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THE ROLE OF PAI TEACHERS IN FORMING STUDENTS' RELIGIOUS CHARACTER AT MTS MA'ARIF KERTEK WONOSOBO

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in shaping the religious character of students at MTs Ma'arif Kertek, Wonosobo, the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence this, and the results of student religious character formation. This study uses a qualitative approach with field research. Data were obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation involving Islamic Religious Education teachers, principals, and students. Data were analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions drawn using source triangulation for validity. The results indicate that Islamic Religious Education teachers act as educators, mentors, motivators, and role models through ongoing learning, religious practices, guidance, motivation, and role models. The success of religious character formation is supported by the school's religious culture, the involvement of the entire school community, student awareness, and the support of family and peers. However, the influence of social media, social environment, and lack of parental supervision remain obstacles. These roles contribute to the development of students' religious character, demonstrated through devotion to worship, discipline, responsibility, honesty, and courtesy in daily life. Thus, the formation of students' religious character occurs through a continuous process of habituation and mentoring within the school environment.

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has brought about significant changes in the lives of students. The internet and social media have become an integral part of adolescents' daily activities, both for communication, obtaining information, and supporting the learning process. On the one hand, social media provides benefits in the form of easy access to information and broadening horizons. However, on the other hand, uncontrolled use of social media has the potential to influence adolescent character development. (Amalia 2023). (Ramadhan dan Hidayat 2024) also explain that the development of social media is a concern in the character development of the younger generation because it can influence moral and religious values if not used wisely. This phenomenon indicates that character building is a critical challenge facing education in today's digital era.

One character dimension that requires serious attention in responding to contemporary educational challenges is religious character. Religious character refers to attitudes and behaviors that reflect a person's adherence to religious teachings, which are manifested in the relationship with God, other individuals, and the surrounding environment (Gunawan 2022).It is not limited to ritual religious practices, but is also reflected in everyday moral behaviors such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, politeness, and empathy toward others. In the context of education, religious character plays a crucial role in shaping students who are not only academically competent but also morally responsible. However, the development of religious character in students is often challenged by environmental influences and the tendency to prioritize cognitive achievement over affective and behavioral development. Therefore, systematic and continuous efforts are needed to ensure that religious values are not only understood as knowledge but are also internalized and reflected in students' daily habits and behavior through consistent educational practices (Ahsanulkhaq 2019).

Efforts to develop religious character cannot be separated from the role of teachers, particularly Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers. PAI teachers hold a strategic position because they are tasked not only with conveying religious knowledge but also instilling Islamic values through learning, habituation, guidance, motivation, and role modeling. In the educational process, teachers are figures who interact directly with students and thus have a significant influence on the development of their attitudes and behavior. Therefore, the success of religious character formation is determined not only by the implementation of religious programs in schools, but also by the teacher's ability to direct, guide, and set a good example for students. (Judrah dkk. 2024), explain that Islamic Religious Education teachers play a crucial role in building student character through various educational activities oriented toward strengthening moral and religious values.

Various studies have examined the formation of students' religious character through the role of teachers and school-based religious activities. (Ahsanulkhaq 2019) explains that continuous religious practices can contribute to the internalization of religious character in students. Similarly, (Basri dkk. 2023) found that routine religious activities play an important role in shaping students' daily religious behavior. In addition, (Judrah dkk. 2024) highlight that Islamic Religious Education teachers contribute significantly to character building through their roles as educators, mentors, motivators, and role models.

However, most of these studies tend to focus either on the impact of religious activities in general or on the role of teachers in a broad sense, without deeply examining how these roles are operationalized simultaneously in classroom practice and school culture. Specifically, studies that integrate the multiple roles of Islamic Religious Education teachers—namely as educators, mentors, motivators, and role models—with an analysis of supporting factors, inhibiting factors, and learning outcomes in the context of Madrasah Tsanawiyah remain limited. Therefore, this study is conducted to address this gap by providing a more comprehensive analysis of Islamic Religious Education teachers' roles in shaping students' religious character at the madrasah level.

MTs Ma'arif Kertek Wonosobo is an educational institution that prioritizes the development of students' religious character through various religious activities, such as Quran recitation, Quran reading and writing (BTQ), congregational prayer, mujahadah (religious study), and group prayer before class. These activities serve as a means of habituating religious values in students. However, students still participate in religious activities because of school obligations

and not fully based on personal awareness. Furthermore, some students arrive late, lack responsibility for assigned tasks, and fail to demonstrate consistent religious behavior in their daily lives. This indicates that religious character formation requires ongoing reinforcement and guidance.

These issues demonstrate that religious character formation is not achieved solely through religious activities; teachers also need to be involved in educating, guiding, motivating, and providing role models for students. Therefore, studying the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers is crucial for understanding the process of religious character formation in students, along with the factors that support and hinder it in the madrasah environment.

Based on the above description, this study aims to describe the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in shaping the religious character of students at MTs Ma'arif Kertek Wonosobo, identify the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence it, and describe the results of religious character formation demonstrated by students. The results of this study are expected to contribute to strengthening religious character education in madrasas, particularly those related to the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative field research design conducted at MTs Ma'arif Kertek Wonosobo. The researcher acted as the primary instrument, playing a direct role in data collection and analysis throughout the research process. The informants in this study consisted of the principal, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, and students from grades VII, VIII, and IX, who were selected based on their relevance to the focus of the study on religious character formation.

Data were collected through interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted to explore the role of PAI teachers in shaping students' religious character, including supporting and inhibiting factors as well as observed outcomes. Observations were used to examine the implementation of religious activities and students' behavior in the school environment, while documentation was utilized to support and verify findings from the field.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Shaping Students' Religious Character at MTs Ma'arif Kertek Wonosobo.

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at MTs Ma'arif Kertek Wonosobo act as educators by connecting learning materials to students' daily lives. Mr. Slamet Chaufin explained that the material on Islamic Creed, Morals, and History of Islamic Culture is not only studied as knowledge but also used as a guideline in daily life. Observations show that teachers connect the Quranic material as a guide to life with students' habits and encourage them to make Quranic reading a habit at home. This role is reinforced through various religious habituation activities, such as Quranic recitation, BTQ (recitation of the Quran), congregational prayer, mujahadah (religious prayer), and group prayer. Learning combined with habituation helps students understand and apply religious values in their daily lives. (Musyarofah dkk. 2025) explained that

the formation of religious character will be more effective if learning is accompanied by habituation that is carried out continuously.

The role of teachers is also evident in the ongoing guidance provided. Mr. Slamet Chaufin explained that teachers involve students in finding solutions to problems they face, while Mr. Arif uses an approach tailored to each student's character, both through assertiveness and a more personalized approach. Guidance is provided through advice, supervision, religious sermons, and support during religious activities. Observations indicate that students who arrive late are directed to perform the Duha prayer or read the Quran before entering class. This approach demonstrates that guidance does not focus on punishment, but rather on building awareness and gradually improving student behavior. This approach aligns with the opinion (Utami dkk. 2024) that consistent guidance helps students apply religious values in their daily lives.

In addition to their role as guides, Islamic Religious Education teachers also function as motivators in shaping students' religious character. This motivational role is implemented through various strategies, including providing advice, emphasizing the importance of worship, reinforcing positive behavior, and sharing inspirational narratives derived from prophetic stories as well as real-life experiences. These approaches are designed not only to inform students cognitively but also to influence their attitudes and internal awareness.

Students reported that teachers frequently encouraged them to balance study and worship, while also reframing both activities as essential responsibilities rather than burdens. This form of consistent encouragement contributes to the gradual internalization of religious values, as students begin to understand and practice them based not solely on school regulations but on personal awareness and conviction. Over time, this motivational process supports the development of more stable and self-directed religious behavior among students.

The formation of religious character is also supported by the example of teachers. Teachers demonstrate discipline, courtesy, and responsibility in carrying out their duties and are directly involved in various religious activities at school. The principal explained that Islamic Religious Education teachers not only guide students in participating in religious activities but also act as imams and accompany them in their implementation. Observations showed that teachers arrive on time, greet students at the school gate, and accompany them during the Duha and Mujahadah prayers. This exemplary behavior is felt by students, who consider the teachers' discipline, patience, courtesy, and religious habits worthy of emulation. (Wibowo dkk. 2024) explain that role models are a crucial element in character formation because students tend to learn through the behavior they observe directly.

The role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in shaping the religious character of students at MTs Ma'arif Kertek Wonosobo is not only evident in the classroom learning process but also through guidance, motivation, and role models demonstrated in daily life. These four roles complement each other, ensuring that religious values are not only understood as knowledge but also internalized and applied in students' behavior. Through this process, religious character formation occurs sustainably, both through learning activities and the religious culture that develops within the madrasah environment.

3.2. Factors Supporting and Inhibiting the Role of Teachers in Shaping Students' Religious Character at MTs Ma'arif Kertek Wonosobo.

The development of students' religious character at MTs Ma'arif Kertek Wonosobo is supported by several internal factors originating from the school environment. Cooperation between teachers is a crucial factor in building discipline and accustoming students to participate in various religious activities. Mr. Slamet Chaufin explained that all elements of the madrasah are involved in supervising and guiding students, from enforcing time discipline to implementing school activities. This role is reinforced by the involvement of teachers and student council (OSIS) administrators in overseeing congregational prayers and other religious activities. Furthermore, habituation through religious programs such as Qur'an recitation, BTQ (Quotes of the Quran), Duha prayer, mujahadah prayer, and congregational Zuhur prayer provides a space for students to practice religious values directly. These habits gradually encourage students to read the Qur'an, perform religious services, and engage in various positive activities without constant teacher direction. (Basri dkk. 2023) also emphasized that regular religious activities play a crucial role in shaping religious character through a continuous process of habituation. The availability of supporting facilities such as the Quran, loudspeakers, and prayer equipment also facilitates the implementation of religious activities in schools.

Supporting factors also come from the environment outside the school. Parents play a crucial role in shaping students' religious habits through attention, supervision, and fostering the habit of worship at home. Teachers assess that students who receive support from their families tend to exhibit better behavior than those who receive less attention. In addition to family, a positive friendship environment also supports the formation of religious character. Students tend to imitate the habits of their peers, including participating in religious activities. Some students report being more motivated to worship due to the encouragement and positive influence of their peers.

On the other hand, the development of religious character still faces several obstacles stemming from the school environment. One such obstacle is the limited availability of worship facilities. The lack of dedicated places of worship means that congregational prayers must be adjusted to weather conditions and sometimes held in individual classrooms. This situation makes teacher supervision of religious observances less than optimal. Furthermore, not all students have the same level of religious awareness. Some students still participate in religious activities due to school obligations, lack enthusiasm for them, and still require reminders from teachers to follow religious activities in an orderly manner.

Another obstacle in the formation of students' religious character arises from the family and social environment. The increasing and often uncontrolled use of mobile phones and social media exposes students to various external influences that may shape their behavior, attention, and daily habits in ways that are not always aligned with school-based character education. In addition, peer interactions within students' social environment can significantly affect their attitudes and behavior, as adolescents tend to adopt and imitate habits that are prevalent among their peers.

This situation is further compounded by limited parental supervision, particularly when parents are occupied with work obligations, resulting in a lack of reinforcement of religious habits at home. Consequently, there is a gap between values instilled at school and those practiced in the

home environment, which weakens the consistency of religious character formation and reduces the overall effectiveness of the educational process.

In general, the development of religious character in students at MTs Ma'arif Kertek Wonosobo is influenced by interrelated factors, both within the school and outside the school environment. Religious practices, cooperation within the school community, student awareness, family support, and a positive friendship environment are factors that strengthen the process of religious character formation. Conversely, limited resources, low awareness among some students, the influence of social media, a less supportive social environment, and minimal parental supervision remain challenges that require attention in efforts to sustainably shape students' religious character.

3.3. Results of Religious Character Development in Students at MTs Ma'arif Kertek Wonosobo.

The development of religious character in students at MTs Ma'arif Kertek Wonosobo is evident in their increased devotion to worship and discipline in carrying out daily activities. Mr. Arif explained that most students have developed a sense of belonging to religious activities without constant reminders from teachers. Regularly participating in congregational prayer, Quran recitation, BTQ (Quran Recitation), and other religious activities helps students develop a sense of worship while also accustoming them to respecting time and complying with school rules. These habits demonstrate that consistent religious practices contribute to the development of discipline and devotion in students.

Changes are also evident in students' honesty and responsibility. Ms. Ifa explained that dishonest behavior, previously found among some students, has decreased, while Mr. Arif assessed that most students have demonstrated responsibility in carrying out their duties and obligations. This development demonstrates that the religious values instilled through learning, habituation, and guidance not only influence the performance of religious services but also influence students' behavior in carrying out daily obligations.

Religious character is also evident in students' polite behavior in interactions with teachers and peers. Ms. Ifa explained that the routine implementation of religious habits, coupled with motivation and teacher role models, influences changes in students' speech and behavior. Students are becoming accustomed to respecting teachers, being mindful of their words, and respecting others in their daily lives. These attitudes demonstrate that religious character is reflected not only in their relationship with God through worship, but also in their social relationships with others. The changes seen in devotion to worship, discipline, honesty, responsibility and good manners show that students' religious character develops through a process of habituation and mentoring that is carried out on an ongoing basis. This religious character is not only reflected in the implementation of worship, but also in the attitudes and behavior of students when interacting with teachers, peers and the school environment.

4. CONCLUSION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at MTs Ma'arif Kertek Wonosobo play a role in shaping students' religious character through their roles as educators, mentors, motivators, and role

models. This role is realized through learning that connects material to daily life, fostering religious activities, mentoring students, providing motivation, and exemplifying attitudes and behaviors. These four roles complement each other, so that religious character formation occurs not only in the knowledge aspect but also in the habits and behaviors of students. The formation of students' religious character is supported by religious habits, cooperation among the school community, student awareness, family support, and a positive friendship environment. Obstacles faced include limited facilities, low awareness among some students, the influence of social media, an unsupportive social environment, and lack of parental supervision. The various efforts made by PAI teachers contribute to the development of students' religious character, demonstrated through devotion to worship, discipline, honesty, responsibility, and good manners in daily life.

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