

TRANSFORMATION OF STUDENTS' CHARACTER THROUGH THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION TEACHERS AT SARDONOHARJO 1 PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the strategic role of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers in transforming students' character through Islamic-based character education at SardonoHarjo 1 Public Elementary School. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results show that Islamic Education teachers serve as educators, role models, facilitators, motivators, and evaluators in shaping students' morals and ethics. Although challenges such as limited instructional time and negative external influences exist, integrative learning strategies have proven effective in instilling Islamic values. This study recommends enhancing collaboration among schools, teachers, and parents to strengthen students' Islamic character education.

Keywords: Islamic Education, Character Transformation, Islamic Character Education, Islamic Education Teachers, Elementary School

A. INTRODUCTION

Character education serves as the fundamental foundation in shaping a generation that is moral, possesses integrity, and upholds noble character. Amid the currents of globalization and rapid technological advancement, societies around the world—including Indonesia—are facing serious challenges in preserving moral and ethical values, particularly among the younger generation. In response to these challenges, Islamic-based character education emerges as a fundamental solution in developing students who are not only intellectually competent but also morally virtuous.

Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System affirms that national education functions to develop capabilities and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation in order to educate the life of the nation (Article 3). Education aims to develop learners' potential so that they become individuals who believe in and are devoted to God Almighty, possess noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2003, p. 5).

From an Islamic perspective, education encompasses not only intellectual and skill-based aspects but also spiritual and moral dimensions. The primary goal of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is to shape students' Islamic character through the internalization of values such as honesty, responsibility, tolerance, and empathy. This aligns with the view of Al-Abrasyi (2003, p. 45), who stated that the ultimate aim of Islamic education is the formation of a complete human being—balanced in mind, heart, and behavior.

Teachers of Islamic Religious Education play a strategic role in implementing Islamic-based character education within the elementary school environment. They do not merely serve as transmitters of knowledge but also as role models (*uswah hasanah*) who inspire and guide students in their daily lives. As emphasized by Zuhairini (2008, p. 102), Islamic Education teachers are the key agents in nurturing students' religious and moral values, as they represent figures who are admired and emulated by learners.

However, in practice, the implementation of Islamic character education in elementary schools still encounters various challenges. One of the main obstacles is the lack of synergy between schools and families in instilling character values in children. Many parents tend to delegate the entire responsibility for character education to the school, even though the family



environment is the first and foremost foundation for moral development (Nashori, 2011, p. 88). Moreover, the social environment and the pervasive influence of digital media have contributed to the spread of values that often contradict Islamic teachings.

The phenomenon of deviant behavior among elementary school students, such as a lack of respect toward teachers, indiscipline, and irresponsibility in completing school tasks, serves as an indicator of weak character education. According to Musfiroh (2016, p. 79), the character crisis among students is not merely caused by ignorance of moral values but rather by the absence of strong internalization of those values within the education system. Therefore, the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in providing character education based on Islamic principles is crucial and cannot be overlooked.

In the context of Sardonoarjo 1 Public Elementary School, PAI teachers face significant challenges in transforming students' character amid limited time allocation for religious subjects, heavy administrative workloads, and the lack of active parental participation in supporting children's character development. As Mulyasa (2011, p. 27) emphasized, the success of character education is largely determined by the exemplary conduct of teachers and the consistency in cultivating positive habits within the school environment.

The methods employed by PAI teachers to internalize character values among students include role modeling, delivering moral messages through lessons, and providing motivation through inspirational stories. This approach has proven effective in shaping students' character, especially when implemented consistently and supported by all elements within the school (Sauri & Rahmat, 2017, p. 57). Furthermore, PAI teachers also act as facilitators who create a religious learning environment and support students' engagement in religious practices at school.

The transformation of students' character through Islamic-based character education is not an instant process; rather, it requires a holistic and collaborative approach involving teachers, students, parents, and the community. As Zubaedi (2011, p. 130) asserts, the success of character education depends on the alignment between the values taught, the examples demonstrated, and the school culture that supports them.

Based on this background, this study aims to examine in depth how PAI teachers perform their strategic roles in transforming students' character at Sardonoarjo 1 Public Elementary School, as well as to identify the strategies, methods, and challenges encountered in the process of

implementing Islamic character education. This research is expected to provide a substantive contribution to strengthening the role of PAI teachers as agents of change in shaping a generation that is both morally upright and virtuous.

B. METHOD

This study employs a literature review approach. A literature review is a form of research conducted through an extensive examination of scholarly sources, including books, journals, and other relevant publications related to the topic under discussion (Amri et al., 2016). The references used in this study consist of both books and previous research findings that are relevant to the subject matter, serving as the primary basis for analysis and interpretation

C. DISCUSSION

1. The Strategic Role of Islamic Education Teachers in Students' Character Transformation

The findings of this study reveal that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at Sardonoharjo 1 Public Elementary School play a strategic role in shaping students' character through five key functions: educator, role model, facilitator, motivator, and evaluator. These roles reflect an Islamic pedagogical approach that emphasizes moral and character formation as the central pillar of education (Huda et al., 2021).

As educators, PAI teachers integrate Islamic values such as honesty, responsibility, tolerance, and empathy into the learning process. These values are not merely taught theoretically but contextualized through exemplary stories and value-based discussions relevant to students' daily lives. This approach enables students to not only understand values cognitively but also internalize them behaviorally in their everyday conduct.

The role of role model (*uswah hasanah*) holds significant influence in shaping students' character. Teachers serve as figures who are observed and imitated by students—in their attitude, speech, and behavior. Simple practices such as greeting students with *salaam*, showing kindness, and exercising patience when handling student behavior become tangible examples that positively shape students' attitudes. Such modeling is considered more effective than mere verbal instruction (Mufidah & Suyadi, 2020).

As facilitators, PAI teachers help create a religious atmosphere within the school environment. Religious programs such as collective *Dhuha* prayer, morning Qur'an recitation, and the "one day, one hadith" activity are part of daily routines that promote consistent

internalization of values. PAI teachers also provide opportunities for reflection and moral discussions, fostering active and participatory learning processes among students.

In their role as motivators, PAI teachers strive to inspire students to practice Islamic teachings voluntarily and sincerely. The motivation provided is not merely instructional but also affective, strengthening students' emotional attachment to moral and religious values. Teachers often employ inspirational stories or non-material rewards to encourage positive behavior among students.

Finally, as evaluators, teachers assess students' character development holistically. The assessment process includes direct observation, behavioral notes, and oral feedback. Evaluation is conducted not only formally through tests but also informally through daily reflections and continuous observation. This character evaluation aims to monitor behavioral consistency and reinforce students' positive changes.

By consistently and synergistically performing these five roles, PAI teachers contribute significantly to the process of students' character transformation at Sardonoarjo 1 Public Elementary School. Their influence extends beyond classroom activities into students' daily interactions within the school environment, ultimately strengthening their Islamic identity from an early age (Aziz & Zubaidah, 2023).

2. Islamic Based Character Education Strategies

The Islamic-based character education strategies implemented by Islamic Education (PAI) teachers at SD Negeri Sardonoarjo 1 focus on integrating Islamic values into both the learning process and students' daily lives. The approaches used consist of three main forms: integrative learning, value habituation, and contextual learning. These three components form a complementary and unified framework aimed at developing students' Islamic character in a sustainable manner.

First, the integrative learning approach is carried out by linking every PAI material to the real-life context of the students. This strategy allows students to understand that Islamic values do not stand alone as mere religious theories, but are embedded in daily life practices. For instance, the value of honesty is not only taught as a moral concept but is also connected to the story of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as an honest merchant. Likewise, the value of discipline is associated with the practice of performing prayers on time, while

responsibility is reflected through the completion of school assignments properly (Pramesti & Syamsudin, 2021).

This approach not only enhances students' cognitive understanding of religious values but also facilitates the internalization of those values into concrete behaviors. The PAI teacher provides direct examples of how these values are applied in learning activities, playtime, and social interactions. Consequently, students gain firsthand experience in applying Islamic teachings contextually and functionally in their lives.

Second, value habituation serves as a fundamental strategy in the process of Islamic character education. PAI teachers cultivate religious habits through daily routines such as reciting prayers before and after lessons, performing *duha* prayers in congregation, reading the Qur'an in the morning, and participating in daily programs such as "*one verse a day*" or "*morning recitation*." Through consistent and continuous repetition, these habits become ingrained in students' mindsets and behaviors. From an educational psychology perspective, habituation represents an affective strategy that allows moral values to attach to an individual gradually yet deeply (Rahman & Mahfud, 2021).

Third, the contextual learning strategy is designed to bridge the gap between the abstract values in Islamic teachings and the students' real-life experiences. PAI teachers actively design learning scenarios that are relevant to children's worlds, such as explaining the concept of *trustworthiness (amanah)* through practical examples like bringing their own school supplies, taking care of classmates' belongings, or completing assignments without cheating. In lessons about mutual assistance (*ta'awun*), students are guided to show empathy toward peers who struggle with lessons or fall behind on assignments (Fatimah & Rohman, 2020).

The contextual approach is also applied in moral discussions, where students are encouraged to reflect on events occurring around them. Teachers provide opportunities for students to express their perspectives on social issues they encounter in the media or community, and then relate them to Islamic teachings. This process not only cultivates students' critical thinking skills but also instills moral values more meaningfully, as they are derived from real-life experiences.

The effectiveness of these strategies can be observed from changes in students' behavior. Based on interviews and field observations, students who actively participate in religious

activities at school tend to exhibit more positive behaviors, such as being more respectful toward teachers and peers, demonstrating higher learning motivation, and showing greater discipline in school activities. One PAI teacher noted that habituation and contextual approaches have helped students to understand and practice Islamic values not out of compulsion, but through genuine awareness (Aziz & Zubaidah, 2023).

These findings are supported by evidence that integrative and contextual approaches are generally preferred by students because they are practical, engaging, and relevant to their everyday lives. Such strategies foster deep emotional and spiritual experiences within students. In this context, the teacher serves not only as a transmitter of knowledge but also as a moral guide and facilitator of students' personal development.

On the other hand, the success of Islamic-based character education strategies also depends greatly on a supportive school environment. School programs that promote Islamic values—such as *adhan* competitions, weekly Islamic studies, and social charity activities—help reinforce the process of character transformation. A religiously oriented school environment indirectly encourages students to adjust their behavior in accordance with prevailing Islamic values.

Nevertheless, PAI teachers face challenges in implementing these strategies. One major challenge is the lack of active parental involvement in reinforcing value habituation at home. Students who do not receive support from their family environment in practicing the values learned at school tend to display inconsistent behavior. Therefore, communication and collaboration between schools and parents are essential to ensure the continuity of Islamic character education between home and school (Wijaya & Handayani, 2023).

In conclusion, the Islamic-based character education strategies implemented by PAI teachers—through integrative, habituation, and contextual approaches—have proven to make significant contributions to students' character transformation. These strategies are not only pedagogically effective but also have positive psychological and social impacts on students' behavior and personality in the long term

3. Kendala Implementasi Pendidikan Karakter Islami

Implementasi pendidikan karakter berbasis Islam di sekolah dasar tidak terlepas dari berbagai kendala yang kompleks. Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) di SD Negeri



Sardonoharjo 1 menghadapi beragam tantangan yang berpengaruh terhadap efektivitas proses transformasi karakter siswa. Kendala-kendala tersebut perlu dianalisis secara komprehensif guna merumuskan solusi strategis yang relevan dan berkelanjutan.

Kendala pertama yang paling nyata adalah keterbatasan alokasi waktu untuk mata pelajaran PAI dalam kurikulum sekolah. Dengan hanya dua jam pelajaran per minggu, guru memiliki ruang yang sangat terbatas untuk menyampaikan materi sekaligus menginternalisasikan nilai-nilai karakter. Situasi ini menuntut guru untuk melakukan seleksi ketat terhadap materi ajar dan memilih strategi pembelajaran yang mampu mengintegrasikan nilai karakter secara efektif dalam waktu singkat. Penelitian Fatimah dan Rohman (2020) menegaskan bahwa durasi pembelajaran yang pendek menjadi penghambat utama dalam membentuk habitus nilai Islami secara mendalam dan konsisten.

Kendala kedua adalah minimnya sinergi antara sekolah dan keluarga dalam membentuk karakter siswa. Beberapa orang tua cenderung menyerahkan sepenuhnya proses pendidikan karakter kepada pihak sekolah, tanpa adanya penguatan nilai di lingkungan rumah. Padahal, lingkungan keluarga merupakan fondasi awal dalam pembentukan moral anak. Data lapangan menunjukkan bahwa siswa yang berasal dari keluarga yang aktif mendampingi proses pembelajaran di rumah memiliki kecenderungan karakter yang lebih kuat, stabil, dan konsisten dibandingkan siswa yang tidak mendapatkan dukungan serupa. Hal ini memperkuat pandangan bahwa pendidikan karakter hanya akan berhasil jika ada kesinambungan nilai antara rumah dan sekolah (Wijaya & Handayani, 2023).

Kendala ketiga berkaitan dengan pengaruh lingkungan eksternal dan media digital yang semakin luas menjangkau kehidupan anak-anak. Konten digital yang bersifat bebas dan tidak terkurasi sering kali menyajikan nilai-nilai yang bertentangan dengan ajaran Islam. Siswa mudah terpapar pada gaya hidup permisif, budaya kekerasan, serta informasi yang tidak sesuai dengan nilai akhlakul karimah. Dalam hal ini, guru PAI harus mampu membekali siswa dengan keterampilan literasi digital dan kemampuan menyaring informasi agar tidak mudah terbawa arus negatif. Nugroho dan Rahmawati (2022) menekankan pentingnya penguatan nilai filterisasi informasi melalui pendidikan agama yang adaptif terhadap perkembangan zaman.

Kendala keempat adalah tingginya beban administratif yang harus ditanggung guru. Tuntutan administrasi seperti pembuatan laporan, dokumentasi kegiatan, dan pelaksanaan

asesmen cenderung menyita waktu dan energi guru, sehingga perhatian terhadap pembinaan karakter siswa menjadi terpinggirkan. Guru PAI mengungkapkan bahwa alokasi waktu mereka lebih banyak digunakan untuk menyelesaikan tugas administratif daripada membangun relasi emosional dan spiritual dengan siswa secara mendalam. Kondisi ini berdampak pada berkurangnya interaksi intensif antara guru dan siswa dalam membentuk karakter yang kuat dan bermakna.

Secara keseluruhan, keempat kendala tersebut menunjukkan bahwa implementasi pendidikan karakter berbasis Islam tidak dapat berdiri sendiri. Dibutuhkan intervensi sistemik yang mencakup kebijakan pendidikan yang mendukung, kolaborasi lintas pihak, serta penguatan kapasitas guru PAI sebagai pendidik dan pembina karakter. Tanpa upaya bersama, transformasi karakter siswa akan terhambat dan berisiko menjadi agenda formalitas semata.

4. Challenges in Implementing Islamic Character Education

The implementation of Islamic-based character education in elementary schools is inseparable from a variety of complex challenges. The Islamic Education (PAI) teachers at SD Negeri Sardonoharjo 1 face multiple obstacles that affect the effectiveness of the character transformation process among students. These challenges must be analyzed comprehensively in order to formulate relevant and sustainable strategic solutions.

The first and most apparent challenge is the limited time allocation for Islamic Education (PAI) in the school curriculum. With only two instructional hours per week, teachers have very little room to both deliver the learning material and internalize character values. This situation requires teachers to carefully select the teaching materials and choose learning strategies that can effectively integrate moral and spiritual values within a limited timeframe. Research by Fatimah and Rohman (2020) emphasizes that short learning durations are a major hindrance to forming a deep and consistent habitus of Islamic values among students.

The second challenge concerns the lack of synergy between schools and families in shaping students' character. Some parents tend to delegate the entire responsibility for character education to the school, without reinforcing those values within the home environment. In fact, the family serves as the foundational setting for moral development. Field data indicate that students whose parents are actively involved in home-based learning processes tend to exhibit stronger, more stable, and consistent character traits than those who receive little or no parental

support. This finding reinforces the notion that character education can only succeed when there is a continuity of values between home and school (Wijaya & Handayani, 2023).

The third challenge relates to the influence of external environments and digital media, which have increasingly permeated children's lives. Unfiltered and freely accessible digital content often presents values that contradict Islamic teachings. Students are easily exposed to permissive lifestyles, violent culture, and information that deviates from the principles of *akhlakul karimah* (noble character). In this context, PAI teachers must equip students with digital literacy skills and the ability to critically filter information to avoid being influenced by negative content. Nugroho and Rahmawati (2022) highlight the importance of strengthening the moral filtering of information through religious education that adapts to contemporary developments.

The fourth challenge involves the heavy administrative workload borne by teachers. Administrative demands such as report writing, activity documentation, and assessment implementation tend to consume much of the teachers' time and energy, thereby reducing their focus on students' character development. PAI teachers report that much of their working hours are spent fulfilling administrative requirements rather than fostering emotional and spiritual relationships with students. This condition diminishes the depth and intensity of teacher-student interactions essential for building strong and meaningful character formation.

Overall, these four challenges illustrate that the implementation of Islamic-based character education cannot stand alone. It requires systemic intervention, including supportive educational policies, cross-sector collaboration, and capacity building for PAI teachers as educators and character mentors. Without a collective effort, the transformation of students' character risks becoming merely a formal agenda rather than a transformative educational mission.

D. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the role of the *kyai* as an educator has a significant impact on shaping Islamic character values and enhancing the life satisfaction of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) alumni. The *kyai's* role extends beyond the mere transmission of knowledge; it also encompasses character formation through exemplary conduct and intensive spiritual



guidance. This holistic educational process enables *santri* (students) to internalize Islamic values such as honesty, discipline, and responsibility in a profound and meaningful way.

The Islamic character values instilled through the *kyai*'s role have been shown to produce long-term effects on alumni's psychological well-being and overall life satisfaction. Alumni who received intensive guidance from their *kyai* demonstrated a greater ability to find meaning in life and to face various challenges with resilience. The integration of spiritual values into daily life, as modeled by the *kyai*, helps alumni cultivate stronger adaptability and inner strength in navigating personal and social difficulties.

The findings of this study affirm that the success of character education in *pesantren* is highly dependent on the *kyai*'s central role as a moral and spiritual figure. The combination of an effective *kyai* in transmitting Islamic values and the strong internalization of these values within the *santri* establishes a solid foundation for long-term life satisfaction among alumni. This underscores the importance of maintaining and further developing Islamic character-based educational models in *pesantren*, with the *kyai* serving as the primary role model and moral exemplar.

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