

THE FUNCTION OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN RENEWING CHARACTER BUILDING

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore how Islamic religious education influences the formation of individual character with high moral values. Furthermore, character education also aims to enhance the quality of educational outcomes by paying specific attention to develop personalities in line with the education graduate competency standards. Additionally, the goal of character education is to refine ethical intelligence and strengthen moral aspects by cultivating a better understanding of right and wrong things. In conducting this study, the methodology employed was systematic literature review involving gathering information from various literary sources related to the discussed topic. Statistical data utilized in this research was derived from books, research journals, and supporting articles. The research findings indicated that the role of Islamic religious education in enhancing character involved regulating and supervising the younger generation by instilling religious values, faith, piety, knowledge, and good conduct in order to ensure that despite the currents of globalization, the younger generation remains capable of upholding Islamic traditions and applying the positive values derived from the religion.

Keywords: Character Building; Character Education; Education Function; Islamic Religious Education

INTRODUCTION

Today, it is very rare to see a child passing in front of an older person saying the word "sorry", which is one of the signs that the child has good manners. Also, we often see students' behavior when meeting a teacher. They only shake teacher's hands and put them on their cheek or on their forehead without kissing them. Seeing this phenomenon, we need to discuss a little bit about character education.

Character education, literally, means changing or shaping one's nature, behavior, and personality according to certain standards. Essentially, character education is an effort to develop children's souls, both in terms of physical and mental, from their nature towards a better human civilization. Besides that, character education roots and instills good habits in life so that students have an understanding, explanation, as well as a sense of care, empathy, and commitment to implement wise habits in their daily routines.

Therefore, the purpose of character education is to improve the quality of educational processes and outcomes that focus on the formation of good character and morals, as well as developing moral intelligence in a comprehensive and balanced manner in accordance with the quality standards for educational graduates (Arifin, 2017; Perdana & Adha, 2020). It also aims to develop moral intelligence or build moral intelligence in children by strengthening their ability to understand the difference between right and wrong things so that they have solid ethical beliefs and act in

accordance with these beliefs, making them honest individuals who respect moral values.

Character education connects the understanding, appreciation, and attitude towards values that are considered noble, which are reflected in good behavior towards God, humans, and nature. To achieve this condition, character education requires support from moral education, value education (manners, character, and morals), religious education, and civic education. Then, the role of Islamic religious education in generating character education is related to the understanding, appreciation, and application of Islamic values in good and noble behavior (Efendi & Ningsih, 2022; Sumatri & Alwizar, 2021; Yusuf, 2021a).

Currently, character education in Indonesia becomes a concern due to the increase in acts of lawlessness such as drug abuse, corruption, brawls between students, social conflicts, and violence, including other acts of violence. There are ten signs of the times that must be watched out for that becomes signs towards the destruction of a nation. The signs include: many violences among teenagers, deterioration of language, strong peer group influence in acts of violence, self-destructive behavior such as drug and alcohol use, blurred moral guidelines, degeneration of work ethic, low respect for parents and teachers, lack of individual and civic responsibility, the spread of dishonesty, and the rise of suspicion and hatred among all people. These signs exist in Indonesia and pose a threat to the sustainability of the nation (Luthfi, 2018; Muslich, 2022a; Yusuf, 2021b).

The impacts of the signs include a change from a comfortable life to an uncomfortable one, loss of peace, anxiety, fear and worry about the future of the nation. In addition, there is also an "intellectual block" which includes feelings of hopelessness, inner conflict, lack of courage to change life, and risk aversion. The causes include poor self-image, traumatic experiences, unfavorable environment, bad references, laziness, fear, hopelessness, passivity, lack of confidence, and a tendency to be prejudiced against others.

Efforts to overcome the character education crisis involve the important roles of schools, households, and communities. One of the efforts made is to rely on the role of religion as a healer of the soul which creates noble morals, guides humans towards a straight life, unites human hearts to live in brotherhood, and increases human dignity (Julaeha, 2019; Luthfi, 2018).

Therefore, the role of parents, educators, and the education system is crucial in providing Islamic religious education which allows students to acquire a character that deals with Islamic teachings. Parents need to provide full support and attention to children so that they can grow and develop positively, becoming individuals who are beneficial to religion, state, and nation (Agustina, 2020; Rufaedah, 2020; Said, 2018).

In character education, the role of Islamic religious education involves developing children's moral abilities or what is commonly referred to as "*building moral intelligence*". The way to build good character in children is to develop moral intelligence which is the ability to understand the difference between right and wrong things. This involves

strong ethical beliefs and acting in accordance with those beliefs, so that one becomes an honest person who respects moral values (Rahman et al., 2020; Rufaedah, 2020).

Moreover, the role of Islamic religious education in shaping the character of the nation involves a high commitment to science, becoming a driver of the progress of a nation. Islamic religious education acts to form individuals who are not only skilled in science and technology, but also have spiritual depth for the welfare of the people. The role of Islamic religious education in reviving character education aims to create individuals with noble morals, thought, appreciation, and action, in line with moral values, morals, ethics, and other religious teachings. This will benefit the individual himself, the community, the state, and the nation.

The research gap lies on the focus of the study. This study focuses more on the role of Islamic religious education in reviving character education in which the transformation starts from the family, school, and community environments by increasing participation and massmedia.

RESEARCH METHODS

Using a qualitative approach, this study was conducted at SMPIT Quantum, Bandung. The main informants in this study were the principal and Islamic religious education teachers at SMPIT Quantum, Bandung. Data collection was done through interviews, participant observation, and documentation. In addition, the statistical data used came from documentation such as books, research journals, and articles that support.

The method of analysis used was descriptive-analytical method in which data were presented critically through various primary and secondary literature sources. This study highlights the role of Islamic religious education in dealing with the crisis of character education, including a description of the role of the school subject, the causes of the crisis of character education, and the efforts to revitalize character education through the Islamic religious education (Ibrahim et al., 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

The definition of Islam linguistically comes from the Arabic root "aslama" which means surrender, obedience, and submission to Allah. The word "aslama" itself is derived from the word "salima" which means safety, peace, and prosperity. In the context of language, Islam implies surrendering and submitting to Allah to achieve salvation (Mulyadi, 2021). This meaning illustrates the mission of Islam to invite humanity to live in peace, security, and safety both in this world and in the hereafter by obeying and submitting to Allah.

Most of the damage to the mentality and thinking of the younger Muslim generation around the world is caused by the influence of the thinking of missionary, orientalist and imperialist groups who are often opposite with Islam. They come to Islamic countries with their own missions in which they overtly or covertly bring their

teachings to corrupt, manipulate and ultimately destroy Islam. Although families, schools, and communities have tried to address these issues, optimal results have not been fully achieved (Mas'ud, 2021).

In the findings from interviews with Mr. Toriq, S. Hum. as the principal at SMPIT Quantum, it appears that the Quantum Islamic Education Foundation, especially SMPIT Quantum, has the aim and intention of forming Muslims generation who have good knowledge and morals in religious, national, and state aspects. They provide junior high education based on sharia principles and strive to prepare students to have a balanced character in terms of intellectual, spiritual, and moral in the millennial era.

The school implements the role of Islamic education in forming student character. Some examples are implementing good manners, giving greetings, and smiling to the teachers, principals and school staff. In addition, It enforces a neat dress code, discipline, and carries out routine recitation activities before lessons begin, as well as holding dhuha prayers and dzuhur prayers in congregation for students to form a disciplined, religious, moral and responsible personality.

Discussion

In revitalizing character education through the role of Islamic religious education, there is a demand to direct and supervise the younger generation by instilling religious values, the strength of faith, piety, science, and *akhlakul karimah* (moral character), without being trapped in the flow of globalization and being able to maintain Islamic traditions and good values. Religious education is required to develop faith, morals, conscience, character, and aspects of intelligence and skills in order to create balance. Thus, religious education is expected to be able to make a comprehensive contribution to the development of Indonesian human beings in accordance with the formulation of national education goals (Baehaqi, 2022; Mas'ud, 2021; Nur & Sunaryo, 2023).

Islamic education, or what is often referred to as moral education cannot be separated with religious education because morals have a strong basis in faith. The Prophet emphasized the importance of morals by stating that "he was sent to improve morals, and that the perfect believer is the one who has the best morals". We know that religious education aims to accommodate the spiritual, psychological, and social functions of religion. It emphasizes the formation of high morals and ethical education which is the soul of Islamic education, dealing with verses of the Qur'an and hadith.

In the context of learner development, religious education plays a vital role. However, at present, character education has become very important due to moral degradation, the lack of students' involvement in learning activities, especially in religious education as well as the emergence of various problems such as drugs (Nur & Sunaryo, 2023; Suwardani, 2020).

Therefore, the revitalization of religious education is crucial to maintain its role. The main purpose of religious education is to create learners who are responsible for carrying out their religious obligations and have a positive attitude and love for religion. This will form individuals who live in accordance with religious values, have good morals, and act based on religious guidance (Ahsanulkhaq, 2019; Nurfalah, 2018).

Factors Causing Character Education Crisis

Character education in Indonesia is currently experiencing a multidimensional crisis caused by several factors:

Firstly, there is a gap in education between knowledge and the development of attitudes or values, and behavior. Secondly, the Indonesian education system is more focused on developing academic potential. Thirdly, the role of parents tends to prioritize the achievement of high grades in science, technology, and foreign languages for their children, while good behavior such as obedience, manners, and religious activities are often not valued as indicators of educational success. Fourthly, although education is based on the 1945 Constitution and Pancasila, it is more influenced by capitalist and liberalist economic ideologies in practice. Fifthly, the implementation of religious education tends to be ritualistic and dogmatic. Religious learning focuses more on laws, rules, prohibitions, and less on learning about ethics and character (Muslich, 2022b).

Education in Indonesia now focuses more on intellectual intelligence, neglecting other intelligences such as writing, speaking, expression of ideas, logical analysis, communication, and others. This causes education that emphasizes the achievement of high grades without regarding to morality, producing individuals who only care about material issues and are dishonest. Education should not only produce individuals who are smart and intellectually savvy, but also have ethical values and good character. The government is trying to promote a mental revolution by strengthening character education through religious values, local values, and community culture. These are excellent efforts to create people of character, or *insan kamil*.

Functions of Character Education

The definition of character in language includes the aspects of innate, heart, soul, personality, character, behavior, personality, nature, disposition, and character. Character is formed from childhood's habits to adolescence and it often persists to adulthood. The role of parents influences the formation of children's habits, both positive and negative (Lestari et al., 2020; Sahroni, 2017).

Character education refers to the process of giving direction to learners to become human beings who have good character in terms of heart, mind, body, and soul. It includes values, ethics, morality, and the development of ethical decisions and their application in everyday life with full awareness. Islam emphasizes the importance of soul development as a top priority because a good soul will come good deeds in which it will create goodness and happiness in human life, both physically and mentally (Abidin & Aulia, 2019; Fitriani, 2021).

There are several key components in forming good character. These components are moral knowledge, moral feelings, and moral action. These are needed for learners so that they can understand, feel, and apply good values in their actions. Character education is rooted in nine pillars of basic values, such as love of God, responsibility, discipline, honesty, respect, compassion, cooperation, self-confidence, creativity, justice, kindness, tolerance, peace-loving, and unity. These form the basis of character education to shape responsible, ethical and noble individuals.

Revitalization of character education can be strengthened through various strategies. These strategies are as follows:

a. Implementing holistic and character-based education

In an effort to build the human dimension comprehensively, a learning approach is used to ensure the learning experience which is not only fun but also inspiring and positive for learners. With this approach, educators can master both theoretically and practically regarding education that is not boring, supports brain development, emotional intelligence, efficient communication, clear application of the nine pillars of character (knowledge, appreciation, and implementation), diverse intelligence, cooperation in learning, contextualized learning, focus on problem solving, effective classroom management, active student participation, use of whole language, application of personality-focused learning materials, application of character in the classroom, narration as a method, creativity, and other things. This personality-based holistic learning approach does not only provide comfort to students but also creates a safe learning environment and stimulates students' willingness to learn (Mulyasa, 2022).

b. Reviving character education, focusing on ethics, values, religion, and citizenship

In reviving character education, the focus on ethics, values, religion, and citizenship is crucial. The role of Islamic religious education is to form all human potential, including physical, intellectual, mental, and spiritual, based on moral principles derived from revelation, reason, and conscience (Riantika, 2022). Therefore, character education must take the dimensions of religion, ethics, morals, and citizenship seriously, in this case:

1. The focus on character education aims to cultivate an individuals' inner-awareness, enable them to make decisions with responsibility, and shape their good character by strengthening their moral intelligence to act based on their beliefs.
2. Building value education involves understanding, appreciating, and practicing noble values such as honesty, justice, compassion, and tolerance in daily life. These values are not only learned in the classroom but also practiced in this life. Many of them are sourced from religious teachings, culture, traditions, and customs that develop in society.
3. A strong foundation in Islamic religious education is essential, enabling a deep understanding of the God-given values in the Qur'an. Through teaching and discussion based on deep understanding, learners can live, practice, and solve problems related to moral teachings in the religion.
4. Civic education is closely related to the values of Pancasila that are instilled in the younger generation. It aims to create citizens who love their homeland, respect differences, and coexist harmoniously among fellow citizens.

c. Revitalizing or restoring family, school, and community education

In this era, the character of our nation is in an alarming and confusing state. Although there have been efforts made by the family, especially the role of parents, schools, and society in providing character education, this situation is experiencing a crisis where its effectiveness is doubtful. Therefore, the importance of the role of Islamic

education in reviving character education is very real (Pebriyanti & Badilla, 2023; Sinaga et al., 2021).

Firstly, the role of Islamic religious education in upholding character education in the family is by developing and implementing the concept of "*the energy of family*", where the family becomes the main foundation in character education. This means understanding the role of parents as educators, forming a peaceful, loving family, and getting used to religious practices such as congregational prayer, reading the Qur'an, and other positive behaviors in everyday life.

Secondly, refreshing the role of schools in character education can be done by formulating and modeling school culture values such as honesty, discipline, cooperation, and religious values. One way is to ensure the availability of prayer facilities and other religious equipment to help realize these values.

Thirdly, revitalizing the role of the community in character education can be realized by creating an environment that is free from gambling, drug trafficking, and other negative activities. This can be done through cooperation between the community and the security forces and building a religious, civilized, and moral environment by establishing places of worship, holding religious activities, formal and non-formal education, and other activities that support the development of talents and skills, with support from the government, donation party, and local businesses.

d. Revitalizing the function of mass media

Revitalization in the function of mass media involves its important role as a source of entertainment, information, and education. However, the dominance of entertainment and information in the media often exceeds too far from its educational role. The abundance of entertainment programs, especially in television broadcasts, tends to push society towards an attitude to be luxurious and pragmatic. Soap operas, as one example, display luxury, social standing, and conflicts that are solved with inappropriate verbal conflicts, showing condescension and mockery of each other.

To deal with this condition, revitalizing mass media requires several steps. These steps include eliminating film or soap opera programs that have the potential to damage character, increasing more positive and meaningful content, and having close collaboration with the education sector to optimize the role of mass media which has a major influence on the students' character (Redi, 2019; Redi Panuju, n.d.).

CONCLUSION

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that the role of Islamic religious education in building character education is to form individuals who have noble morals, including thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors that are in accordance with moral, ethical, and religious values. Its goal is to create good learners, beneficial to themselves, society, state, and nation. Moreover, it must be able to implement holistic education based on character. Revitalizing character education starts from changes in the scope of education at home, school, and society, with the aim of strengthening the role and function of mass media. These places have an important role in educating, fostering, and guiding

the nation's character and it is crucial to revive character education, focusing on ethics, values, religion and citizenship. Therefore, moral education functions to fence off a person from bad deeds which are far from norms that exist in education, society, nation and state. It does not only convey Islamic religious knowledge but also foster students' behavior based on Islamic religious values.

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