The Urgency of Islamic Education in Shaping Religious Character to Improve Students' Moral Quality

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Abstract: The purpose of this research is to understand the urgency of Islamic education in improving moral quality. The method used in this study is descriptive analysis. In this research, the descriptive analysis method is specifically applied, which not only describes but also provides explanations and draws conclusions from the discussed material. This research is qualitative in nature. The article discusses the important role of Islamic education in shaping religious character to enhance students' moral quality. Islamic religious education equips children with an understanding of religious values, introduces them to religious teachings, and fosters obedience to Allah SWT. Meanwhile, moral education helps children understand the difference between right and wrong, and develop good attitudes and empathy towards others and the environment. The following are the details of the urgency of Islamic education in shaping religious character to improve students' moral quality: 1) It provides physical and spiritual growth, thus forming a personality that thinks before acting; 2) It enhances the ability to manage thoughts on how to behave appropriately and correctly; 3) It fosters self-confidence and gratitude; 4) It shapes an Islamic personality and respect for others; 5) It anticipates negative influences.

Keywords:
Islamic Education, Religious Character, Moral Quality of Students

Abstrak: Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui apa urgensi dari pendidikan Islam yang dapat meningkatkan kualitas moral. Metode yang dipergunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode deskriptif analisis. Dalam penelitian ini spesifikasinya yakni metode deskriptif analisis, disamping menuliskan juga memberikan penjelasan serta mengambil kesimpulan dari materi yang dibahas. Jenis penelitian ini adalah penelitian kualitatif. Pembahasan artikel ini adalah pendidikan Islam mempunyai peranan yang sangat penting dalam membentuk karakter religius untuk meningkatkan kualitas moral siswa. Pendidikan agama Islam membekali anak dengan pemahaman nilai-nilai agama, mengenalkan ajaran agama, dan membentuk rasa ta'at terhadap Allah SWT. Sedangkan pendidikan moral membantu anak memahami perbedaan antara benar dan salah, serta mengembangkan sikap baik dan empati terhadap sesama manusia dan lingkungan. Berikut pemaparan dari urgensi pendidikan Islam dalam pembentukan karakter religius untuk meningkatkan kualitas moral siswa: 1. Memberikan pertumbuhan jasmani dan rohani sehingga terbentuknya kepribadian yang berfikir sebelum bertindak; 2. Menambah wawasan mengelola pemikiran tentang bagaimana bersikap yang baik dan benar; 3. Menumbuhkan rasa percaya diri dan

Kata Kunci:

Pendidikan Islam, Karakter Relegius, Kualitas Moral Siswa.

bersyukur atas dirinya; 4. Membentuk kepribadian yang Islami dan menghargai sesame; 5. Mengantisipasi hal negatif yang didapatkannya.

A. Introduction

In this era, many of the nation's successors have moral qualities that are far from the morals expected by society and religion. Due to this, as many of the nation's successors have poor morals, the world of education should focus more on religious education. Education is an essential need in life. Living without education is like a house without supporting pillars. Islamic education, in particular, is fundamentally an effort to develop and optimize the potential of each individual, so that our life goals as servants of Allah SWT and His caliphs in this world can be maximally achieved. This potential includes both physical and spiritual aspects, including will, intellect, emotions, and more (Sinta, S. D., Aminah, S., Safitri, M., & Andriani, Amelia Putri, 2024). As we know, education is an effort to develop and cultivate human personality, both in terms of physical and spiritual aspects, in a gradual process. Education provides an optimization of abilities or potential with balance and harmony in various dimensions of life. Thus, we need to focus on the moral dimension through the existing education. General education provides students or the nation's successors with knowledge and general conduct, focusing on the societal environment. From this, we understand that the general education we receive is not enough to enhance the moral quality of the nation's successors. There is a need for education that can shape a character capable of improving the moral quality of the nation's successors. Moral or ethical education is also an important pillar in shaping the religious character of elementary school students. The goal of moral education is to enable children to differentiate between right and wrong and develop good attitudes and behaviors when interacting with others and their surroundings. Through moral education, children will be instilled with universal values such as honesty, tolerance, cooperation, and compassion towards others (Astuti et al., 2022).

The nation's successors must have a character that supports their personal and national progress while adhering to rules and regulations that do not violate religious commandments. Religious character is one of the character values developed in schools.

Heri Gunawan defines religious character as a value related to one's relationship with God, encompassing thoughts, words, and actions that are always based on divine values and/or religious teachings (Gunawan, 2014). A child's personality is also shaped by the parenting patterns applied in daily life, both in educational settings and within the family environment (Parhan, M., & Kurniawan, 2020). Through religion, human life can be orderly and purposeful, ultimately creating peace and tranquility in life. Therefore, in the world of education, efforts must be made to form the religious character of students. Religious character is an aspect of human personality that cannot stand alone; it must be nurtured and habituated in children from an early age to avoid hindering their developmental tasks and to inspire their willingness to be religiously capable. This is because the ability to be religious does not develop on its own but is achieved through encouragement and guidance from others (Miftahul Jannah, 2019).

We know that in shaping religious character, educators must pay attention and focus so that it will improve the moral quality of the students. This religious character formation can be obtained through Islamic education. Islamic education is an effort to encourage, develop, and invite students to be dynamic, based on high values and noble life, consciously carried out by educators toward the development of both physical and spiritual aspects to form a perfect personality, known as *insan kamil* (Mahmudi, 2019).

From the explanation above, we understand that Islamic education plays an important role and is related to the formation of religious character to enhance moral quality. If the moral quality of students is good and in accordance with religious commandments and regulations, it will create an environment where students' quality of life is more civilized and knowledgeable in their daily lives. Once they become civilized and knowledgeable, they will benefit themselves, their surroundings, society, the country, and even their religion. Based on the introduction the writer has presented, this study will discuss the urgency of Islamic education in the formation of religious character to enhance the moral quality of students.

B.   Method

The method used in this research is descriptive analysis. Specifically, this research employs a descriptive analysis method, in addition to writing, providing explanations, and drawing conclusions from the discussed material.

This type of research is qualitative. According to Sugiyono, qualitative research generates descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from individuals or groups who are observed (Sugiyono, 2019). The sources used in this research come from journals, books, and e-books that are relevant to the research topic. This research utilizes a literature study. The literature study consists of four steps: first, selecting a topic, then searching for and selecting articles or books related to the research title, followed by analyzing and synthesizing the literature, and finally organizing the writing.

C.   Results and Discussion

Islamic education is an essential aspect of the lives of Muslims and cannot be separated from it. This is because education helps individuals achieve their life goals and provides them with more knowledge and understanding of the true meaning of the life they are living. Education also serves as the foundation for humanity to start their lives. It helps people mature or, in other words, "humanizes humans." Additionally, education allows individuals to grow and develop properly, assisting them in carrying out their tasks as human beings. Islamic education is a learning system that is based on Islamic knowledge and has been applied since ancient times (Syafe'i, 2015). Islamic religious education is not only to fulfill intellectual needs but also to provide an understanding and application of religion in life and to serve as a life guide. The explanation above shows that the responsibility of Islamic religious education teachers is to educate children or students with the aim of instilling Islamic values so that these values are ingrained in them through their behavior and personality in daily life. Therefore, Islamic religious education is meant to prepare students to believe, understand, and practice the teachings of Islam. This education is provided through guidance, instruction, or training designed to achieve predetermined goals (Adirinarso, 2023).

Education in general has a meaning that, when linked to Islam, becomes a religious system that implicitly explains its unique characteristics. The focus on

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Islamic education is often lacking in the attention it receives from the government, teachers, or within the education system today. However, the ultimate goal of Islamic education is to guide students to become pious individuals who fear Allah SWT. When Islamic education is prioritized and focused on in today's education system, it will significantly impact the nation's quality. However, what we see today in Indonesia's education system is that it often focuses solely on worldly or general knowledge in schools rather than religious education (Amel Nurain M. Sabudi, 2021).

As educators, it is important to pay attention to the quality of moral values or ethics instilled in students to ensure the success of character formation that is civilized and able to apply the knowledge they have acquired properly. Especially for Islamic education teachers, they must be responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and gradually correcting the ethics and behavior of the students they teach. The tasks of Islamic education teachers must be continually controlled and evaluated to guide and direct students' hearts toward Allah SWT. This, in turn, will help shape the religious character of the students, ultimately improving their moral quality. Islamic education contributes significantly to the formation of students' religious character. Actions based on certain beliefs are referred to as religious perspectives. A person's way of thinking and acting, oriented by faith, will show their religious attitude. By integrating this into all levels of education, character education can be strengthened and instilled in students (Ainiyah, 2023).

In the context of globalization, Islamic education must reflect its teachings while considering the development of students' knowledge and ethics. This is because, as we know, today's generation faces many moral issues. Examples include students dressing inappropriately for their age, openly disrespecting their teachers, spending excessive time on their phones, and engaging in bullying and other inappropriate behaviors (Khobir, 2009).

These issues are not only influenced by the school environment but also by the family environment. However, as teachers, we must be fully aware and

put in maximum effort to ensure that we can impart high-quality morals and ethics to our students. This can start by improving and evaluating the teaching methods we use, assessing the learning processes we have implemented, refining the strategies and lesson designs based on the results of these evaluations, and focusing on how to improve or adjust the behavior and attitudes of the students. Islamic education must be able to anticipate the developments in the era of globalization and technological advances by fostering a complete personality, particularly in terms of rational reasoning and critical thinking, without violating the Qur'an and Hadith.

Islamic education helps individuals develop in at least three aspects: (1) faith, covering all pillars of faith, (2) worship, covering all pillars of Islam, and (3) character, covering all praiseworthy moral values (Patoni, 2022). The potentials developed in Islamic education include basic potential, intelligence and talent, instincts, character, desire/impulse, and heredity (Mayasari, 2015). This explanation shows that the aspects developed and nurtured by Islamic education are comprehensive and significant, capable of improving moral quality if Islamic education is properly implemented and focused on, resulting in the formation of a religious character driven by students' awareness and motivation.

The following outlines the urgency of Islamic education in shaping religious character to enhance students' moral quality: 1) Nurturing physical and spiritual growth to form a personality that thinks before acting; 2) Expanding knowledge on how to behave properly and correctly; 3) Instilling self-confidence and gratitude; 4) Shaping an Islamic personality that respects others; 5) Anticipating negative influences; 6) Enabling students to face problems calmly and use technology wisely; 7) Empowering students to develop religiousness, which helps them understand, appreciate, evaluate, feel, and choose the right actions to take.

1. **The Importance of Islamic Education**

Islamic Religious Education is one of the subjects taught in schools and universities. It is considered crucial in shaping the religious character of students. In countries with large Muslim populations, such as Indonesia, Islam plays a central role in religious education at schools. Through Islamic Religious Education, students gain knowledge about religious teachings in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunnah, thus forming individuals with strong religious character. Instilling spiritual values derived from religious teachings is an essential aspect of education that families should take seriously for their children. This builds a strong foundation that acts as a natural filter for children, awakening their spiritual consciousness and strength from an early age (Tahang, 2010).

The importance of Islamic education in shaping children's character by parents is essentially a conscious and planned effort to prepare children to understand, believe, appreciate, and practice Islamic teachings through guidance, training, and direction. Character building can be done by forming habits, especially good habits. Character development is heavily influenced by the environment, starting from the family, school, community, and extending to national life. Character development in the nation should be a top priority in national development (Moh. Fachri, 2014). This is carried out through a long process with the goal of optimizing the child's basic potential (fitrah) through intellectual and spiritual development based on Islamic teachings derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah, to achieve happiness in this world and the hereafter. Thus, the child will grow and develop into an individual who is well-educated both intellectually and spiritually, grounded in faith and knowledge (M. Abdul Somad, 2021).

Islamic education provides a strong foundation for the religious values that serve as the basis for students' daily lives. Islamic teachings cover various aspects of life, including ethics, morality, and good conduct.

Values such as honesty, justice, responsibility, and respect are instilled from an early age through Islamic education, shaping a character based on religious teachings. Islamic education focuses not only on academics but also on students' spiritual development. Through activities such as prayer, reading the Qur'an, and memorizing hadith, students are taught to always remain close to God. This spiritual development helps students face life's challenges with calmness and confidence in God, encouraging them to always strive to live a good and righteous life (Choli, 2019).

According to Ramayulis, the goals of Islamic religious education include achieving harmony, balance, and equilibrium between human relationships with Allah SWT (God Almighty), human relationships with others, relationships with oneself, and relationships with other creatures and the environment (Ramayulis, 2020). The aim is to enhance the faith, understanding, appreciation, and practice of Islam in students, making them Muslim individuals who are faithful, pious to Allah SWT, and have noble character in personal, social, national, and state life. Additionally, the primary goal of Islamic education is the formation of noble character. Islam emphasizes the importance of good behavior and noble character in social interactions. Through Islamic education, students are taught the importance of doing good to others, avoiding bad deeds, and always striving to become individuals with commendable character. This helps students develop positive character traits that benefit society. Furthermore, Islamic education gives students an understanding of the negative consequences of behaviors that do not align with religious teachings, such as lying, stealing, and violence. Thus, Islamic education serves as an effective tool in preventing negative behaviors, helping students stay on the right path.

Theories and literature on the importance of Islamic education in the moral and character development of students:

1) **Character Education Theory**

This theory focuses on developing ethical and moral values in students. Islamic education, with its emphasis on noble character, aligns well with this theory. It provides a foundation for values such as honesty, responsibility, and caring for others, which are central to character education.

2) **Lawrence Kohlberg's Cognitive Moral Development Theory**

Kohlberg's theory of moral development explains that a person's moral development occurs through a series of developmental stages. Islamic education helps students understand and internalize moral values at each stage, from understanding religious rules and laws to developing higher ethical principles based on Islamic teachings.

3) **Lev Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory**

Vygotsky's theory emphasizes the importance of social and cultural interaction in the learning process. In the context of Islamic education, interaction with teachers, parents, and the surrounding environment practicing Islamic values can help students internalize religious teachings and apply them in everyday life.

Supporting Literature:

1) "The Concept of Education in Islam" by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas: Al-Attas explains that Islamic education is not just about knowledge transfer but also about character formation. Education should instill spiritual and moral values integral to Islamic teachings.

2) "Islamic Education in Shaping Noble Character" by Azyumardi Azra: Azra emphasizes that Islamic education plays a central role in shaping noble character and student values. Through Islamic education, students are taught to internalize the ethical and moral values taught by the religion.

3) "Educational Philosophy in the Islamic World" by Syed Sajjad Rizvi: Rizvi discusses that education in Islam aims to develop both the

intellectual and spiritual aspects of students, emphasizing the importance of character development in line with Islamic values.

2. **The Influence of Islamic Education on Religious Character**
Islamic education plays an important role in shaping students' religious character through various methods and approaches that emphasize moral and ethical values taught in Islam. Several concrete examples show how Islamic education can shape students' religious character.

For example, teaching religious values through the curriculum: In Islamic schools, the curriculum usually includes subjects such as Qur'anic Exegesis, Hadith, Fiqh, and Ethics. Through these subjects, students are taught fundamental Islamic teachings, such as honesty, patience, justice, and respect for others. One concrete example is teaching students the importance of honesty through the story of Prophet Muhammad, who was known as Al-Amin (the trustworthy). The teacher explains how Prophet Muhammad always spoke the truth in every situation. Students are then encouraged to practice honesty in their daily lives, such as always being truthful to their parents and friends.

Another example is daily worship routines: Islamic education also teaches and encourages students to practice daily worship, such as the five daily prayers, reading the Qur'an, and praying. In Islamic schools, students often perform congregational Dhuhr prayer together at school. This activity not only teaches the obligation of prayer but also instills a sense of togetherness and discipline in fulfilling religious commands.

Character-based assessment: School assessments are not only based on academic achievement but also on students' ethics and behavior. A concrete example is schools giving awards to students who demonstrate good behavior, such as honesty, responsibility, and devotion to worship. These awards can be in the form of certificates or special recognition during flag ceremonies.

Implementing Islamic education in the education system faces various challenges that can affect the effectiveness and success of the learning process. One challenge is the diversity of students' backgrounds. Schools often have students from various cultural and religious backgrounds. This diversity can influence students' reception and understanding of Islamic education. To address this challenge, schools need to adopt an inclusive approach that respects diversity. Islamic education programs should be designed to be relevant and acceptable to all students, regardless of their backgrounds. Teachers also need to be trained to handle diversity wisely and fairly.

Another challenge is the lack of family support. Islamic education at school requires family support for students to internalize and practice the teachings they learn. A lack of support or negative influences from the family can be a barrier. Therefore, schools must build strong relationships with students' families through effective communication, counseling, and programs involving parents. Educating parents about the importance of their role in supporting their children's Islamic education is also crucial.

Religious teachers must also have high social sensitivity and empathy to understand the needs and challenges students face in applying religious values in their daily lives (Atiratul Jannah, 2023). Teachers who serve as role models and exhibit religious behavior will be more effective in inspiring students to emulate and apply religious values in their lives. The behavior demonstrated by educators leaves an impression on students, which can improve their attitudes and behavior, provide direction, and prepare them to become good members of society. To assess exemplary behavior in character development, one way is by examining the teacher's personality as a role model (Atiratul Jannah, 2023).

D.   Conclusion

Character education from an Islamic perspective is a behavioral system mandated in Islam, which is outlined in the teachings of the Quran and Hadith. The components of moral education include knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. When character education values are combined with religious principles, character education becomes more internalized. As a result, the values to be taught must be included in the school curriculum so that every student in school has a strong understanding of these values and the ability to apply them in real life. Three stages can be used as a strategy to implement character education: Moral Knowledge/Moral Learning, Moral Feelings/Moral Learning, and Moral Action/Action Learning.

The role of teachers as role models and facilitators is highly influential in helping students understand and apply religious and moral values in their daily lives. The integration of Islamic religious and moral education in the school environment is also crucial in shaping students' religious character. Teachers provide examples and assist students in understanding and applying religious and moral principles in everyday life. The role of parents and cooperation with them is also essential to support religious character education at home and in school.

It is important to address and overcome challenges that arise in implementing Islamic religious and moral education in primary schools. In developing an effective character education strategy, several factors need to be considered, including curriculum limitations, social environment, and the influence of media and technology. The use of religious stories, a value-based approach, and active participation of the community and school can help address these issues. It is hoped that through effective Islamic religious and moral education, students will grow into individuals with strong religious character and the ability to face moral situations and dilemmas with integrity and wisdom. Thus, this education will produce a generation that is religious, of noble character, and contributes positively to society and the world.

Islamic religious and moral education in secondary schools serves as a solid foundation in shaping the personality of children as the next generation to face the ever-evolving challenges of the times. With awareness of the importance of religious and moral education, it is hoped that society can guide and inspire children to grow into religious, virtuous individuals who can make positive contributions to human civilization.

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