating a discontinuity between school education and family-based habituation.

Another influencing factor is the learning atmosphere, which does not fully support the development of religious values. Some students remain unfocused and lack full awareness of the importance of religious education. This indicates that developing religious character requires a process that is not only cognitive but also affective and psychomotor, achieved through repeated habituation and concrete role model.

To address these challenges, Islamic Religious Education teachers, in collaboration with the school, have implemented several strategic steps. One approach is strengthening teacher collaboration by integrating religious values into every subject. This effort ensures that character development is not solely the responsibility of Islamic Religious Education teachers but becomes a shared responsibility of all educators at the school. Consequently, religious values can be integrated into various learning activities and daily school life.

Moreover, the school applies a reward system for students who demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviours. This recognition aims to foster students' intrinsic motivation in practicing religious values. By acknowledging good behaviour, students are encouraged to maintain and further develop the positive character traits they have acquired.

The school also involves parents in developing religious character through educational activities, such as Islamic parenting programs. These activities aim to align the school's and the family's perceptions and actions in instilling religious values in children. With harmonious collaboration among teachers, parents, and the surrounding community, the development of religious character can proceed more effectively and sustainably.

Furthermore, intensive communication between teachers and parents is an important factor in monitoring the development of students' attitudes and behavior. Through effective communication, any problems that arise can be addressed collaboratively and promptly. This enables a more appropriate approach in guiding students in accordance with their individual needs and characteristics.

In addition, the community environment also plays an equally important role in supporting the formation of religious character. A religious and conducive environment reinforces the values taught at school and at home. Conversely, an unsupportive environment may pose challenges that require more intensive supervision and guidance.

Thus, synergy among schools, families, and the community serves as the main foundation in shaping students' religious character. Continuous and consistent collaboration will create an educational ecosystem that is not only oriented toward academic achievement but also toward the formation of noble character, which represents the primary goal of education.

Overall, the research findings indicate that developing students' religious character requires a holistic, integrative, and collaborative approach. Efforts are carried out not only through classroom learning but also through role modelling, habituation, recognition, and active involvement of parents and the community. Through these strategies, it is expected that religious values will be strongly instilled in students and reflected in their daily behaviour.

5. Conclusion

Islamic Religious Education teachers play a central role in developing students' religious character. These efforts are carried out through two main approaches: habituation and role modelling, as well as the implementation of various religious activities within the school environment. Through these approaches, students are guided to internalize behaviours in accordance with religious values and to emulate the attitudes of teachers as role models. The process of developing religious character is not without obstacles and challenges. At SDN Inpres Silae, the challenges include limited time for character development, negative influences from the social environment, and insufficient role modelling from the students' surroundings. To overcome these issues, a synergistic collaboration among teachers, the school, and parents is required. Strong cooperation, coupled with the provision of recognition for students' positive behaviours, becomes a strategic step in creating a conducive environment for the sustainable strengthening of students' religious character.

In addition, the success of students' religious character formation is strongly influenced by the consistency in implementing religious values within the school environment. Habituation programs that are carried out continuously will have a positive impact on the development of students' attitudes and behavior. Therefore, strong commitment from all members of the school community is required to establish religious values as a living culture in daily school life.

Furthermore, the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers is not limited to classroom instruction but also includes guidance outside the classroom through religious activities and social interactions. PAI teachers must be able to serve as inspirational figures and build emotional closeness with students so that religious values can be well received and internalized.

In addition, the importance of periodic evaluation of religious character development programs is also a supporting factor for success. This evaluation aims to determine the effectiveness of the strategies implemented and to identify aspects that need improvement. In this way, efforts to develop religious character can be continuously improved according to students' needs.

Finally, the formation of religious character is a long-term process that requires patience, perseverance, and continuity. The results cannot be achieved instantly but through continuous and sustained guidance. With good cooperation between schools, families, and the community, it is expected that students will grow into individuals who are faithful, pious, and possess noble character.

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