Exploration of Character Values in the Islamic Religious Education Curriculum (An Educational Perspective)

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Abstract
This study aims to explore the character values contained in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum and their role in student character building. Using a qualitative approach with a case study method, the research was conducted in several secondary schools in Indonesia. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with PAI teachers, students, and Islamic religious education experts, as well as classroom observations and curriculum documentation studies. The results showed that the PAI curriculum has integrated various character values, such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, empathy, and tolerance in the teaching materials. However, the implementation of this curriculum still faces challenges, including time constraints, lack of training for teachers in teaching character, and the negative influence of technology and social media on students. As a solution, this study suggests increased teacher training, integration of character values in all subjects, and positive use of technology in learning. This research provides important insights for the development of PAI curriculum as an effective tool in shaping students' character in the modern era.
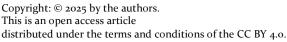
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1.   Introduction

Islamic religious education in Indonesia has a vital role in shaping the character of the nation, because Islam as the majority religion in Indonesia makes a major contribution in shaping the morality and behavior of society. As an integral part of the national education system, the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum focuses not only on teaching religious teachings, but also on shaping the character of students with noble character, in accordance with the values contained in the Qur'an and Hadith. In this era of globalization, Islamic religious education is expected to be able to face various challenges that arise, including the influence of foreign cultures that can erode local and religious values. Therefore, the exploration of character values in the Islamic education curriculum becomes important to study, given that the formation of strong character will be the foundation for the next generation of the nation that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also virtuous and has high integrity.

Character education is an effort to instil and develop moral values in a person so that behavior is formed in accordance with the prevailing norms in society. Character education is not new in the world of Islamic education. Since the beginning, Islam has taught the importance of morality and good ethics through various teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith. As mentioned by the Qur'an in surah Al-Ahzab verse 21 which reads, "*Verily there is in the Messenger of Allah a good example for you, for those who expect (the mercy of) Allah and (the coming of) the Day of Judgment and he mentions Allah a lot*." This

shows that character education has become an integral part of Islamic teachings, which emphasizes the importance of having noble morals as a basis for living everyday life.

Character education in the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) aims to instill moral values contained in Islamic teachings, such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, hard work, as well as empathy and tolerance towards others (Arif et al., 2025). According to Nawawi (2016); Suryadi et al. (2024), the PAI curriculum should be able to accommodate various character values contained in Islamic teachings and be able to integrate them in students' daily lives. Thus, students not only acquire knowledge about religion, but also understand and apply these values in their lives.

In the context of Indonesia's national education curriculum, the development of character values is also in line with the objectives of national education stated in the National Education System Law (UUSPN) No. 20 of 2003, which states that education aims to develop the potential of students to become human beings who are faithful and devoted to God Almighty, have noble character, and have intelligence. Therefore, the PAI curriculum must be well designed in order to build character in accordance with these educational objectives, and is not only limited to teaching religion, but also includes aspects of character building rooted in Islamic values and Indonesian culture.

The PAI curriculum has an important role in creating a generation that is not only intelligent, but also has good morals and ethics (Arifin, 2014). According to Mulyasa (2004); Yaqin & Sumedi (2023), the curriculum is a tool or vehicle used to achieve educational goals. Therefore, the PAI curriculum should be a vehicle for effectively instilling and developing students' character values. In the PAI curriculum, character values should be made an integral part of every material taught, whether in learning the Qur'an, Hadith, morals, fiqh, or Islamic history.

However, the implementation of character values in the PAI curriculum often faces challenges. One of the main challenges is the gap between theory and practice. Many PAI teachers focus more on the cognitive aspect or religious knowledge, while the character-building aspect tends to be neglected. This is in line with Suyadi (2019) opinion that religious education in Indonesia still often ignores the affective and psychomotor dimensions of learning. In fact, this aspect is very important to form student character that can be applied in everyday life. Therefore, to create effective learning in shaping character, the PAI curriculum must include a holistic approach, which not only focuses on understanding religious texts, but also on character building through real behavior and actions.

On the other hand, the PAI curriculum must also adapt to the times. Rapid social and technological changes can affect students' mindset and behavior. Therefore, character building based on Islamic values needs to be continuously updated to be relevant to the challenges of the times. Cherniss et al. (2006) in his book on emotional intelligence states that the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own and others' emotions is essential in social life. In this context, the PAI curriculum should be able to develop students' emotional intelligence, so that they are able to manage their emotions and interact well in social life.

Although the PAI curriculum has great potential in shaping students' character, its implementation in the field often encounters various challenges. One of the main challenges is the teachers' lack of understanding and skills in integrating character values into the learning process. Many PAI teachers prioritize the transfer of religious knowledge, while character building does not get enough attention. According to Muslimin (2023), many teachers do not understand well how to effectively implement character education in the PAI curriculum.

In addition, there are different views on how religious and character education should be implemented. Some think that religious education should focus more on religious teachings alone, while others consider character education as a separate part of religious teaching. In fact, good Islamic religious education should cover all aspects of life, including character building. Therefore,

collaboration between the PAI curriculum and character education becomes very important so that both can run synergistically and support each other.

This study aims to explore the character values contained in the Islamic Religious Education curriculum and how the curriculum can play a role in student character building. This study will also identify the challenges faced in the implementation of the Islamic Education curriculum in character building and provide recommendations to improve and optimize the implementation of the Islamic Education curriculum to be more effective in shaping character.

2. Methods

In this study, data were obtained through a literature study method that involved collecting and analyzing various sources of literature relevant to the topic of character values in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum. The data processing was done systematically with the following steps: The first step in data collection was to identify various relevant literature sources. These sources include textbooks, journal articles, research reports, policy documents, as well as other sources that discuss the PAI curriculum and character development in Islamic education. This process was done by searching for references in various academic databases, libraries, scientific journals, and sites that provide educational materials such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, or university libraries. After identifying various literature sources, the researcher made a selection to ensure that the literature used was of good quality and high relevance to the research topic.

The selected literature sources should be able to provide accurate information about the character values contained in the PAI curriculum, both in theory and in practice. Only literature from accredited journals, books published by reputable publishers, or official policy documents from the government will be considered. After the selection process, the researcher collected data from the selected literature by reading and recording information related to the topic. This data collection process involves recording important ideas, quotes, and information relevant to character values in the PAI curriculum, challenges in its implementation, and strategies used to overcome these obstacles. The data collected will help explore how values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, and empathy are taught through the PAI curriculum.

Content analysis was an important step in this study, which was conducted to identify key themes related to the implementation of character values in the PAI curriculum. This process involves categorizing information found in the literature, such as character values taught in PAI and how these values can shape students' character. The researcher will use a qualitative approach by analyzing the deep meaning of the texts obtained to find the relationship between character values and the PAI curriculum. After analyzing, the researcher will compare the findings from various literature sources. This comparison process aims to find similarities and differences in the way character values are applied in the PAI curriculum according to various sources.

This synthesis of findings will then be used to build a more comprehensive conclusion on how PAI curriculum can play a role in student character building. To ensure the validity of the data collected, researchers used the principle of source triangulation (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). This triangulation is done by comparing the results of analysis from different literatures and literature sources. It aims to verify the truth of the information and avoid bias that may arise due to dependence on one source only. If there are conflicting findings or differences of opinion in the literature, the researcher will seek further explanation to ensure that the results of the analysis remain objective and valid.

3. Results and Discussion

This study aims to explore the character values contained in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum as well as its application in student character building. Through a qualitative approach with a literature study, the researcher managed to identify various themes and patterns related to character values in the Islamic Education curriculum. In this discussion, the results of the analysis of the existing literature will be presented to illustrate how the PAI curriculum plays a role in shaping students' character and the challenges faced in its implementation.

In this literature study, there are a number of character values that are consistently found in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum. These values do not only focus on the spiritual or religious aspects, but also lead to the formation of students' morals and ethics. Some of the character values found are honesty, responsibility, discipline, empathy, and respect. According to Goleman (2006), emotional characters such as honesty and responsibility are closely related to emotional intelligence that can form a good personality. In the context of the Islamic Education curriculum, the value of honesty is taught through learning about commands and prohibitions in religion, where students are taught to be honest in both speech and action. Islamic Religious Education plays a role in instilling these values early on, with exemplary examples from the life of the Prophet Muhammad SAW being the basis of teachings in the PAI curriculum. The value of responsibility is also highly emphasized in the PAI curriculum (Nasution, 2013). This can be seen from the emphasis in religious education on the obligation of Muslims to carry out religious orders such as prayer, fasting, and zakat, all of which reflect the responsibility of individuals towards themselves and society. According to Mulyasa (2017), strengthening the value of responsibility in PAI aims to create individuals who not only care about themselves, but also about the welfare of society.

Discipline, as another character value, is taught through the introduction of time in the implementation of worship and structured daily activities. PAI teaches discipline in performing worship at the right time, such as in the implementation of the five daily prayers that must be done on time. This is in line with Suyadi's (2019) opinion, which emphasizes that discipline in the practice of worship is one of the effective ways to form good character. In addition, the value of empathy and respect is also taught in the PAI curriculum (Suyanto, 2020). This value is reflected in Islamic teachings about the importance of mutual respect among fellow human beings, including towards parents, teachers, and others. This character education is important so that students can develop into individuals who are not only focused on personal interests, but also care about the surrounding environment (Muhammad, 2018).

The PAI curriculum has a very important role in the formation of student character, both in the context of theory and practice. As Suyanto (2020) explains, a well-structured curriculum can provide space for student character development. PAI not only teaches religious knowledge, but also becomes a vehicle for character building through the practice of worship, manners, and social interactions built in the classroom. The emphasis on the practical aspect in the PAI curriculum is very important because character education in Islam is not only theoretical, but also requires real implementation in daily life. For example, through activities such as congregational prayer, Ramadan fasting, or other social activities, students can learn directly to internalize character values such as discipline, empathy, and responsibility.

Furthermore, the PAI curriculum also focuses on strengthening morals or character. In this case, the curriculum not only teaches students about religious teachings, but also how to interact with others, how to behave in society, and how to place themselves in social life. Thus, PAI not only plays a role in the formation of students' spiritual relationship with God, but also in the formation of harmonious

social relationships with others. Although the PAI curriculum has been designed to support character building, in its implementation there are several challenges faced by educators and students. One of the main challenges is the lack of in-depth understanding of how to integrate character values in teaching and learning activities that take place in the classroom. This is in line with the findings of Arifin (2014), who stated that often the character education curriculum in Islamic religion is applied only as a ritual activity without any reinforcement in students' daily lives.

4. Conclusion

This study aims to explore the character values contained in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum as well as its application in student character building. Based on the results of the literature analysis, it can be concluded that there are several important things related to the role and challenges of the Islamic Education curriculum in students' character building.

The Islamic Religious Education curriculum integrates various character values that are important for the formation of students' personalities, including honesty, responsibility, discipline, empathy, and respect. These values are taught through theory and practice in religious learning, and implemented in students' daily lives through worship and social activities. This character education is very relevant to the purpose of PAI to form individuals who are not only spiritually intelligent, but also have good morals.

The PAI curriculum has a very significant role in student character building. Not only through theoretical learning, but also through worship practices and social activities that familiarize students to carry out character values in their lives. PAI plays a role in teaching students to be responsible, disciplined, empathetic, and highly moral individuals. Therefore, this curriculum is an important instrument in shaping the character of the younger generation.

Although PAI curriculum has great potential in shaping students' character, there are several challenges that must be faced in its implementation. Among these are the limited lesson time allocated for PAI, teachers' lack of understanding in integrating character values practically, and the lack of support from parents and the community in character education. These challenges hinder the optimization of students' character building expected through the PAI curriculum.

To overcome these challenges, this study suggests several strategies, including increasing training for PAI teachers, increasing the time allocated for PAI lessons, and strengthening cooperation between schools, parents, and communities. This is very important to create an environment that supports the implementation of character values in students' lives, both inside and outside the classroom.

5. References

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