

The Role of Islamic Education Teachers in Fostering Diversity Among Students at SD Negeri 101953 Pantai Cermin, Pantai Cermin District, Serdang Bedagai Regency

Henny Sartika^{1*}, Nurhaibah Purba², Yusnita Ramanda³

Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara, Indonesia^{*1, 2, 3}

^{*1}email: sartikahenny99@gmail.com

²email: purbaibah@gmail.com

³email: yusnitaramand46@guru.sd.belajar.id

Abstract: This research aims to explore the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in fostering student diversity at SD Negeri 101953 Pantai Cermin. The study falls under the category of qualitative field research, focusing on investigating and describing the conditions or phenomena occurring in the field without manipulating variables. In this context, a descriptive approach is used to highlight the importance of the role of PAI teachers in creating an inclusive environment that respects diversity. The research was conducted during the second semester of the 2023-2024 academic year in May 2024. This study employs a qualitative approach using observation and interview techniques. The research sample involved PAI teachers and students at SD Negeri No 101953 Pantai Cermin. The results indicate that the role of PAI teachers is crucial in guiding students to appreciate and understand diversity. PAI teachers act as facilitators in creating an environment that promotes tolerance and cooperation among students from various backgrounds. Through an inclusive approach, PAI teachers are able to shape the character of students to respect differences and uphold the values of diversity.

Keywords: Role of PAI Teachers, Diversity, Islamic Religious Education, Tolerance, Inclusivity.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggali peran guru Pendidikan Agama Islam dalam membina keberagaman peserta didik di SD Negeri 101953 Pantai Cermin. Penelitian ini termasuk dalam kategori penelitian lapangan kualitatif, yang berfokus pada investigasi dan deskripsi kondisi atau

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fenomena yang terjadi di lapangan tanpa memanipulasi variabel. Dalam konteks ini, pendekatan deskriptif digunakan untuk Menyoroti pentingnya peran guru PAI dalam menciptakan lingkungan yang inklusif dan menghormati keberagaman. Penelitian dilakukan selama semester kedua tahun akademik 2023-2024 pada bulan Mei 2024. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan teknik observasi dan wawancara. Sampel penelitian melibatkan guru PAI dan peserta didik di SD Negeri No 101953 Pantai Cermin. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa peran guru PAI sangat penting dalam membimbing peserta didik untuk menghargai dan memahami keberagaman. Guru PAI berperan sebagai fasilitator dalam menciptakan lingkungan yang mempromosikan toleransi dan kerjasama antar peserta didik dari berbagai latar belakang. Melalui pendekatan yang inklusif, guru PAI mampu membentuk karakter peserta didik yang menghormati perbedaan dan menjunjung tinggi nilai-nilai keberagaman.

Kata Kunci: Peran Guru PAI, Keberagaman, Pendidikan Agama Islam, Toleransi, Inklusivitas.

A. Introduction

Indonesia is known as a country rich in culture, ethnic groups, and religions. This diversity is one of the nation's treasures that must be preserved and maintained. In education, elementary schools play a crucial role in shaping the character and attitudes of tolerance in students. As the first educational institution that introduces the concept of diversity to children, elementary schools have a strategic role in fostering understanding and appreciation for differences.

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in elementary schools have a significant responsibility to instill religious values while also nurturing attitudes of tolerance and mutual respect among students from different backgrounds. The purpose of Islamic education is not only to shape students who are faithful and pious but also to instill

universal humanitarian values that teach the importance of living peacefully alongside others, regardless of the existing differences.

In the context of diversity, PAI teachers have a dual role. On one hand, they must ensure that students understand and practice Islamic teachings well. On the other hand, they must also instill inclusive attitudes and appreciate diversity as part of the Islamic teaching of *rahmatan lil alamin* (blessing for all). The implementation of this role can be seen in various school activities, both in classroom learning processes, extracurricular activities, and in daily interactions among students.

However, in practice, PAI teachers often face various challenges in fostering student diversity. These challenges may arise from students' lack of understanding regarding the importance of diversity, the presence of negative stereotypes or prejudices among students, and limitations in resources and teaching media that support inclusive education. Therefore, effective strategies and approaches are necessary to achieve the goals of inclusive religious education.

Various religions, cultures, languages, ethnic groups, and customs often coexist in educational environments. Issues that arise in educational institutions are expected not to divide the elements within them. The goal is for teachers, students, and the entire community in educational institutions to live in harmony and peace. They are expected to cooperate and compete in goodness in this highly competitive life.

To prevent various conflicts that may arise, such as mutual insults among students, a lack of respect, claims of truth over groups, and others, one of the ways that can be done is by training Islamic Religious Education teachers in educating about diversity, religion, culture, language, and ethnicity in multicultural schools.

Teachers play a vital role in education, especially Islamic Religious Education teachers. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education teachers are expected to understand and apply multicultural values in their duties, so that they can create a tolerant, democratic, empathetic, just, harmonious society, as well as other humanitarian values.

The attitude of diversity plays a very important role in the formation of diverse behavior. A good attitude towards diversity will lead to good diverse behavior. Likewise,

a poor attitude towards diversity will result in poor diverse behavior. Therefore, to shape the behavior of religious individuals, it must start from the formation of the attitude of diversity. (Munirah & Ladiku, 2019, p. 22)

An attitude of diversity is something that is acquired through effort and experience derived from culture, parents, and the community; it is not innate. (Munirah & Ladiku, 2019) The attitude of diversity must begin early. This is because early childhood is a very important time. According to Sigmund Freud, early years are the formative period for basic attitudes, habits, personality, and behavior. If the foundational attitudes, habits, personality, and behavior are formed well during these early years, it will facilitate development in subsequent periods. (Santrock, 2004, p. 36)

Islamic Religious Education teachers have a very important role in fostering, directing, and motivating students regarding tolerance among religious communities. The aim is to prevent them from falling into anarchistic attitudes and to foster mutual respect among followers of different religions. (Djollong & Akbar, 2019) According to the mandate of Law No. 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, a teacher is a professional educator with the main duties of educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students in formal early childhood education, elementary education, and secondary education. Islamic Religious Education teachers must always be committed to maintaining their professionalism, carrying out the mandates and duties entrusted to them, so that they will embody a high dedication to ensure the quality and performance of their role as educators.

As one of the subjects taught in schools, Islamic Religious Education aims to cultivate and enhance faith and piety through the presentation and provision of materials that encompass three aspects of education: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. The goal is to create Muslims who are faithful and devoted to God Almighty, have good character, moral integrity, and contribute to the nation and state. Islamic Religious Education is a conscious and planned effort to prepare students to recognize, delve into, experience, and embrace Islamic teachings, accompanied by the demand to respect

followers of other religions in fostering inter-religious harmony to achieve national unity and integrity. (Abd Majid, 2005, p. 130)

The challenges in fostering diversity among students in elementary schools are a shared responsibility and require the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers who do not only transmit knowledge but also educate students' morals so that, in addition to being intelligent, they can also produce individuals with noble character. The role of Islamic Religious Education teachers fundamentally aims to transfer the knowledge they possess to their students, so they can better understand and gain a broader knowledge base.

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to understand how Islamic Religious Education teachers play a role in fostering diversity among students in elementary schools and to identify the efforts that need to be addressed regarding the diversity of students who have different backgrounds in terms of religion, knowledge, attitudes, and behavior, as well as the limitations of media and learning resources. The contribution of this research is to provide insights for readers, academics, and scholars to study or even develop in accordance with the prevailing conditions and phenomena.

B. Research Method

This research uses a qualitative approach, with field research as the type of research. In this study, the actual state related to the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in fostering student diversity in SD Negeri No 101953 Pantai Cermin will be revealed and explored. This aligns with the opinion of D. Satori and Komariah (2011, p. 25) which states that qualitative research is a research approach that uncovers specific social situations by describing the reality as it is, presented through words based on relevant data collection and analysis techniques obtained from experienced situations.

The main object of this research is the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers and the attitudes of students; the subjects of the research are the attitudes of diversity and the fostering of diversity that is formed by PAI teachers and implemented into the attitudes and behaviors of the students. By using interview and observation techniques, the data obtained will be presented in detail in the research results.

C. Results and Discussion

The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Elementary Schools

As educators, Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers play a crucial role in conveying knowledge about Islam to their students. They are responsible for teaching the fundamentals of Islam, including beliefs, worship, morals, and the history of Islam. IRE teachers must present the material in an engaging and comprehensible manner so that students can understand Islamic teachings and apply them in their daily lives. IRE teachers also serve as mentors, helping students navigate personal and psychological challenges. They should provide guidance based on Islamic values and assist students in finding solutions to their problems. Both inside and outside of school, IRE teachers should motivate students to continue learning and growing spiritually and morally. We must create a positive and supportive learning environment that encourages students to diligently study and practice religious teachings. As role models, IRE teachers must demonstrate behaviors that are consistent with Islamic teachings in their daily lives. IRE teachers should be good role models for their students, allowing them to learn by imitating their positive attitudes and behaviors.

Other terms for the concept of a teacher in Islamic education include (GM Lubis, Deepublish, 2018): a) Murabbi: A person who educates and prepares students to be productive and capable of managing and maintaining their achievements without causing harm to themselves, society, or the environment. b) Mu'allim: A person who masters knowledge and is able to develop and explain its benefits for practical application in daily life. They can explain from various perspectives, both theoretically and practically, and are capable of transferring, internalizing, and implementing knowledge. c) Mu'addib: A person who prepares students to take responsibility for creating meaningful civilization in the future. d) Mudarris: A person who possesses intellectual sensitivity and information, continuously updates their knowledge and skills, and strives to enlighten their students, eradicate ignorance, and train skills according to their talents, interests, and abilities.

The objectives of Islamic Religious Education in schools are:

1. To enhance the faith and piety of students towards Allah SWT by introducing, understanding, and internalizing the verses of Allah that are both created and written (kauniyyah and qauliyyah);
2. To develop the character of Muslim students by introducing, understanding, and habituating norms and Islamic rules in establishing harmonious relations with God, oneself, fellow humans, and the environment;
3. To develop reasoning and moral attitudes that align with Islamic beliefs in life as citizens, community members, and members of the global society, both spiritually and socially. (Haidar Putra Daulay, 2004, p. 153)

An inclusive learning environment is key to promoting diversity. IRE teachers must ensure that all students feel involved and valued, regardless of their backgrounds. This can be achieved by instilling a sense of respect for differences and addressing any stereotypes or negative prejudices that may exist among students. Integrating values of diversity into the Islamic Education curriculum requires preparation of learning materials that reflect these values.

IRE teachers can employ participatory teaching methods, such as group discussions and role-playing, to help students understand and appreciate diversity. They can also implement extracurricular activities that support diversity, such as interfaith dialogues, visits to places of worship, and discussions about cultural and religious diversity. Such activities can broaden students' understanding of the importance of harmonious living in diversity.

The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Nurturing Diversity among Students in Elementary Schools

Diversity is one of the main characteristics of the Indonesian nation and is reflected in various aspects of life, including ethnicity, religion, race, and culture. This diversity presents unique challenges in education, especially in preparing students to live harmoniously despite their differences. Values of tolerance, mutual respect, and harmony must be instilled from an early age during elementary school, which serves as the foundation for a child's personality development.

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers have a strategic role in promoting diversity among their students. The teachings of Islam conveyed by IRE teachers contain many principles and values emphasizing the importance of tolerance and respect for others, regardless of their religious, ethnic, or racial backgrounds. In this context, IRE teachers are not only responsible for imparting religious knowledge but also serve as moral leaders and role models who promote a life perspective that respects diversity. In elementary school, children are at a critical stage of development where their fundamental values and life attitudes are formed.

Social interactions at school involving students from various backgrounds are one of the most important ways for children to learn about diversity. IRE teachers have the opportunity to introduce and teach universal and inclusive Islamic values, such as love, brotherhood, and justice, which help children understand and appreciate differences. Promoting diversity through Islamic education in elementary schools is also essential to reducing the likelihood of social conflicts in the future. If children are taught from an early age to appreciate differences and live harmoniously, they will grow into more tolerant and inclusive individuals. This is particularly relevant in the context of Indonesia's multicultural and multi-religious society.

However, the role of IRE teachers in promoting student diversity is not without challenges. Efforts to promote diversity may be hindered by a lack of deep understanding of Islamic concepts of tolerance, limited effective teaching methods, and a lack of support from the school and community environments. Therefore, strengthening the capacity of IRE teachers to fulfill this role requires a comprehensive approach, including training, the development of comprehensive curricula, and collaboration with various stakeholders.

The roles of IRE teachers in nurturing tolerant behaviors among their students are as follows:

1. As educators, IRE teachers should be role models for their students by providing a correct understanding of monotheism, guiding them to develop social personalities by viewing religious differences as a means to enhance faith.

2. As motivators, IRE teachers should encourage their students to cultivate and practice tolerance towards different beliefs or religions by fostering cooperation and collaboration among religious communities.
3. As facilitators, IRE teachers should be available to their students when they face issues related to religious tolerance and assist them in finding solutions to their problems.

Islamic education teachers in elementary schools face various challenges in promoting diversity among their students. These challenges include understanding, resources, the school environment, teaching methods, and support from various stakeholders. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes teacher training and professional development, the provision of appropriate resources, and close collaboration with parents, the community, and the school. By doing so, IRE teachers can more effectively promote diversity and create a generation that is tolerant and inclusive.

Promoting Diversity Through Interaction

Islamic education teachers play a vital role in promoting diversity through their daily interactions with students. They create an inclusive environment where every student feels valued and respected, regardless of their background. This is achieved through:

1. **Class Activities:** Teachers design activities that encourage students to share their cultural and religious practices. This not only broadens students' perspectives but also fosters respect and understanding.
2. **Discussions:** Open discussions about various cultures and religions are encouraged. Teachers guide these conversations to ensure they remain respectful and informative.
3. **Personal Interactions:** Teachers take the time to understand each student's background and experiences, building personal relationships that reinforce the value of diversity.

Impact on Students

When diversity is effectively promoted, the benefits for students are profound:

- 1) Improved Social Skills: Students learn to communicate and interact with peers from different backgrounds, enhancing their social skills and empathy.
- 2) Cultural Awareness: Exposure to various cultures and religions broadens students' perspectives and fosters a more inclusive mindset.
- 3) Inclusive Environment: Classes that celebrate diversity become safe and welcoming spaces for all students, encouraging better learning and personal growth.

The role of Islamic education teachers in nurturing diversity among elementary school students is invaluable. Through thoughtful interactions, engaging activities, and a sincere commitment to understanding each student's unique background, these educators help create a more inclusive and harmonious school environment.

D. Conclusion

The role of Islamic education teachers in nurturing the diversity of students at SD Negeri No. 101953 Pantai Cermin is highly significant. Teachers not only function as conveyers of religious knowledge but also as key agents in creating an inclusive learning environment that appreciates diversity. Through various classroom activities, open discussions, and personal interactions, teachers help students appreciate and understand the cultural and religious differences that exist among them. The impact of these efforts includes enhanced social skills, increased cultural awareness, and the creation of a safe and supportive classroom atmosphere for all students. Initiatives such as "Cultural Day," implemented by the teachers at the school, have proven effective in building a more harmonious community based on mutual respect.

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