The Formation of Students' Religious Character through Islamic Religious Eduction Learning Asma'ul Husna Material at Ma'arif 1 Middle School

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to determine the process of implementing the habit of reading the Asmaul Husna, the supporting and inhibiting factors in the process of implementing the habit, in order to shape the religious character of students at SMP Ma'arif 1 Metro. The type of research used is field research with a qualitative descriptive approach. The data collection method was carried out in three stages, namely: Observation, interviews and documentation. Meanwhile, the data analysis techniques are: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of this research found that: The results of the research show that the formation of religious character is carried out through synergy between routine religious activities (such as congregational midday prayers, reading Surah Yasin and Asma'ul Husna), teacher example, and integrating character values in the learning process. Even though there are obstacles such as low student awareness and lack of consistency in learning, teachers still play an important role as motivators and role models. The gradual cultivation of religious character shows a positive impact on changes in student behavior, both in the school environment and in everyday life. These findings emphasize the importance of PAI learning as an effective medium in forming students' religious character holistically.

Keywords: *Religious Eduction Learning, Religious Character*

INTRODUCTION

Education has a very important role in human life. When a human being is born, he does not have any knowledge. However, Allah SWT bestows the five senses, reason and feelings so that humans can learn and develop. Education plays an important role in honing and developing this potential and ability. Therefore, every individual needs to receive education in order to optimize their basic abilities. This is in line with the words of Allah in His book:

And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers knowing nothing, and gave you hearing and sight and insight that you might You will be thankful۝٧

"And God brought you out of your mother's womb in ignorance, and He gave you hearing, sight, and conscience, so that you may be grateful." (Surah an-Nahl, verse 78).

According to Law no. 20 of 2003, the aim of education is to create a learning environment that supports students in actively developing their potential. The educational environment must be able to encourage the spiritual, intellectual, moral

and emotional development of students, as well as equip them with skills that are beneficial to society, the nation and the state (National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003). Educational efforts that focus on developing students' potential are referred to as educational processes. Both formal and non-formal education apply various methods, such as guidance, character building, and learning (Wulansari, V., & Maunah, B. (2024).

The main subject in school education is Islamic Religious Education (PAI), which aims to provide an in-depth understanding of Islamic teachings, both in theory and practice. Apart from that, PAI also aims to shape students' character and beliefs so that they are able to implement Islamic principles in everyday life (Yogi Fernando, Popi Andriani, and Hidayani Syam 2024). The main aim of Islamic education is not only to provide knowledge about creeds, as well as guiding students to live their lives according to Islamic principles to achieve salvation in this world and the hereafter (Saputra, 2022). Schools and other educational institutions should pay special attention to Islamic learning, as this helps students understand Islam better, thereby having a positive impact on their personal lives and their role in society. However, efforts to create perfect humans through education are not easy. The reason is, phenomena that show negative behavior are increasingly visible in this country, and what is more worrying is the involvement of students in this matter (Siregar et al., 2024)

Problems in learning Islamic Religious Education in class VII-B of SMP Maarif 1 Metro based on observations and interviews conducted during PPL for 40 days from 15 July 2025- 31 August 2025. In class VIII-A, however, many overcome boredom by sleeping, talking, or disturbing friends, thereby reducing class calm and disrupting concentration (Marsitati 2025). Even though SMP Ma'arif 1 Metro City has made the formation of religious character one of the main focuses through various religious activities such as reading yaasiin and istighosah and congregational Duhur prayers, the implementation of these activities has not yet fully shown optimal results. There are inconsistencies in student participation, which can be seen from lack of discipline, tardiness, absences without clear reasons, as well as attitudes that do not reflect religious values such as speaking impolitely and not complying with dress codes. This problem shows that efforts to form students' religious character still face significant challenges, especially in terms of internalizing religious values into everyday behavior. This ineffectiveness indicates that the current coaching approach is not yet fully integrated between cognitive (religious knowledge), affective (attitudes and behavior) and social aspects (school and family environmental support). Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of existing religious activities, as well as design a more comprehensive and sustainable religious character development strategy.

Previous research conducted by Weni Yuliastutik has similarities with this research in that it focuses on the formation of religious character. Both seek to understand how religious character can be developed through certain habits or activities, such as reading *asmaul husna* and praying together. However, there are significant differences between this research and the research currently being conducted. Weni Yuliastutik's thesis places more emphasis on getting used to reading *asmaul husna* and carrying out congregational prayers as a means of forming religious character, but does not discuss in detail or in depth the efforts made in the formation process. This research, on the other hand, is expected to identify and explain in more detail the steps or methods used in forming a person's religious character, which may include approaches other than reading. *asmaul husna* and congregational prayers ((wenni yuliastutik, 2014)

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Study by Khumaedulah and Imron *Efforts to Improve PAI Learning Outcomes on Asmaul Husna Subjects Through Jigsaw Type Cooperative Learning"* focuses on improving student learning outcomes through the application of Jigsaw type cooperative learning strategies. This approach is cognitive in nature, where learning success is measured through students' academic achievements in understanding Asmaul Husna material. Instead, research with a title *Formation of Students' Religious Character Through Learning PAI Asma'ul Husna Material* focuses more on the affective domain, namely the formation of religious values and character through internalizing the meaning of Asmaul Husna in students' lives. Thus, even though both use the same material, namely Asmaul Husna in PAI subjects, the orientation of the first research is more on quantitative learning outcomes, while the second research focuses on developing students' religious attitudes and character qualitatively.

Character formation is a very important aspect in maintaining and guiding future generations in the era of globalization. To achieve this goal, teachers have a major role in forming positive habits, such as getting used to reading the Asmaul Husna, in order to instill religious values in students. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) as one of the curriculum components at primary and secondary education levels has a strategic role in shaping students' religious character. PAI is not only interpreted as a process of transferring religious knowledge, but also as a means of transforming noble Islamic values into the attitudes and behavior of students. One of the materials in PAI that has strong potential in forming religious character is Asma'ul Husna—the ninety-nine names of Allah SWT which reflect the attributes of His perfection. Each name contains a theological and ethical meaning that can be used as a basis for character development in an educational context (Ananda Muhammad Tri Utama, 2022).

The implementation of PAI learning in various educational units still shows a tendency towards a purely cognitive approach, which focuses on memorization and conceptual understanding, but is not yet optimal in forming students' spiritual awareness and applicable attitudes towards the values being taught. In this case, Asma'ul Husna is often only taught as rote material, without being accompanied by systematic efforts to link it to the formation of students' concrete character or behavior in everyday life, whether in the school, family or community environment.

Based on this background, this research is focused on examining in depth how PAI learning, especially the Asma'ul Husna material, can be implemented as a medium for developing students' religious character in the junior high school environment. This research aims to describe the learning strategies used by teachers, the form of internalization of Asma'ul Husna values in student activities, as well as the obstacles faced in the learning process. It is hoped that the results of this research can contribute to the development of a PAI learning model that is more contextual, applicable and effective in forming the religious character of the younger generation.

METHOD

This research uses descriptive qualitative methods. This research is categorized as field research. According to Bogdan and Taylor, as quoted by Moleong, the aim of qualitative research methodology is to collect data in a form that is easy to understand, such as text or titles, and express it in a way that can be directly understood by other people. This approach allows researchers to collect information in a more in-depth and accurate manner, which provides an in-depth picture of the phenomenon being

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researched without relying on quantitative data or numbers, but instead focuses on the context and meaning behind the phenomena found in the field. (Moleong, L. J. 2007)

Qualitative descriptive research is a type of research that is included in the qualitative research category, where in this research, the researcher focuses on exploring and understanding more deeply the events or phenomena experienced by certain individuals or groups. Researchers ask participants to share their life experiences directly, and the information obtained is then presented in the form of descriptive narratives that describe the situation or conditions being studied. The characteristic of descriptive research is that the data produced is in the form of words and images that describe context, understanding and experience, not numbers which are generally found in quantitative research. This allows researchers to explore the deep meaning behind the phenomena that occur, providing a richer understanding of the subject under study. (Rusandi & Muhammad Rusli, 2021)

The author's research aims to describe and analyze PAI learning material *Asma'ul Husna*, with a focus on student specialization at SMP Ma'arif 1 Metro City. In this research, the authors used various methods, including data collection, classification, and analysis or synthesis, to gain a better understanding of the situation. Furthermore, the results of this analysis are presented clearly and precisely, supported by relevant theories from various sources, such as books and journals, which can help solve the problem being researched.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of research conducted regarding the formation of students' religiosity character through learning PAI material on asma'ul husna at SMP Maarif 1 metro city. The research implementation began with initial observation activities as pre-action to formulate the problems experienced by students, then continued with implementing actions until the learning objectives were achieved. The implementation of lesson actions was carried out in 2 cycles, where each cycle was carried out in one meeting. This research aims to describe the implementation of religious character formation through PAI learning for Ma'arif 1 Metro Middle School students. SMP Ma'arif 1 Metro is one of the schools under the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education which has the advantage of being integrated with Islamic boarding schools. Most of the students at Ma'arif 1 Metro Middle School live with their parents and some live in Islamic boarding schools. The research results are described as follows.

Strategy for cultivating religious character

In order to support the cultivation of religious character, SMP Ma'arif 1 Metro seeks various strategies including routine religious activities, integration of character in learning and programs organized by the school. This research reveals that the formation of students' religious character at school is carried out through planned and sustainable strategies. The results of the analysis show that various forms of religious activities are part of students' routines, such as congregational noon prayers, reading surah Yasin, asma'ul husna, and istighosah. These activities are designed to form deep spiritual habits. This is supported by the data shown in the following interview excerpt.

KP3: "Okay, sis, of course there are many programs designed to shape students' Islamic personalities, such as spiritual activities such as midday prayers in congregation, istighosah and reading Surah Yaasiin every Friday morning in the school yard, reading prayers and reciting asma'ul husnaa before starting learning and other NU practices."

Furthermore, character cultivation through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning does not only focus on cognitive aspects but also affective and psychomotor aspects of students. PAI teachers try to link teaching material to character values, such as emulating the characteristics of the prophets. This strengthens students' understanding that religion is not just science, but a daily life practice. This is supported by the data shown in the following interview excerpt.

"In teaching PAI material, we always try to link the subject matter to character values."

The role of the teacher in cultivating character

Islamic Religious Education Teachers have an important role in cultivating student character. The results of this research show that PAI teachers have a role as role models and companions in cultivating students' religious character. In terms of the role of educators, it was found that teachers not only act as learning facilitators but also as role models (uswah) which is very important in the process of instilling religious values. School principals and PAI teachers both emphasize the importance of giving real examples of behavior, both through daily behavior and in delivering lesson material. As conveyed by the PAI teacher through the following transcript.

, "teachers must be super patient,"

The interview results emphasize that teachers must be patient, especially when dealing with students who are less motivated to carry out religious activities.

"Teachers are like the foundation of the earth for students and uswah for children"

Apart from that, teachers also have a strategic role in assisting students in forming religious character.

"Oh yes, of course you have to take part, because this activity is a school activity which involves all school members. So the role of teachers is very important to accompany children in order to form religious character."

Furthermore, the research results show that teachers have a role to be role models in providing examples. This is supported by the results of interviews with students as follows.

S?: "....teachers not only talk about the rules, but also give examples through their own attitude ..."

Challenges in cultivating character

SMP Ma'arif 1 Metro has made various efforts to help cultivate students' religious character both through routine activities, integration in learning and through other programs. However, in this effort Ma'arif 1 Metro Middle School faces several challenges, including low student motivation.

"..lack of awareness from students and considering these routine activities to be boring and just a formality..."

Apart from that, the obstacles faced were during the implementation of worship. This is supported by the results of the following interview.

"You have to be patient in getting the children to pray together for the noon prayers"

Impact of character cultivation

The efforts made by SMP Ma'arif 1 Metro to support the cultivation of students' religious character have had a positive impact on students. The following are the results of interviews that show the impact of cultivating religious character.

"The cultivation of character can slowly encourage change for the better"

"Children who used to be late, are now starting to come more punctually"

"This activity speaks my words, my behavior becomes better"

Based on the results of the interview above, real changes were felt, for example students who were often late came more punctually. This shows an attitude of discipline. Apart from that, students' speech and behavior improved after participating in programs organized by the school or through classroom learning through PAI subjects. The process of forming religious character is formed from a synergy between routine religion-based activities, teacher example, and the integration of character values in learning. Students responded positively to this process. Students admitted to experiencing changes, such as becoming more patient, praying more diligently, and starting to control themselves and respect others. This change is an indicator that the process of cultivating religious character has shown a positive impact even though it occurred gradually.

The findings of this research show that the formation of students' religious character at SMP Ma'arif 1 Metro is through synergy between routine activities held by the school based on Aswaja Islamic values, teacher example and contextual learning. The cultivation of religious character in students occurs through routine school programs based on Aswaja Islamic values, the active role of teachers as role models and educators, as well as the integration of character values into PAI learning. Challenges such as lack of motivation and habitual obstacles are overcome with a patient and persuasive approach. This process shows positive changes, although gradual. Conceptually, the findings of this research can be seen in the following image.
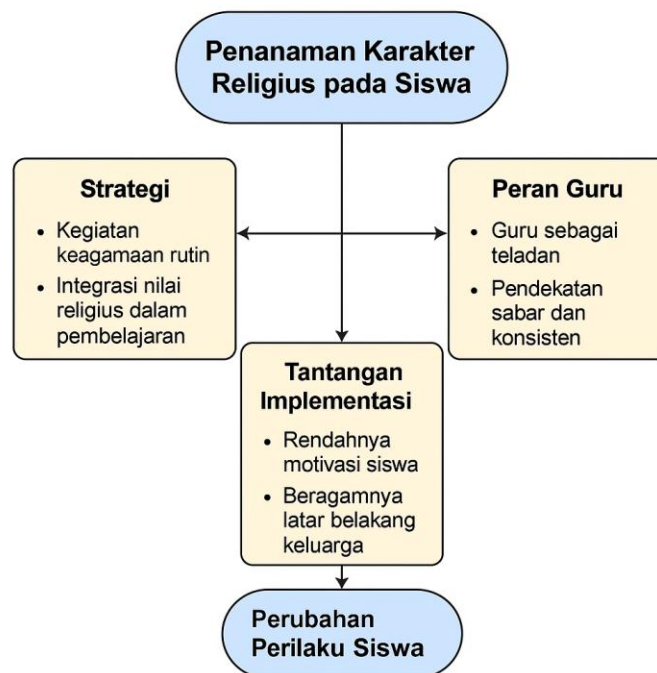
The cultivation of religious character in this research shows that the character education process cannot run alone without synergy between school programs, the role of teachers, and contextual learning approaches. This finding is in line with character education theory which states that character is formed through a process of habituation and consistent example (Lickona, 1991).

Routine religious activity strategies such as congregational prayers and istighosah support the habituation theory, where good behavior is instilled continuously until it becomes part of the student's personality. Apart from that, the integration of religious values in learning is in line with the contextual approach in character education, which connects values with the realities of students' lives. Routine religious activities such as congregational prayers, istighosah, and reading Surah Yasin are effective habituation efforts in shaping students' religious character. Research by Oktari & Kosasih (2019) shows that regularly reading prayers and blessings can shape students' religious character, such as istiqomah.

The teacher's role as a model is an important key in the success of character development. Example has a big psychological impact in shaping students' attitudes and behavior. This finding is reinforced by Thomas Lickona's opinion that teachers must be "moral models" that students can emulate. Teachers have a central role in forming students' religious character, not only as teachers but also as role models in everyday behavior. Research by Rulia Futuroh (2021) confirms that the process of cultivating religious character will not be achieved if educators only give orders; Teachers must be examples so that students can be role models.

However, challenges such as low student motivation show that the process of character formation is not an instant thing. Teachers need patience, creativity and a good interpersonal approach to change students' thinking patterns and behavior gradually. The implementation of religious character education faces various challenges, such as low student motivation, diverse family backgrounds, and the negative influence of social media. Research by Dwi Astuti (2023) shows that the main challenge in forming students' religious character is the diversity of family backgrounds and students' understanding of religion, which causes gaps in the application of religious values among students.

The existence of positive changes in students shows that character education carried out consistently is able to bring results. This shows that the strategy for cultivating religious character implemented by this school is quite effective and relevant to the needs of character education in the current era. Cultivating religious character has a positive impact on student behavior, such as increasing discipline and changing attitudes for the better. Research by Nur Hasib Muhammad (2019) shows that the formation of students' religious character through the school morning program can increase students' discipline and responsibility.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that cultivating religious character in students through learning Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is carried out through a comprehensive and sustainable approach. This process includes the implementation of routine religious activities, integration of character values in learning, as well as consistent example from the teacher as a central figure in moral education. Even though they are faced with challenges such as low student awareness and the perception that religious activities are only a formality, teachers still show an active and patient role in developing students. This strategy has been proven to be able to gradually encourage changes in student behavior in a more positive direction, such as increasing discipline, politeness, and enthusiasm in carrying out worship. Thus, the formation of religious character cannot be separated from the integration of teacher example, habituation to religious activities, and contextual learning approaches.

The results of this research have important implications for educators, school administrators, and educational policy makers. First, PAI teachers need to be prepared not only as teachers of religious material, but also as role models of real religious values in everyday life. Second, schools should continue to develop religious programs that are relevant and enjoyable for students, so that the process of internalizing Islamic values does not feel monotonous or just a formality. Third, for policy makers, these results show the urgency to strengthen character education in the national curriculum, especially through more systematic integration between cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects. Finally, this research encourages the need for special training for teachers in managing students' emotional and motivational challenges, so that the cultivation of religious character can take place more effectively and have a long-term impact.

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