

The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Forming the Morals of Students at SMK Indonesia Membangun 2 Medan

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ABSTRACT

The low implementation of moral values among students at SMK Indonesia Membangun 2 Medan, can be seen from the behavior of lack of discipline, low responsibility, and disrespect towards teachers and peers. This condition is exacerbated by the negative influence of the environment outside the school, such as free association and uncontrolled use of social media. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in forming morals of students at SMK Indonesia Membangun 2 Medan. The research method used is qualitative descriptive with a phenomenological approach. Data collection techniques use observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis techniques through the stages: data condensation, data presentation, and drawing conclusions and verification. The results of the study indicate that Islamic Religious Education teachers at SMK Indonesia Membangun 2 Medan play an active role as educators, moral educators, and role models who guide students through various strategies, such as role models, habituation of worship, personal approaches, and strengthening Islamic values in students' daily lives. Teachers also face various challenges, such as lack of parental involvement and factors in students' social environment. Meanwhile, teachers' efforts in forming akhlakul karimah remain significant in influencing students' positive attitudes and behaviors.

1. INTRODUCTION

Problems regarding morals and human behavior, from the past until now the discussion about morals is never ending, This can be seen from the many young generations becoming a serious concern in the world of education. Especially in the midst of the era of globalization which is marked by the flow of information that is so fast and free, students are very vulnerable to negative influences from outside, such as misuse of technology, hedonistic lifestyles, and lack of moral control in interacting (Panggabean et al, 2022). This problem is increasingly visible, based on the results of research conducted by Fahdini et al (2021), that student behavior at school tends to ignore moral and religious values, such as loss of respect for teachers, low social concern, and high conflict between students. This condition demands a major role from educational institutions, especially Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, in re-instilling the values of akhlakul karimah in students (Badrudin & Shidiq, 2022).The importance of forming good morals is

emphasized in Islamic teachings, as narrated in the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, namely:

إِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ لِأَتَمِّمَ مَكَارِمَ الْأَخْلَاقِ

Meaning: Indeed, I was sent to perfect noble morals." (HR. Ahmad) (Al-Hilali, 2005).

This hadith emphasizes that the main purpose of the Prophet Muhammad's sending was to perfect human morals (Nurmilah & Irfan, 2024). The importance of instilling morals in every human being, so someone who has noble morals will be able to stay away from the bad influence of various negative things around him. The role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in shaping students' morals is not only limited to teaching in the classroom, but also through exemplary behavior and daily interactions with students. Islamic Religious Education teachers are expected to be role models for students in implementing Islamic values in real life. Therefore, in the learning process, Islamic Religious Education teachers will certainly face various problems in instilling moral education in students.

As a PAI teacher at SMK Indonesia Membangun 2 Medan, facing various problems in the process of forming akhlakul karimah. This can be seen, based on the fact that as a vocational school that focuses on developing technical skills, moral and spiritual aspects are often neglected. Students are more directed to master skills that can be directly used in the world of work, without being accompanied by the instillation of adequate moral values. In addition, vocational high school students who are mostly teenagers face various external influences, including free association, gadget addiction, and lack of control over the use of social media. This makes teachers, especially Islamic Religious Education teachers, face a big challenge in shaping students' morals to be in accordance with Islamic values. Another challenge faced by Islamic Religious Education teachers at SMK Indonesia Membangun 2 Medan is the diverse socio-economic backgrounds of students. Students who come from families with various economic statuses and social environments have differences in their outlook on life and attitudes towards moral education. Some students may grow up in an environment that is less supportive of positive character formation, so that learning at school is the only hope to shape them into individuals with noble morals. Islamic Religious Education teachers must be able to adjust their teaching methods so that they can touch the hearts of students from various backgrounds, so that moral messages can be received and internalized well.

Based on the various problems above, this research is important to be conducted, so that as teachers we can understand more deeply the role or strategy of Islamic Religious Education teachers in forming students' morals, especially in vocational schools such as SMK Indonesia Membangun 2 Medan. This research is expected to provide a real picture of the efforts and strategies carried out by Islamic Religious Education teachers in instilling moral values in students amidst various existing challenges. In addition, this research also aims to identify the obstacles

faced by teachers in carrying out their duties, so that appropriate solutions can be formulated to increase the effectiveness of moral learning in schools.

Although this research has been done by many previous researchers. However, there are still limited studies that specifically discuss the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in the formation of noble morals in vocational high schools. Many studies focus on moral education in public schools, but not many have highlighted how Islamic Religious Education teachers can play an important role in the formation of morals of students in vocational schools that have unique characteristics, such as focusing on work skills and preparation for facing the industrial world. Therefore, this study is expected to fill the gap in the literature and become a reference for Islamic Religious Education teachers in developing more effective learning strategies.

2. METHODS

This type of research uses qualitative research. Qualitative research functions to explain phenomena that exist in society to find out what things are obstacles or may be problems that are relatively difficult to express (Sugiyono, 2015) While the research approach used is a phenomenological approach (Abdussamad 2021). The location of this research is at SMK Indonesia Membangun 2 Medan. Jl. Air Bersih No. 59, Sudirejo I, Medan Kota District, Medan City, North Sumatra Province 20226. The planning time for this research is around 2 months ahead. The data sources in this study are divided into two, namely primary and secondary data sources. Primary data information that the author obtained directly through interviews with the Principal, one PAI teacher and two grade XI students. While secondary data supporting data that is relevant to this study consists of documents that are closely related to the research problem.

The data collection technique in this study uses observation, interviews and documentation. While the data analysis technique in this study is an interactive model that refers to the concept offered by Miles, Huberman and Saldana, with steps, namely: data condensation/reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The data validity technique uses two methods, namely: source triangulation and technique triangulation (Sugiyono, 2020).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Forming the Morals of Students

Etymologically, morality comes from the Arabic "al-khalqu" which means creation or event, and "al-khuluqu" which means behavior (Basri, 2023). Both refer to different things, namely physical appearance (outward) and inner behavior (inner). Morality includes these two aspects: the outer appearance that can be seen by others and the inner condition or soul that can only be felt by the heart. Between the two, the soul or inner is more important because a person's good or bad behavior is more influenced by their inner condition than their appearance. Meanwhile, in terms of terminology, according to Ibn Maskawaih, morality is a character that is

deeply embedded in a person's soul, which directs individuals to carry out actions spontaneously without requiring consideration or deep thought (Maisyanah et al, 2020).

The formation of morals is carried out based on the assumption that morals are the result of educational efforts, training, hard work and coaching (muktasabah), not happening by itself. The spiritual potential that exists in humans including reason, lust, nature, conscience, and intuition are optimally developed with the right methods and approaches (Firdaus, 2017). Basically, the purpose of moral formation in Islam is so that humans are in the truth and always on the straight path, the path that has been outlined by Allah SWT (Tsalitsah, 2020). The process of education or the formation of morals aims to produce people with noble morals. Akhlakul karimah is one of the main goals of education in Islam (Amsari & Tambunan, 2023). The role of teachers as educators is very important in the school environment because teachers are not only tasked with teaching subject matter, but also play a role in shaping the character and behavior of students. Teachers are role models for students in terms of morals, ethics, and discipline (Chontesa et al, 2019).

Based on the results of the interview with the Principal of SMK Indonesia Membangun 2 Medan, stated that the formation of akhlakul karimah is the main part of the educational goals at the school. He explained that akhlakul karimah is commendable behavior that comes from a clean heart and is in accordance with Islamic values, such as honesty, trustworthiness, patience, humility, and responsibility. According to him, education that does not form morals only produces intelligent but immoral people. The principal's statement, then this is also in line with the mandate of Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers which regulates that teachers have the responsibility to create a generation that is intelligent, has character, and has morals (Presiden Republik Indonesia, 2005).

The principal added that the formation of good morals in schools must start from the exemplary behavior of teachers, especially Islamic Religious Education teachers. According to Muh. Judrah, dkk (2024), Islamic Religious Education teachers are not only teachers, but also moral guides. Islamic Religious Education teachers become figures that students imitate, both in speech and action. In addition, this opinion is in line with the concept of role models (uswah hasanah) in Islamic education, where teachers are the main role models in everyday behavior (Rozak et al, 2025). Based on research conducted by Anggraini et al (2025), as stated by Arwani and Jannah, moral development of students can be carried out through various approaches, such as getting used to positive behavior, providing good examples, involving students in direct training and practice, implementing a clear system of commands and prohibitions, and using rewards and punishments as a form of strengthening and controlling behavior.

As a PAI teacher at SMK Indonesia Membangun 2 Medan, that the formation of students' noble character is carried out through an integrative approach: starting from delivering lesson

materials, habituating good deeds, to religious activities outside the classroom. The PAI teacher said that noble character is not only taught, but must be instilled and trained continuously. This is in accordance with Al-Ghazali's opinion, about morals emphasizing that morals are not something instant or innate from birth, but rather the result of habituating good behavior that is carried out continuously until it becomes a permanent character in a person. According to him, the human soul is like empty land that can be shaped through training and education (Basri & Hasibuan, 2024).

The Islamic Religious Education teacher also emphasized that good morals are formed through three important elements: knowledge, role models, and practice. In learning practices, Islamic Religious Education teachers insert moral values in each topic. For example, when discussing honesty in trade, he does not only quote verses or Hadiths, but also gives real examples and asks students to practice them in assignments and social interactions. This is in accordance with Thomas Lickona's theory of internalization of values, which states that values must be understood, felt, and made into habits (Hikmasari et al, 2021).

According to the results of research conducted by Munirah et al (2023) that moral education is more effectively learned and formed through good examples and habits and the maintenance and development of morals in humans, must be carried out through education through the process of coaching and formation. Meanwhile, according to the results of research conducted by Al Farisi et al (2024), habituation can be interpreted as a process of making something a common thing to do, until it finally becomes a routine. This method is an effective strategy for instilling noble morals in students. Through this habituation process, it is hoped that students will be accustomed to carrying out positive and commendable behavior in their daily lives.

Then in school activities, there are programs such as "Dhuha Prayer in Congregation," "Al-Quran Literacy," and "Blessed Friday" which are a means to foster noble character. According to the PAI teacher, these programs are very effective because they provide space for students to practice Islamic values in real terms. These activities strengthen the concept of *tarbiyah* in Islam, where education is not only cognitive, but also touches on spiritual and emotional aspects (Basri, 2023). Furthermore, the Islamic Religious Education teacher revealed that one of the indicators of the success of the formation of noble character is the change in student behavior in everyday life. He said that the teachers saw that students who used to be rude were now more polite. Those who used to be lazy to worship were now actively participating in congregational prayers. This change reflects that ongoing moral education can internalize positive values in students.

Therefore, to realize good morals in children, the role of teachers as educators is very necessary because teachers play a direct role in guiding, directing, and inspiring students in the

process of character formation. Ahmad Tafsir, an expert in the field of education, put forward several important roles of teachers in the education of students' morals which include various aspects, as explained in the results of Siregar's research (2018), that the role of teachers in the formation of students' good morals includes: teachers must be able to be role models, as guides, as motivators, and as controllers or supervisors.

3.2. Supporting and inhibiting factors in forming students' noble morals

The formation of noble character in students cannot be separated from the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers who are the spearheads in fostering students' morals and character. In carrying out a habituation activity both in the learning process in the classroom or outside the classroom, Islamic religious education teachers will not be separated from supporting and inhibiting factors in forming noble character in students (Farikhin et al, 2024).

Based on the results of an interview with one of the Islamic Religious Education teachers, the process of forming noble morals in schools is greatly influenced by various factors, both supporting and inhibiting. These factors arise from within the school environment, family, and social and cultural influences outside the school. The first factor that is the main supporter in forming students' noble character is the teacher's role model. Teachers who are able to demonstrate polite, disciplined, honest, and fair attitudes will be real role models for students. According to Islamic Religious Education teachers, students tend to imitate the behavior they see every day. Therefore, teachers are not enough to just convey religious material theoretically, but must be a direct representation of the morals taught. This role model is in line with Al-Ghazali's view which emphasizes that morals are formed through habituation and continuous real examples (Zaman, 2019).

In addition to the teacher's exemplary behavior, a religious and conducive school environment is also a significant supporting factor. At SMK Indonesia Membangun 2 Medan, religious activities such as congregational prayers, morning tadarus, and commemoration of Islamic holidays are routines that help foster good habits in students. This environment full of spiritual values indirectly forms the religious character and social ethics of students, and strengthens the values of *akhlakul karimah* in their daily lives at school. Support from students' parents also influences the success of moral development. Islamic Religious Education teachers said that students who come from families who consistently apply religious values at home tend to be easier to direct and have a high awareness of the importance of good behavior. Good communication and cooperation between schools and parents are important keys to maintaining the continuity of children's character formation, both in the school environment and at home.

However, the process of forming good morals is not free from various obstacles. One of the main inhibiting factors is the negative influence of the social environment and social media.

Islamic Religious Education teachers said that many students are easily influenced by the bad behavior of their peers or by content on the internet that is not in accordance with Islamic values. Behavior such as swearing, being indifferent to teachers, and imitating a free lifestyle are challenges that teachers must face in fostering students. According to the results of research conducted by Akbar & Farikhin (2020) the challenges for teachers in shaping students' morals are very complex because they are influenced by various factors, such as instinctive traits which are natural tendencies of children from birth, hereditary traits inherited from parents such as temperament or emotional intelligence, as well as environmental factors and customs that shape children's behavior through interactions with family, friends, media, and society.

Another inhibiting factor is the low awareness and internal motivation of students towards the importance of noble morals. Some students view religious studies as only formal lessons, not as a guide to life. This makes them less enthusiastic in participating in religious activities or improving their behavior. The Islamic Religious Education teacher said that a more persuasive and sustainable approach is needed to raise students' spiritual awareness so that they truly understand the importance of noble morals in life.

Limited learning time is also an obstacle. Islamic Religious Education subjects only have a limited time allocation each week, even though the material that must be delivered is quite broad and covers cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. Islamic Religious Education teachers hope that there will be collaboration across subjects and all teachers to jointly instill moral values, so that it does not only become a burden on religious teachers. Character building should be a shared responsibility of all parties in the school. In addition, Islamic Religious Education teachers also highlighted the need for training and strengthening of competencies in character building. According to Islamic Religious Education teachers, not all teachers have received special training on strategies for developing morals based on Islamic values. In fact, an appropriate and contextual learning approach is needed to deal with the dynamics of today's students. Therefore, increasing the capacity of teachers in terms of pedagogy and child development psychology is very important to optimize the process of forming students' morals as a whole.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study conducted through interviews with Islamic Religious Education teachers at SMK Indonesia Membangun 2 Medan, it can be concluded that the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers is very vital in shaping the morals of students. Teachers not only function as teachers, but also as role models, guides, and motivators who shape students' character through positive behavioral habits, role models, and supportive religious activities. The strategies used include a personal approach, direct role models, coaching through religious

activities, and cooperation with parents and the school environment. This strengthens Al-Ghazali's view that morality is the result of consistent habits of goodness.

However, the process of forming noble morals also faces quite complex challenges. The influence of negative social environments, unwise use of social media, low student awareness of the importance of morals, and limited learning time are inhibiting factors that must be overcome collaboratively. Therefore, fostering students' noble morals requires synergy between teachers, parents, schools, and the community, as well as the need to improve teacher competence so that they are able to respond to the challenges of the times with a relevant and effective approach.

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