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**ARE AQIDAH AKHLAK TEACHERS IN PRIVATE  
MADRASAHS MORE CREATIVE THAN THOSE IN  
PUBLIC MADRASAHS? A CASE STUDY**

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**Abstract**

Moral education plays a crucial role in shaping student characteristics. The lack of creativity in teaching Aqidah Akhlak poses a barrier to effective character development. Therefore, this study analyzed the creativity of teachers in teaching Aqidah Akhlak in public and private senior high schools. This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study method. The research participants were six Aqidah Akhlak teachers, 12 students from two public Islamic senior high schools, and four private Islamic senior high schools in Bantul Regency, Indonesia. The results indicate that teacher creativity in teaching Aqidah Akhlak is more prominent in private schools than in

public schools. Teachers in private schools show better performance in developing creative learning strategies, presenting more interesting material, and creating a more interactive learning environment so that students can be actively involved in the learning process, understand religious values, and internalize them in their daily lives. One creative approach that resonates with students is the "confide-in" session during lessons, which boosts their enthusiasm and encourages positive behavior.

**Keywords:** *Aqidah Akhlak; Teacher Creativity; Character Building*

### **Abstrak**

*Pendidikan Aqidah akhlak memiliki peran krusial dalam membentuk karakter peserta didik. Namun, kurangnya kreativitas guru dalam pembelajaran Aqidah akhlak menjadi penghambat dalam proses pembentukan karakter tersebut. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis kreativitas guru dalam pembelajaran Aqidah akhlak di MAN dan MAS Kabupaten Bantul. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus. Informan penelitian adalah enam guru mata pelajaran Aqidah Akhlak dan 12 peserta didik, dari 2 MAN dan 4 MAS yang ada di Kabupaten Bantul. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa kreativitas guru dalam pembelajaran mata pelajaran Aqidah Akhlak di Madrasah Aliyah Swasta (MAS) lebih menonjol daripada di Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN). Guru-guru di MAS Kabupaten Bantul memiliki kemampuan yang lebih tinggi dalam mengembangkan strategi pembelajaran yang kreatif, menyajikan materi yang lebih menarik, dan menciptakan lingkungan pembelajaran yang lebih interaktif sehingga peserta didik di MAS dapat terlibat aktif dalam proses pembelajaran, memahami nilai-nilai agama, dan menginternalisasikannya dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Salah satu kreativitas yang menarik bagi siswa adalah sesi curhat dalam pembelajaran yang meningkatkan antusiasme peserta didik dan berupaya berperilaku yang baik.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Aqidah Akhlak; Kreativitas Guru; Pembentukan Karakter.*

## INTRODUCTION

One of the key aspirations for realizing Golden Indonesia's vision lies in character education. A key subject expected to fulfill this mission is part of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum, specifically the Aqidah Akhlak subject. The success of character-building lies in how teachers facilitate students. Unpredictable changes in the world around students present more challenging learning opportunities. Despite these challenges, many religious teachers have taught these subjects as doctrines. To address these challenges, we need creative and innovative teachers to present Aqidah Akhlak learning materials in a logical manner that aligns with the needs of students and the broader community.

Akhlak plays an important role in Islamic character education (Dayani, 2020; Handayani, 2020; Parhani et al., 2021; Suyudi, 2020). This subject helps students learn how to process information, evaluate it logically, and internalize religious principles, which serve as the foundation for morality and ethics in day-to-day conduct. The goal of the Aqidah Akhlak lesson is to instill the concept of faith, which strengthens students' faith and is evident in their exemplary character (Khalimi, 2009). Therefore, the role of the teacher as a facilitator is crucial in ensuring the effectiveness of Aqidah Akhlak learning, which can shape students' character. Teachers also play a central role in classroom management. Creativity plays a central role in the achievement of educational goals.

This study used term Madrasah for Islamic high school. Preliminary observations revealed that efforts to enhance teacher creativity in teaching Aqidah Akhlak at Islamic private and public high schools in Bantul Regency have not been fully

optimized. Some teachers face obstacles in designing and implementing innovative learning strategies, presenting interesting materials, and creating interactive learning environments. Because of this, students' participation in the learning process is not at its best, and they have fewer possibilities to learn new things and develop their character.

This research aimed to study and analyze teachers' creativity in learning Aqidah Akhlak in MAN and MAS Bantul Regency. The specific objectives are to identify creative strategies used in learning Aqidah Akhlak, analyze the effectiveness of creative learning strategies in shaping students' character, and evaluate the role and importance of teacher creativity in learning Aqidah Akhlak.

This research is highly urgent, as teacher creativity in teaching Aqidah Akhlak is crucial for shaping student character. With innovative approaches, interesting strategies, and interactive learning environments, students can become actively involved in the learning process and better understand the religious values taught. Thus, they can internalize and apply these values in daily life, strengthen the personality of the learners' character, and become individuals with strong morals.

Teacher creativity in Aqidah Akhlak instruction is also closely connected with Islamic teachings found in the Al-Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (Saw). Creativity in learning allows for a deeper connection between learning materials and verses of the Qur'an and the sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (Saw). This facilitates learners to relate learning to the context of real life and apply religious values to daily behavior. For example, the Qur'anic verse in Surah Al-Imran (3:190) highlights the significance of observation, reflection, and

knowledge gained through learning, which creative teachers can leverage using natural phenomena as examples and illustrations in teaching Aqidah Akhlak. Other verses, such as Surah Al-Jumu'ah (62:2) and Surah An-Nahl (16:125), emphasize the importance of genuine faith, adherence to religious teachings, and employing a wise approach to delivering religious teachings. Sincerity, obedience, and wisdom are virtues imparted to students through creative teaching. Qur'anic values and principles can serve as a source of inspiration and guidance for students' character development.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study utilized a qualitative approach with a case study method to understand, explore, and examine the core issues present. The research informants were identified using the purposive and snowball methods. The informants were six Aqidah Akhlak teachers and 12 students from two public Islamic senior high schools and four private Islamic senior high schools in Bantul Regency, Indonesia. This study was conducted from July to October 2023.

The steps in this research include: (1) data collection through classroom observations; (2) interviews with teachers; (3) documentation studies; (4) descriptive data analysis; (5) data triangulation; (5) Spiral Analysis to find patterns of teacher creativity; and (6) drawing conclusions. The data from this study were analyzed using the Spiral Analysis model (Creswell, 2015), which includes data organization, reading and making memos, describing, classifying, and interpreting data into themes of learning creativity and character education.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Creativity of Aqidah Akhlak Teachers

Aqidah Akhlak is a subject taught to students to be applied in their daily lives. The teaching of Aqidah Akhlak in schools aligns with learning objectives aimed at instilling Islamic faith concepts, which are reflected in students' behavior both within and outside the school environment (Ginanjar & Kurniawati, 2017). Teachers must play a role in developing active and creative learning. Creative learning development is useful for understanding children's talents and interests (Rouf 2019).

According to the principal of a public Islamic senior high school, Aqidah Akhlak is a subject with cognitive and psychomotor aspects that students must master. The assessment of this subject was carried out in the form of cognitive and psychomotor aspects, observation, and peer assessment. In learning implementation, creativity must also be applied to increase students' understanding. As Aqidah Akhlak touches on both the moral and religious aspects of life, it is imperative that the material be taught in an engaging and innovative manner.

In the implementation of Aqidah Akhlak learning, there are several things that must be considered by a teacher, one of which is the readiness of students to practice the knowledge gained (Putra et al., 2020). Teachers must be aware of the specific forms of character education behaviors that need to be applied. In addition, the teacher must acknowledge the supporting and inhibiting factors in its application. The teacher's attention to these small things is one of the supports that can streamline Aqidah Akhlak's learning at school.

The implementation of learning at public madrasahs involves not only the teacher's efforts but also requires students to focus on the most effective methods for learning Aqidah Akhlak. According to public madrasahs, the best way to learn Aqidah Akhlak is to pay attention to what teachers explain. More knowledge was obtained with full attention. After acquiring knowledge from the teacher, students practice the knowledge they acquire. The application of this knowledge is one of the things that make learning Aqidah Akhlak effective. Ultimately, the most effective way to learn the Akidah Akhlak is to concentrate on the subject matter and avoid using cellphones for unrelated activities.

Students will increasingly favor learning if it is implemented creatively. In public madrasahs, using a range of learning media, including PowerPoint and mind maps, is considered creative learning. According to one of the students at a publicmadrasahs, the Aqidah Akhlak teacher has never used creative learning media. The teacher only used the boring lecture method, and there were no games or ice breaks. The teacher only requested that the students come forward, and then he checked their work.

This is an important consideration for teachers, as students are more likely to enjoy learning when they first appreciate the teacher. The use of a creative approach in learning Aqidah Akhlak fosters character building in students. Students understand better when the teacher teaches a lesson. This creative approach is perceived to have a significant internal impact, as it has been successfully implemented by teachers in other subjects, and is expected to be similarly effective.

Public madrasahs continue to teach using outdated methods. This was revealed by the Aqidah Akhlak teachers at public madrasahs. He explained that the lack of creativity in Aqidah Akhlak lessons is due to the use of learning technology. In the learning process, creativity is assessed by the students' ability to understand the teacher's explanation and articulate it during presentations. Creativity is evaluated based on how well students convey and reflect on the knowledge they have acquired. Presentation is a method considered creative in learning Aqidah Akhlak.

In contrast to learning at Private Aliyah Madrasah, Aqidah Akhlak's learning is highly creative, utilizing methods beyond lectures. Learning employs diverse methods that are more engaging and help students to understand the material more effectively. Creative learning not only increases students' enthusiasm, but also improves their quality of learning (Supriadi, 2017).

However, despite the creative methods, student character building still depends on God's guidance. This encourages teacher and students' interactions to pay attention to factors other than the teaching method. The interaction between teachers and students in Aqidah Akhlak learning in private senior high schools is close. Teachers treat their students like their families and are exceptionally supportive of them. One strategy teachers frequently employ to raise students' morality, and closeness is holding confidential sessions. In terms of instruction, the Aqidah Akhlak instructor is regarded as a patient. The teacher's excitement and intimacy with the pupils ultimately increase students' happiness and moral development.



In Aqidah Akhlak's learning, the focus is not just on the method; it also involves personal connections, such as a touch on the shoulder or hand. This direct approach is essential to address mistakes in private madrasahs. This helps students emotionally engage in and better understand the lessons being studied. The principal states that supervisors emphasize that teachers should not be too dominant in class, such as employing only the lecturing method. Learning methods should adapt to the behavior of students.

Character education requires creativity (Rony & Jariyah, 2021), and teaching and learning methods (Syahrena, 2020). Likewise, the creative approach at public madrasahs can influence the character of students. The approach used, especially in the learning process, encourages students to pay attention to the teacher's explanation. If learning is approached creatively, students will be deeply engaged. Most children pay attentively and use the information learned to conduct themselves in accordance with the teacher's explanation.

Evaluation is necessary for learning to meet objectives and adhere to established rules (Setiawan, 2021). However, the public schools included in this study did not implement an evaluation process. They evaluated the students' character development in the previous year by conducting mid-and final exams. The assessment included questions related to moral material such as despicable and praiseworthy morals. The use of this exam for evaluation stimulated students to consider their responses. In addition, peer assessment is used to evaluate the morals of students.

The evaluation was conducted not only for the students. The evaluation of teachers at public madrasahs was conducted

by supervisors. Supervision was carried out by the principal, senior teacher, or the authority assisting the principal. Assessment includes the way teachers teach, engage students, and achieve their learning objectives. Teachers' fixed mind-sets present a challenge for principals, ensuring that learning evolves beyond traditional methods. Kurikulum Merdeka, the present implemented curriculum in Indonesia, requires teachers to b diagnose students characteristics and create interesting learning according to student needs.

Aqidah Akhlak learning does not only emphasize the theoretical aspect. Teachers must ensure that students understand the lesson and apply it to their daily lives. One of the suggestions for teacher creativity that may be used in the learning process is mastery of the subject matter and the application of active learning models. Aqidah Akhlak learning aims for students to not only have strong faith, but also good morals. This ensures that students' learning encompasses not only worldly knowledge but also spiritual understanding, including faith and character development.

### **Character Education**

Character education aims to shape positive moral, ethical, and behavioral values in individuals. The primary goal of character education is to help individuals become responsible and embody positive values in their daily lives. Character education can also be called moral education, since characters in a religious language are called morals. Akhlak is an Arabic term that refers to the practices of goodness, morality, and good behavior (Kalsum, 2018). Religious character refers to basic religious values (Siswanto 2013).

Personality plays a crucial role in students' learning. The teacher serves as a role model for students, with their actions, especially morals, being closely observed and imitated by students. To educate students, teachers must have good morals. Good personality and morals are related to changes in age. Therefore, the development of students' personalities must be balanced with the growth of teachers as educators in order to shape students who are both superior and competitive in various fields.

Students' character values are not sufficiently developed through lessons, understanding, and explanations alone; they need guidance and support to apply these values independently (Shodiqin, 2021). Nurturing character in students requires guidance to guide, direct, and assist students, especially when they feel helpless or experience problems that are burdensome. For this reason, the presence of a teacher guiding students is meaningful and memorable. Teachers' exemplaries are also important in instilling character values, especially religious characters (Astani et al., 2022; Walad, 2021). Specifically, the role of Aqidah Akhlak teachers also has a significant relationship with the development of affective behavior (Ekawati, 2012).

This teacher's personality is also one of the concerns of the public Islamic senior high school in Bantul Regency. Teachers are not just educators who transfer knowledge or guide students; their role is crucial in the transmission of values. Hence, education extends beyond the classroom, with moral transfer as a key component. Education that prioritizes morals is related to Akhlak's learning. Naturally, if morality is given priority in school, teachers will play a larger role in influencing students' morality.

In public madrasahs, students' religious characteristics tend to vary. These character differences are found during learning activities and outside the classroom. The students are still in the process of self-discovery. Religious characters must be ingrained over time, which necessitates instruction and guidance in character development. Teachers must be skilled in analyzing and developing Aqidah Akhlak learning to meet the diverse religious backgrounds of the students they teach.

### **Inhibiting Factors of Aqidah Akhlak Learning in Character Building**

Naturally, several factors influence the development of student characters. The biggest inhibiting factor was the students. This is mainly due to differences in individuals, such as environment and family background. According to teachers at public Islamic senior high schools, having a decent home and environment facilitates character development. Problems at home impede the development of characters in school. Situations within a family eventually shape each learner into a morally upright person. This creates a barrier to student-character development. A few of these factors are as follows (Idhar, 2022):

#### ***Parents***

One of the biggest causes of children's poor character development can be attributed to parents who do not give their children enough attention. Parents' poor monitoring causes children's behavior to deviate from their expectations. Since a child is inherently close to his/her parents from an early age, it is possible for them to model their conduct after that of their parents or other family members. Parents in the household environment are expected to foster their children to be better and

provide examples of noble morals as exemplary morals of the Prophet Muhammad (Saw).

### *Community*

Familiarizing good behavior in social life as a form of social life education is one of the community's duties towards the education of children. Sometimes, children exhibit less desirable attitudes, which could unconsciously stem from the behaviors they adopt while socializing with their peers in the community. For example, this attitude may manifest as rigid character in children, a preference for instant gratification over creativity, and a lack of enthusiasm for learning, leading to quick boredom. This can be attributed to the unfavorable environment in their association.

### *Technology*

Technological advancements may have a significant positive and negative impact on students' attitudes. Technology is very helpful for the development of science, creativity, and information collection to improve the quality of life of students who can use it effectively. On the other hand, if children are unable to utilize technology for their own benefit, this may negatively impact their character development.

Another inhibiting factor stemming from individual students is their disinterest in studying Aqidah akhlak, which leads to frequent student absences and poor learning outcomes (Aunurrahman, 2016). As for the problems experienced by schools, especially in public madrasahs in this study, there are many obstacles to character building. Not having parents is also one of the factors inhibiting teachers' character building. However, most students were honest about their circumstances

or at home. Eventually, this openness became one of the ways that teachers prepared their students for moral education.

This contrasts with character building in the private Islamic senior high schools included in this study. Aqidah Akhlak learned to address problems in the community. Practical learning was limited because most students forget the material they are taught if it is not applied in real-world situations. Furthermore, learning is limited by technical language; thus, the implementation of the learning process is hampered whenever it is not presented in depth.

### **Supporting Factors of Aqidah Akhlak Learning in Character Building**

The challenges in character building require teachers to employ various strategies to shape students' characteristics effectively. In this study, character building mostly occurred in the classrooms. Character building was also performed personally and specifically between the teachers and students. This was assisted by counselling to overcome students' problems. Character building is generally conducted in classrooms to address daily life ethics and personal challenges.

A teacher's example significantly influences student character development, potentially affecting their future personalities. As teachers serve as role models for their students, they ought to possess positive attitudes and personalities (Palunga & Marzuki, 2017). Teachers also play an important role in education. Teachers must be better at understanding science and have the advantage of achieving intellectual, moral, social, emotional, and spiritual values in their personalities. A teacher should be of high moral character, since teaching is the process by which students' personalities are developed. The teacher

becomes the focus of students' attention while they are around them. Therefore, all the actions must serve as role models. Educators are responsible for developing themselves, cultivating positive inner attitudes, and instilling good moral values as their role is to promote goodness and prevent wrongdoing.

## CONCLUSION

The results of this study underline the importance of developing teacher creativity in Aqidah Akhlak education and show that private madrasahs in Bantul Regency have succeeded in achieving this goal compared with public madrasahs. This research shows that teachers' creativity in learning Aqidah Akhlak subjects in private madrasahs is more prominent than that in public madrasahs. Teachers in private madrasahs in Bantul Regency have a higher ability to develop creative learning strategies, present more interesting material, and create a more interactive learning environment that allows students to be actively involved in the learning process, understand religious values, and internalize them in their daily lives. Teacher creativity plays a crucial role in shaping students' character in both public and private madrasahs, as exemplified by learning models such as mind mapping and ice breaking in the classroom. The sharing session in class is one of the creative learning activities that students enjoy, and this helps students perceive the Aqidah akhlak teacher as a compassionate educator. This approach enhances enthusiasm and fosters a closer relationship between teachers and students, ultimately making students more motivated to improve their morals. Teacher creativity in public madrasahs also reflects the Islamic values found in the Al-

Quran and the sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (Saw), which can be applied in the daily behavior of students better than in public madrasahs. Thus, teacher creativity in private madrasahs not only creates a better understanding of religious teachings but also helps build strong and religious characters of learners.

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