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Teachers' Strategies in Improving Students' Understanding of Aqidah and Akhlak at MI Az-Zahro

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Abstract

Faith and morals education plays an important role in shaping the religious character of students in elementary schools. In the context of MI Az-Zahro Pagaram, the values of Islamic faith and morality are not only taught theoretically, but also internalized through role modeling, habituation, and emotional and spiritual approaches. This study aims to examine the strategies teachers use to improve students' understanding of faith and morality and evaluate their effectiveness. The research method employs a qualitative case study approach, incorporating observation, interviews, and documentation techniques. The results showed that exemplary behavior, habituation of worship, storytelling method, and active collaboration with parents are the main strategies in fostering student character. Despite facing challenges such as the influence of digital media and limited facilities, teachers continue to innovate to strengthen faith and character education. The findings are expected to be a reference for the development of Islamic character education in madrasah ibtidaiyah.

Keywords: Faith Education, Moral Education, Religious Character, Madrasah, Learning Strategy, Basic Education

Abstrak

Pendidikan keimanan dan akhlak memegang peranan penting dalam membentuk karakter religius siswa di sekolah dasar. Dalam konteks MI Az-Zahro Pagaram, nilai-nilai keimanan dan moralitas Islam tidak hanya diajarkan secara teoritis, tetapi juga diinternalisasikan melalui keteladanan, pembiasaan, dan pendekatan emosional dan spiritual. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji strategi guru dalam meningkatkan pemahaman siswa tentang keimanan dan moral serta mengevaluasi efektivitasnya. Metode penelitian menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif dengan teknik observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa keteladanan, pembiasaan beribadah, metode bercerita, dan kolaborasi aktif dengan orang tua

menjadi strategi utama dalam membina karakter siswa. Meskipun menghadapi tantangan seperti pengaruh media digital dan keterbatasan fasilitas, para guru terus berinovasi untuk memperkuat pendidikan keimanan dan akhlak. Temuan ini diharapkan dapat menjadi referensi bagi pengembangan pendidikan karakter Islami di madrasah dasar.

Kata kunci: Pendidikan Keimanan, Pendidikan Akhlak, Karakter Religius, Madrasah, Strategi Pembelajaran, Pendidikan Dasar

Introduction

Education plays a vital role in the formation of individuals and the progress of a country. In Islamic education, the foundation of faith (akidah) and moral behavior (akhlak) are essential for every educational process. Islamic religious and moral education is very important to shape the religious character of students in elementary schools. Kamila, "The Importance of Islamic Religious Education and Moral Education in Building the Character of Elementary School Children." Akidah in Islamic teachings refers to belief in the oneness of Allah SWT, His angels, His holy books, His messengers, the Day of Judgment, and the law of destiny. Andini, "Faith and Ethics: The Relationship Between Belief and Moral Values," while morality is the application of these beliefs in real life. Both are very important to produce strong and quality children. In this situation, educators are responsible for determining the best methods to instill spiritual and moral values.

into their children. Nurlina et al., "Early Childhood Moral Education: Implementation of Islamic Religious Values."

Religious values are an important component of the school curriculum. It is used to build students who are moral, monotheistic, and well-behaved, and apply Islamic teachings according to Islamic rules. Widodo, "Strengthening Character Education at Muhammadiyah Macanan Elementary School, Sleman, Yogyakarta."

By instilling religious character, it is hoped that students will have personalities and behaviors that are in accordance with the principles and rules of their religion. Dhori and Nurhayati, "Implementation of Religious Character Education in Elementary Schools." The values of Islamic character education, which are spread across various religious teachings, are very important to be internalized by everyone. Not only does it apply to the family and school environment, but it is also very important for social interactions in society

as a whole. Maulidin, Maulana, and Nuha, "THE CONCEPT OF CHARACTER EDUCATION IN THE BOOK SYAJAROTUL MA'ARIF WAL AHWAL BY SHEIKH AL IZZ BIN ABDUSSALAM." In a madrasa environment, such as MI Az-Zahro, education in faith and morals is not only taught as a formal subject, but must be integrated into all of the students' daily activities.

Many cases of moral violations in direct social interactions and through social media show the phenomenon of moral decline among the younger generation. Salsabila et al., "Facing the Moral Degradation of the Young Generation Through the Implementation of Islamic Education for Students." The phenomena that occur in the era of globalization show a worrying moral degradation. In this era of the industrial revolution 4.0, unfortunately, there are negative consequences that need to be watched out for, especially those related to the decline in morals and character of the nation's young generation. Febrianto and Shalikhah, "Forming Morals in the Era of Industrial Revolution 4.0 with the Role of Islamic Religious Education." This reinforces the urgency of the school's role in fortifying students with solid value education. Instill moral and ethical values in children from an early age. Values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, and

mutual respect are taught in such education and are very important to form a strong character in the future. Muis et al., "The Role of Islamic Religious Education in the Formation of National Character in the Era of Globalization."

Teachers not only play an important role in shaping students' character, but they are also responsible for educating, teaching, guiding, and training students to become people who believe in God Almighty, have noble character, are knowledgeable, and are responsible. Judrah et al., "The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Building Student Character: Moral Strengthening Efforts." Teachers at MI Az-Zahro are required to not only convey the material of faith and morals theoretically, but also internalize it through role models, habits, and emotional and spiritual approaches. The strategies used by teachers in teaching faith and morals must be adaptive to the psychological development of elementary school students. According to Hamid (2020), MI-age children are in the concrete-operational development phase (Piaget), where they find it easier to understand abstract concepts if given through concrete examples, stories, or direct experiences. According to Piaget, cognitive refers to the way children adapt and understand the things and events they experience. He believed that children not only learn passively but also actively learn

about reality. Istiqomah and Maemonah, “Basic Concepts of the Theory of Cognitive Development in Early Childhood According to Jean Piaget.” Therefore, implementing strategies such as storytelling methods, experience-based learning, and fostering good behavior are effective choices.

In addition, a collaborative approach between schools and parents is a key factor in the success of faith and moral education. The inconsistency of values taught at school and at home causes value conflicts in children. Parents are responsible for teaching their children to apply the principles they learn in school in their daily lives. Nurlina et al., “Integration of Religious Values in Early Childhood Character Education.” Thus, active communication and synergistic programs between teachers and guardians of students at MI Az-Zahro become an integral part of the strategy for fostering faith and morals. Education of faith and morals in elementary madrasahs, such as MI Az-Zahro, faces many problems. These include students coming from various socio-economic backgrounds, the effects of digital media, and limited educational resources. One of the biggest obstacles in the process of internalizing morals is when the values taught in schools are not consistent with students' daily lives. The purpose of this study is to thoroughly study the methods used by teachers at MI Az-Zahro to improve students' understanding

of aqidah and morals and evaluate how effectively they are implemented. This study is expected to provide scientific contributions to the development of Islamic-based character education. In addition, they can be a practical reference for teachers to improve the quality of aqidah and morals education at the elementary level.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study type. This approach was chosen because it aims to deeply understand the teacher's strategy in improving students' understanding of faith and morals at MI Az-Zahro through descriptions of natural and contextual phenomena. The book on qualitative research methods, written by Yudo Handoko et al. in 2024, states that one of the main reasons why qualitative research methods are so important is the complexity that exists in educational administration. In the world of education, many stakeholders—such as parents, students, teachers, and policy makers—interact with each other in a complex network of interactions. Handoko, Wijaya, and Lestari, *Qualitative Research Methods: A Practical Guide for Educational Administration Research*. This research was conducted at MI Az-Zahro, Regency, South Sumatra. The subjects of the study consisted of Aqidah

Akhlak subject teachers, madrasah principals, students in grades IV, V, and VI, and parents of students as supporting informants. The selection of informants was carried out by purposive sampling, namely selecting individuals who were considered to understand the most and were directly involved in fostering students' aqidah and morals.

Data collection was conducted through three main techniques, namely observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Observations were conducted in a participatory manner to observe the learning process in the classroom as well as the activities of habituating faith and morals in the madrasah environment. Interviews were conducted with teachers, madrasah principals, students, and parents to dig deeper into the strategies used and the challenges faced. In addition, documentation studies were conducted by analyzing documents such as the Learning Implementation Plan (RPP), syllabus, madrasah work program, and records of faith and moral guidance. This is in accordance with the study Qualitative, as explained by Meleong (2007) and quoted in the book "QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY" compiled by E. Ratnaningtyas et al. (2023), is an effort to deeply understand the various experiences of research subjects, including their behavior, views, motivations, and actions.

This understanding is obtained comprehensively through descriptive descriptions in the form of words, which occur in real situations using various natural methods. **Ratnaningtyas et al., "Qualitative Research Methodology."**

The stages of the research include the preparation stage, such as the preparation of research instruments and permission to the madrasah, the implementation stage, which includes observation, interviews, and documentation, the data analysis stage, and the stage of preparing a systematic research report. With this method, it is hoped that the research can produce accurate and useful findings for the development of aqidah and moral education strategies in elementary madrasahs.

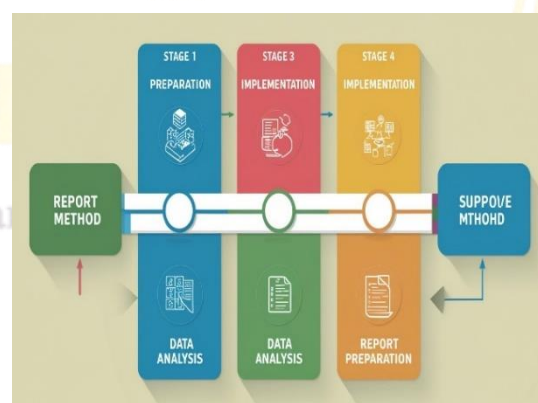


Figure 1. Process Flow Chart

Result and Discussion

Based on the results of observations, interviews, and documentation studies at MI Az-Zahro, it was found that teachers use various strategies to improve students'

understanding of faith and morals. These strategies include role models, habituation, giving advice, using story methods (exemplary stories), and emotional and spiritual approaches.

Aqidah Akhlak teachers are responsible for driving change in the educational environment and have a very strategic role in shaping the character of their students. SULISTIYO, "THE ROLE OF FAITH AND MORALS TEACHERS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CHARACTER EDUCATION AT MUHAMMADIYAH 2 PATEAN ISLAMIC HIGH SCHOOL, MUHAMMADIYAH DARUL ARQOM ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL, PATEAN, KENDAL REGENCY, CENTRAL JAVA PROVINCE." Teachers not only teach the material of faith and morals theoretically in the classroom, but also try to apply it in daily behavior in the madrasah environment. This is evident from the teacher's efforts to be a role model for students, such as showing honesty, discipline, responsibility, and polite behavior in every interaction. According to an interview with Mrs. Yeka Susanti, M.Pd.I, the teacher of faith and morals, she said, "Children imitate faster than they listen, so teachers must first be a real example."



Figure 2. Interview Process

In addition, habituation is carried out through routine programs such as praying together before and after studying, praying in congregation, and other religious activities such as commemorating Islamic holidays. This strategy has proven effective because, through the repetition of positive behavior, the values of faith and morals are more easily internalized in students. This is in accordance with previous studies, which state that scheduled and unscheduled habits are used to develop character. This can happen inside and outside the classroom. Spiritual habituation activities in schools are activities that are carried out regularly and continuously with the aim of educating students to behave well. This habituation can be considered as one of the important approaches to teaching character. An example is the application of good habits by parents to their children without forcing them to do it. This habituation will naturally instill positive values in children if done regularly. Lathifah and Rusli, "Spiritual

Habits to Improve Students' Character Education."

The use of the story method is also one of the techniques that is often used. Teachers use exemplary stories from the Qur'an, hadith, and Islamic history as a means of introducing the concept of faith and morals. In an interview, fourth-grade student Rika Apriani said, "Ustadzah often tells stories about the Prophet Muhammad SAW and his companions." We also sometimes play while studying. Not only is it fun to listen to lectures, but it's also fun. This statement shows that interactive and interesting learning can help students understand moral values.



Figure 3. Character Accustoming

This method is adapted to the developmental characteristics of MI-age children, as stated by Sasmi Nelwati (2022). According to Piaget, children do not only receive information from their environment passively. Instead, they actively adapt to the world around them and develop an understanding of the various events they experience. Sasmi and Rahman, "Analysis of

Jean Piaget's Cognitive Theory on Language Development in Elementary School Children." This means that children at the concrete operational age find it easier to understand abstract values through concrete examples and narratives.

The religious atmosphere in the madrasa greatly influences the morals and actions of students. The head of the madrasa continues to monitor the habituation program and encourages teachers to integrate Islamic principles into education. The role of the madrasah principal, with all his authority, is very influential in encouraging change. Prasetya, "Development of Religious Culture in Schools." Various channels, such as meetings, online groups, and regular reports on students' moral development, are used to establish close communication between teachers and parents. "We actively invite parents through regular meetings and WhatsApp groups, so that the values we teach can also be applied at home," he said when interviewed by Mrs. Aminah, a grade V teacher. This collaboration is very important because, as stated in the research of Ewin Iskandar et al. (2019), schools and families are closely related to the formation of student character. Education at home affects students' morals at school. Parents are responsible for building and supervising children's behavior in the home environment, while teachers are responsible

for instilling positive principles. Nugroho et al., "COLLABORATION BETWEEN PARENTS AND PAI TEACHERS IN SHAPING STUDENTS' MORALS." The mismatch between the values taught in schools and the values applied at home can hinder the process of internalizing morals in children. By working together with families and madrasahs, consistency of values can be maintained, which strengthens the process of Islamic character education.

Teachers face many challenges when implementing this approach. Differences in students' social and economic conditions cause differences in their understanding of religion and morals. The uncontrolled negative influence of digital media is also a major obstacle. This causes some students to be attracted to content that is contrary to Islamic teachings, which has an impact on their daily behavior. Mrs. Aminah said in an interview that, "Today's children are more easily influenced by YouTube videos than by teachers' advice; we as parents/teachers, depending on the previous context, must be very creative and patient." However, efforts to shape students' religious attitudes in the digital era also face various challenges, such as the existence of uncontrolled digital content and open access to information. Therefore, supervision of digital content is a crucial issue in religious education today. Ropiah and Adhari, "The Effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education in Enhancing

Students' Religious Attitudes in the Digital Era at SMK Al Ishlah Cikarang Utara."

Teachers also face limitations in madrasah facilities, such as a lack of technology-based learning media and Islamic books that are not appropriate for the children's age. However, MI-Al Azhar teachers continue to work to find new and creative ways to improve students' understanding of morals and beliefs. They remain eager to develop new methods to teach their students; on the contrary, these limitations challenge them to use the available resources in more innovative ways.

Conclusion

Education in aqidah and morals at MI Az-Zahro plays a very strategic role in shaping students' religious character from an early age. The process of instilling values is carried out not only through theoretical learning but also through teachers' examples, habituation to religious activities, storytelling methods, and emotional and spiritual approaches tailored to the child's developmental stage. This strategy has proven effective in helping students understand and internalize the values of faith and morality in daily life. The success of this education is also greatly influenced by the collaboration between the madrasah and parents to ensure consistency of values between the school and home environments. Despite facing various

challenges such as the influence of digital media, differences in students' socio-economic backgrounds, and limited resources, teachers continue to strive to be creative and innovative. With the support of all parties, education in faith and morals can be effective in shaping a faithful generation, has noble character, and is ready to face the developments of the times.

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