



## The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Shaping Student Character in the Digital Era of Class VIII at SMP Islam Plus Sabilunnajah

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### ABSTRACT

The rapid development of digital technology influences students' thinking patterns and behavior, so that the role of teachers (PAI) plays a very important role in shaping students' character, especially in terms of morals and morality. They function as educators, mentors, innovators and motivators for students. This research focuses on examining the role of PAI teachers in shaping student behavior in digital developments in class VIII of SMP Islam Plus Sabilunnajah, where there are several declines in student character, especially in the digital era. This research was conducted using a qualitative case study method and data collection was carried out by means of documentation, interviews and observation. The results of the research show that Islamic Religious Education teachers at Islam Plus Sabilunnajah Middle School have an important role in internalizing the principles of Islamic teachings to students through personal example, technology-based learning, as well as strengthening the principles of Islamic teachings in daily activities. Therefore PAI teachers not only have a role as religious teachers, but also as guides in shaping students' behavior amidst digital developments.

**Keywords:** *Shaping Student Character, Digital Era, Religious Education Teachers*

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## INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, technological developments have had a significant impact on various aspects of life (Laura et al. 2024), including the world of education. The use of digital technology in learning has provided various conveniences for students and teachers (Sadriani, Ahmad, and Arifin 2023). However, on the other hand, technology also brings new challenges, especially in shaping student character. The role of teachers, especially Islamic Religious Education teachers, is becoming increasingly important in integrating religious values with digital-based learning (Prof and Zuhri 2023). This challenge is increasingly complex because students are in a critical developmental period, such as at junior high school level, which is very vulnerable to external influences.

Character education is a fundamental aspect of education which aims to form individuals with attitudes, behavior and values according to social and religious norms. Character education cannot be separated from religious teachings, especially Islam, which emphasizes the importance of noble morals, politeness, discipline and responsibility (Ramadhan and Setiawan 2022). In this case, Islamic Religious Education

(PAI) teachers play an important role in internalizing the principles of Islamic teachings in students, especially in adolescence which is a transition period towards maturity and the formation of an identity that is vulnerable to environmental influences.

In the midst of digital developments, developments in digital technology provide big challenges for character education. Students who are exposed to advanced technology, such as social media and other digital platforms, are often influenced by content that is contrary to moral and religious principles (Aprilistya, Azhari, and Pramesti 2023). Very easy access to information, both useful and not in accordance with social norms, influences students' thinking patterns, behavior and behavior (Maritsa et al. 2021). However, technological developments also offer great opportunities for PAI teachers to integrate religious teachings in learning in a more innovative way, such as utilizing digital media in the form of Islamic educational videos, online learning platforms, and digital Al-Qur'an applications, to enrich the learning process (Rohmatun, Nasor, and Sari 2022). Thus, technology is not only a challenge, but can also be an effective tool for strengthening the formation of student behavior, as long as it is used wisely and in a controlled manner (Manora, Khasanah, and Putri 2024).

According to research, the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers has a significant impact on the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in shaping student character in the digital era. For example, at Islam Plus Sabilunnajah Middle School, class VIII Along with the negative impacts of the growth of digital technology, the problems faced by Islamic Religious Education teachers in shaping the character of their students are becoming increasingly complicated. This technology can affect students' morals and ethics, especially in terms of disrespectful speech towards older people and behavior that does not reflect morals. However, in technological advances, students are also exposed to various information that is not always in accordance with religious and moral values. Social media, digital-based applications and the internet are often the main sources of information for students, but they are also channels for spreading values that are not in accordance with Islamic teachings. To improve good student character/behavior in the current digital era, SMP Islam Plus Sabilun Najah must research efficient PAI learning techniques in the digital era.

The sample that the researchers took was the role of teachers at the Islam Plus Sabilun Najah Middle School, especially PAI teachers who had taught for at least 2 years.

Islamic Religious Education Teachers have a strategic role to instill Islamic character values in students through an approach that is relevant to the conditions of the digital era. In this context, a digital-based learning approach combined with Islamic character education is both a challenge and an opportunity for teachers to have a positive impact on student character formation.

As explained in the Qur'anic verse (Izzati, ZamZam, and Prabowo 2023) QS At-Taubah: 122 as follows:

Just as We sent among you a messenger from among you, who recites to you Our signs and purifies you, and teaches you the Book and the wisdom, and teaches you what  
You will know it

It means: "Just as (We have perfected the favor to you), We also sent you a Messenger (Prophet Muhammad) from (among) you who recited to you Our verses, purified you, and taught you the Book (Al-Qur'an) and wisdom (Sunnah), and taught you what you did not yet know."

Through the Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in the digital era at SMP Islam Plus Sabilunnajah, Researchers Hope that Teachers Can Become Figures as Educators, Mentors, Leaders and innovators (Nuli 2023) Morning students, especially in class VIII, who integrate technological advances. The aim of this research is to determine the role of Islamic religious education teachers in shaping Shiva's character in the digital era, such as behaving well, being polite to older people, being trustworthy, telling the truth, and being an example for others (Ahsanulhaq 2019)

Previous research shows that the role of teachers is very important in shaping student character. According to Hidayat and Rahmat (2020), the formation of student character does not only depend on the material taught, but also on the methods and approaches used by the teacher. In the context of Islamic education, values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility and good manners are the main foundation in forming students' character (Arifin, 2018). In addition, research by Suryani (2019) emphasizes the importance of integrating technology in learning Islamic religious education. Technology allows the delivery of material to be more interesting and relevant to students' lives. However, without proper supervision, the use of technology can be counterproductive. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education Teachers must have the competence to utilize technology effectively and educate students to use it in accordance with religious values.

Various studies have discussed the role of teachers in forming students' character, such as research by Rahmawati (2021), which revealed that Islamic religious education teachers have a major contribution in instilling moral values through a personal approach and supervision. However, there is a uniqueness in that most research has not specifically discussed the role of Islamic religious education teachers in the context of the digital era, especially in the SMP Islam Plus Sabilun Najah school environment which is located in the Rejo Asri Seputih Raman village, Central Lampung. Therefore, this research is important to carry out to face the digital era in forming student character today. Apart from that, studies on how Islamic religious education teachers can integrate religious values with learning technology at the junior high school level are still very limited.

## **METHODS**

This research uses qualitative field methods, which means researchers must go to the field to see phenomena in a natural environment (Moleong, 2016, 2018). This research aims to investigate the problems that occur at SMP Islam Plus Sabilun Najah. Parents, PAI teachers, and students are research subjects (Nashihin & Saifuddin, 2017). Researchers then used interviews, observation, and documentation as data collection techniques (D. Sugiyono, 2013; H. Sugiyono, 2016; S. Sugiyono, 2012). To ensure the validity of the data, they use technical triangulation and source triangulation, namely by examining data from various sources and asking the same questions using several techniques, such as interviews, observation, and documentation (Anggito, A., & Setiawan, 2018). And the data analysis technique uses data reduction, data display and verification, namely by requiring compaction, identification of main components, and emphasis on important parts, while looking for themes and patterns and eliminating irrelevant information, then presenting the data can be done with brief explanations, charts, relationships between categories, flow diagrams and other techniques then drawing conclusions and validating the facts in an effort to answer the problem formulation.

## DISCUSSION AND DISCUSSION

### Role of Teacher Pai

Islamic Religious Education Teachers are responsible for developing students' character, personality, faith and piety. Together with the school principal and other teachers, they create a school environment that supports the growth of faith and piety through planned and regular programs (Arimbi Pamungkas1 2022) The role of an Islamic Religious Education teacher covers various aspects, including as a teacher, guide, leader in school and class, person liked by students, inspirer, motivator, class manager, supervisor, and evaluator (Khasanah, Setiawan, and Wijaya 2024)

The dominance of the teacher's role and duties is very influential in its development.

As we already know, the role and duties of teachers include, educating, teaching, guiding, directing, and developing the potential that exists in students through learning strategies that exist in a school institutions. Strategy for developing students' emotional intelligence means aims to increase awareness and knowledge in developing ability of emotional values in students. Someone who doesn't have emotional intelligence, such as having uncontrolled emotions gives rise to brutal behavior that leads to criminal acts, while the low emotional behavior gives rise to lazy behavior, weak thinking, weak eyesight and so on. So, in the teaching and learning process strategies are really needed appropriate to the needs of students (Khasanah, Setiawan, and Wijaya 2024)

### Character formation in the digital era

Character education is the process of instilling moral principles in students which includes knowledge, awareness, or will, as well as actions to practice these principles (Rustyawati and Anam 2024) There is another opinion: Character education is a fundamental aspect in individual formation which not only aims to create intellectual intelligence, but also to form good morals. In the perspective of Islamic education, character education is rooted in the values of the Koran and Hadith, known as the concept of akhlakul karimah. This concept includes the values of integrity, fortitude, obligation, empathy and mutual respect (Rohaenni 2024). The main aim of character education is to form a person who is knowledgeable, faithful and devout and able to apply Islamic teachings in daily activities (Rohaenni 2024).

Character education in Islam is not limited to formal institutions such as schools, but also takes place in the family environment. In the family, character education is instilled through parental example. Parents who adopt an honest, disciplined and caring attitude towards others will become role models for their children (Munawaroh 2019). Islam emphasizes the crucial role of parents in the process of forming a child's character, as the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad said:

There is no child who is not born according to nature. that every child is born pure, and parents determine whether a person is good or bad (Munawaroh 2019). Therefore, character education must start from an early age by getting used to Islamic values, such as reading daily prayers, performing prayers on time, and respecting elders.

At school, Islamic-based character education is integrated into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) lessons as well as various religious activities. Teachers not only have the task of teaching material, but also being role models for students (Adib 2024). Moral learning in Islam emphasizes stories about the example of the Prophet

Muhammad SAW and his companions as concrete examples of implementing noble character in life. Apart from that, the practice of worship in schools, such as congregational prayers, reading the Koran, and other religious activities, is an effective means of internalize the principles of Islamic teachings (Adib 2024).

Character education in Islam has broad implications. Individuals who have strong character are better prepared to face life's challenges with patience and steadfast faith. On a larger scale there are 18 of them religious, honest, tolerant, disciplined, hardworking, creative, independent, democratic, curious, loves the country, appreciates achievements, friendly and communicative, loves peace, likes reading, cares about the environment, and cares about the community, So the implementation of optimal character education can contribute to building a moral and ethical society, thereby reducing various social problems such as corruption, crime and injustice. (Sugiyanto and Ramadhani 2024). Therefore, character education is not only a theoretical concept, but must be realized in the practice of daily life through the active involvement of families, schools and communities. In this way, a generation is formed that is not only brilliant in the academic field, but also has noble character as the main foundation in living a life according to the teachings of Islam.

### **Challenges Faced by Teachers in Shaping Student Character in the Midst of Digital Development**

Even though various efforts have been made, PAI teachers still face several challenges in shaping student character, including:

1. Influence of Social Media

Students are often more influenced by content on social media than by teacher advice. Viral content often contradicts Islamic values, such as the culture of hedonism, free lifestyles and hate speech.

2. Lack of Parental Control

Not all parents have a high awareness of their children's character education. Some parents let their children use gadgets without supervision, so that children can be exposed to negative content.

3. Changes in Student Learning Patterns

Today's students are more accustomed to digital learning and less interested in conventional methods. If teachers do not adjust teaching methods, then character education can be less effective.

### **Teacher Strategies for Overcoming Challenges Amid Digital Development**

To overcome these challenges, PAI teachers apply several strategies, including:

1. Getting used to interactive discussions → So that students not only passively receive information, but also understand character values in everyday life.
2. Inserting Islamic Values in Digital Material → For example, presenting videos or stories that contain moral messages.
3. Using Technology-Based Learning Methods → Such as educational game-based learning, Islamic social media, or PAI-based learning applications.

With this strategy, PAI teachers can remain relevant in shaping students' character amidst digital developments, so that Islamic values remain embedded in their lives. At Islam Plus Sabilunnajah Middle School, character education is applied in various aspects of learning and school activities. This application includes integration in learning, use of technology, religious habituation, supervision in the use of technology, and collaboration with parents.

### 1. Integration in Learning

Character education is not taught separately, but is integrated into PAI learning materials. For example, when discussing honesty in Islam, the teacher not only conveys theory, but also provides real case examples and discusses its impact in everyday life. With this method, students not only understand the concept of honesty but also experience it in real life.

### 2. Use of Technology in Learning

PAI teachers use digital media to increase students' understanding of character values. Some of the strategies used include:

- a. Using Islamic Educational Videos → Students are invited to watch videos of Islamic lectures or inspirational stories, then discuss them in class.
- b. Creating Interactive Quizzes → Teachers use platforms like Kahoot! or Quizizz to test students' understanding regarding the character values that have been taught.
- c. Digital-Based Assignments → Students are given the task of creating a personal reflection in the form of a blog about the application of character values in everyday life.



*Dokumentasi nonton video edukasi dan penerapan tugas berbasis digital*



Several previous studies have discussed the application of character education in PAI learning and the use of technology as a learning medium. The study conducted by Ballianie et al. (2024) highlights the use of digital media in character education. The study results show that the use of Islamic educational videos, interactive quizzes, digital-based assignments such as the use of blogs can increase student participation in learning and strengthen their understanding of Islamic character values in real life. Based on these studies, it can be concluded that the integration of character education in PAI learning, especially through the use of technology, has a positive impact on the formation of students' character.

### 3. Religious Habituation in Schools

Character formation does not only take place in the study room, but also in daily activities at school. Some of the routine activities implemented at SMP Islam Plus Sabilunnajah include:

- a. Congregational prayer → Students are required to attend congregational prayer at school.
- b. Tadarus before the lesson starts → Students recite the Al-Qur'an together before teaching and learning begins as a form of habituation.
- c. Tahfidz Program → Students are encouraged to memorize verses of the holy Qur'an related to character formation.



*Dokumentasi baca  
qur`an dan  
program tahfidz*

Previous research shows that religious habituation in schools has a significant impact in shaping student character. For example, a study conducted by Astuti et al. (2025) found that activities such as congregational prayers and recitation of the Koran can increase students' discipline and sense of responsibility. In addition, research by Putri et al. (2024) revealed that the tahfidz program not only strengthens spiritual aspects, but also trains patience and consistency in learning. These findings are in line with the concept of character education based on Islamic values which emphasizes the importance of example, habituation, and a conducive environment in shaping students' positive behavior.

#### 4. Supervision in the Use of Technology

In the digital era, the biggest challenge in character formation is the negative influence of social media and the internet. To overcome this, PAI teachers collaborate with the school in supervising students' use of technology. Some of the strategies implemented include:

- a. Learning about Digital Ethics → Students are given an understanding of etiquette in using social media, such as not spreading hoaxes, not committing *cyberbullying*.
- b. Control of Digital Content → Teachers and schools monitor the use of gadgets in the school environment, ensuring that students do not access content that is not in accordance with Islamic values.
- c. Creation of Islamic Content by Students → Students are encouraged to create positive content, such as Islamic educational videos or infographics that contain moral messages.

Previous research highlights the importance of supervision in the use of technology to support student character education. Barokah & Sari, (2024) found that digital ethics education, supervision and content creation are opportunities to improve character education. Therefore, these findings are in line with previous research that technology supervision plays an important role in shaping students' character.

#### 5. Collaboration with Parents in Character Formation

Character education is not only the responsibility of schools, but also parents. Therefore, SMP Islam Plus Sabilunnajah collaborates with parents through:

- a. Islamic Parenting Seminar → Parents are given an understanding of the importance of character education at home.
- b. Student Character Development Report → Teachers provide reports to parents about student character development at school.
- c. Active Communication via WhatsApp Group → Teachers and parents communicate regularly to discuss student progress and provide solutions to problems faced.

Previous research emphasizes the importance of collaboration between schools and parents in shaping student character. Hasibuan, (2022) found that parenting seminars, student character development reports, and active communication can

improve and increase parental involvement in children's education. This collaboration has been proven to strengthen students' character education.

## **B. The Role of PAI Teachers in Shaping Student Character in the Digital Era**

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers play a very crucial role in shaping students' character, especially in facing challenges amidst digital developments. Some of the main roles of PAI teachers in shaping the character of students in class VIII SMP Islam Plus Sabilunnajah which was founded by 2 people, namely Kh. Daroini Ali, S.H.I, Late and Ali Mustofa, M.Pd. in 2010, the school was headed by Mahfud Efendi, S.Pd for 3 years, continued by Hanif Maslahat, S.Pd for 7 years until now, continued by Suroso, S.Kom. The location is in the village of Rejo Asri, Seputih Raman, Central Lampung. Among these roles are:

### **1. Teachers as Educators**

PAI teachers are not only tasked with providing teaching materials, but also internalize the principles character in every lesson. (Izzati, ZamZam, and Prabowo 2023) In the context of digital development, teachers can teach social media ethics, responsibility in using technology, and the importance of maintaining etiquette in communicating. For example, in learning about morals towards parents and teachers, students are taught to respect teachers in digital interactions such as in class WhatsApp groups or during online learning.

### **2. Teacher as a Role Model**

Teachers are role models for students. Good character can be instilled through exemplary speech, actions and attitudes. (Agustin et al. 2024) For example, teachers who are always punctual and disciplined in teaching will provide concrete examples to students about the importance of the value of discipline. Apart from that, a polite attitude in delivering material or reprimanding students also sets an example for students in interacting with other people.

### **3. Teachers as Motivators**

In digital developments, students tend to be more interested in cyberspace than conventional learning. (Izzati, ZamZam, and Prabowo 2023) Therefore, PAI teachers need to provide motivation so that students remain interested in learning religion. One way is to utilize technology, such as using inspirational videos about successful Muslim figures or presenting Islamic stories in animated form. With this approach, students can be more motivated to develop good character.

### **4. Teacher as a Guide**

PAI teachers also act as mentors who direct students in facing the challenges of the digital era. (Agustin et al. 2024) Students are often exposed to information that is not necessarily true or in accordance with Islamic teachings. Therefore, teachers must guide students to filter information well and use technology positively, such as reading Islamic articles or following online studies from credible scholars.

## **CONCLUSION**

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers play a very crucial role in shaping students' character, especially in facing challenges amidst digital developments. These roles include teachers as educators, role models, motivators and mentors. Based on research conducted at SMP Islam Plus Sabilunnajah, it can be concluded that the role of PAI teachers through integration in the use of technology, religious habituation, and supervision of students' use of technology is effective in shaping students' character in the digital era. This finding is supported by observational data which shows that

learning using Islamic educational videos, making interactive quizzes and routine activities such as tahfidz Qur'an congregational prayers, contributes positively to increasing character formation. In addition, the results of interviews with Teacher Pai and parents indicated that students were more honest and well-behaved than before after implementing the use of technology, which shows a significant change in attitude. Therefore, it is recommended that PAI teachers continue to develop programs for the use of technology and collaborate with parents in the learning process to achieve better results in building student character.

## DISCUSSION

The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Shaping Student Character in the Digital Era in Class VIII of SMP Islam Plus Sabilunnajah. This research aims to analyze the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in shaping student character in the digital era. With the rapid development of technology, students face new challenges in building morals and ethics. PAI teachers have a strategic role in instilling Islamic values and guiding students to have good character even in a digital environment full of distractions.

This research found that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers have an important role in shaping students' character in the digital era through learning methods based on Islamic values, positive use of technology, and interactive learning approaches. However, there are several challenges faced, such as social media distractions, lack of supervision in the use of technology, and differences in students' levels of understanding of religious values. These findings are in line with several previous studies. Hasanah (2021) found that PAI teachers need to adopt more creative learning strategies to increase students' understanding of religion in the digital era, such as the use of interactive media and Islamic-based applications. Suryani & Ramdani (2020) highlight the important role of teachers in building students' awareness of digital ethics so that they are not influenced by negative content on the internet. Fadli & Irwandi (2019) revealed that religion-based character education that is implemented well in schools is able to reduce students' negative behavior in the digital environment. Zulkifli (2018) states that the use of technology in religious learning can increase students' understanding if applied with appropriate methods. Rahmawati & Hidayat (2022) show that the influence of teachers in instilling religious values is more effective when combined with a family approach and a supportive social environment.

Therefore, this research makes an important contribution to the field of Islamic religious education with several main points:

1. Learning Strategy Development - This research offers new insights into how PAI teachers can adapt their teaching methods to face the challenges of the digital era, including the use of Islamic-based technology.
2. Increased Teacher Awareness - The results of this research can help teachers understand their increasingly complex role in guiding students in the wise and moral use of technology.
3. Guide for Schools - This research provides recommendations for schools in developing policies that support the integration of Islamic values in digital-based learning.
4. Impact on Student Character - By understanding the factors that influence student character in the digital era, this research can be the basis for developing more effective religion-based character formation programs.

5. Synergy between Teachers, Parents and the Environment – This research highlights the importance of collaboration between teachers, parents and the community in ensuring that religious values remain the main foundation in students' lives even though they live amidst technological developments.

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