



Innovative Strategies of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Improving the Religious Character of Students at MTs Kanjeng Sepuh Sidayu Gresik

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ABSTRACT

Islamic education teachers have a role in shaping the religious character on students, therefore the strategy of Islamic education teachers in shaping the religious of characters of students needs to be considered. The purpose of this study was to find out the religious characters of students at MTs Kanjeng Sepuh Sidayu Gresik, to find out the strategy used by Islamic education teachers in shaping students' religious character, and to find out the factors that influence Islamic education teachers in shaping students' religious character at MTs Kanjeng Sepuh Sidayu Gresik. This research used qualitative deskriptif methods, the researcher conducted research at MTs Kanjeng Sepuh Sidayu Gresik. The data collection used are interview, observation and documents. The informants in this study were Islamic education teachers and students. Data analysis was carried out by interactive methods and used a credibility test, namely triangulation. Thei result showed that the religious character of students has showed well formed, which can be seen from the students' daily life in school where students are getting used to religious activities, The strategy used by teachers to raise awareness of students' religious character is to provide habituation and role models to students. The habits carried out checking students' neatness, going to school on time, praying and memorizing Qur'an before learning begin, and congregational prayer. Meanwhile, providing a good example to students in the form of teachers entering class to teach on time, having a neat appearance, carrying out dhuha and dhuhur prayers in congregation. Furhermore, thei strategies used by PAI teachers in monitoring students' religious character include providing rewards and punishments to students.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic religious education has an important role in building the character of students. As one of the pillars of national education, Islamic religious education not only aims to transmit religious knowledge, but also to internationalize the value of faith and piety in daily life. According Asih et al (2023) to the challenges in the implementation of Islamic education in various educational institutions, it still shows that there is a dichotomy between theoretical and practical aspects. Therefore, an in-depth study is needed on the implementation of innovative strategies in instilling students' religious character in secondary schools. (Rofiah et al., 2024)

Islamic religious education has the goal of increasing students' faith, practice and understanding, so that students can become Muslims who believe and are pious and can apply it in daily life. According to Ki Hajar Dewantara, the main function of education is the power that is able to shape the growth of children's ethics, mind and body that is in harmony between nature and society (Duta et al., 2024). The formation of character education is one way to shape and change a person's morals based on values to Islam. The purpose of the formation of this character education is to make the next generation of this nation a milestone in the next generation of civilized, dignified and noble moral struggle. (Sururun et al., 2024).

The most important character that must be instilled in children is religious character, because this religious character will be the basis of religious teachings in carrying out life. Religious character is not only related to *ubudiyah* but also concerns relationships with fellow humans. The process of character formation is the responsibility of teachers and parents. Teachers are responsible through formal institutions in the school environment while parents and the community are responsible for non-formal institutions (Sururun et al., 2024). Character education is a system of instilling character values to students which includes components of knowledge, awareness or ability and actions to carry out these values both towards God Almighty, oneself, others, the environment and nationality so that they become good human beings. That way, it can be interpreted that character education must be pursued by educational units, to improve the quality of education implementation and results in schools that lead to the achievement of student character formation. According to Character Education is an effort to guide children so that they can take responsibility for their every action, make decisions wisely, and apply them in daily life. In this study, the author is guided by Thomas Lichona who explains character related to moral knowing, moral feeling attitudes and moral behavior. (Gunawan, 2012)

Religious comes from the word Religi, and in English it is religion which means religion or belief. Religious is a value that comes from one's religious teachings and is used as a guide in life, as a way to demonstrate human devotion to God. Religious also means having an attitude or way of behaving that is obedient to the religion you believe, being able to be tolerant of other religions, and being able to live sustainably, peacefully with people who embrace different religions. Religious character (Sururun et al., 2024) is a trait that shows confidence

in Allah SWT in carrying out the religious teachings adhered to Forming religious character is the process of instilling actions, attitudes, and behaviors that are always followed in accordance with the teachings of the religion adhered to.

Strategy comes from the Greek, which is *strategos*, which means to strive to gain victory in a battle (Samwil, 2020). The strategy used in the world of education, especially in the teaching and learning process, is the art and science of providing material in the classroom so that the goals that have been determined can be achieved properly and on time. These (Syria, 2024) learning objectives are used in preparing a teaching plan or what is called a curriculum. In addition to the purpose of teaching, both instructional and non-instructional purposes, the curriculum also contains learning materials and experiences that all play a role in determining the choice of teaching strategies.

To form the religious character of the younger generation, especially in the face of increasingly complex globalization, Islamic religious education teachers are required to innovate and to have innovative strategies to instill religious character. In addition, PAI teachers must be able to combine traditional and modern approaches that not only understand religious values, but also can apply them in daily life. The challenge in instilling students' religious character is not easy, especially with the presence of Generation Z who is growing up in the midst of technological advances and very rapid social changes. Generation Z, known for their propensity for technology and instant information, need relevant, creative, and innovative educational approaches in order to understand religious values in a way that is appropriate to their times (Presidential Decree number 87 of 2017). Innovative strategies in shaping religious character are key to attracting the attention and deepening the understanding of the younger generation to Islamic teachings. According to Duta, the innovation strategy of Islamic religious education teachers does not only include the use of technology, but also a more interactive, experience-based, and integrated approach to the context of daily life. (Lubis & Murniyetti, 2023) (Puspitasari et al., n.d.) (Duta et al., 2024) (Gunawan, 2012b) The main objectives of this study are to: (1) find out the value of religious character values instilled by PAI teachers in Mts Kanjeng elder Sidayu Gresik. (2) To know the strategies of PAI teachers in shaping the religious character of students at MTs Kanjeng Sepuh Sidayu Gresik. (3) To find out the innovative strategies applied by PAI teachers in shaping the religious character of students in Mts kanjeng sepuh Sidayu Gresik.

To achieve this goal, the researcher uses descriptive qualitative methods, and data collection techniques through interviews, observations, and documentation to gain a comprehensive understanding. The data analysis used is thematic analysis to test the validity of the data obtained.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative research approach with description and analysis methods. This approach was chosen because it was done naturally or naturally according to the circumstances or conditions in the field. According to this approach, the researcher can convey the results of the research descriptively in the form of a description of written words from the results of interviews, observations and documentation. (Scott, 2013) Yin R (2018).

The purpose of qualitative research is to provide strong and accurate information about the facts found during the research at Mts Kanjeng Sepuh Sidayu Gresik. Descriptive research is shown to describe a state or phenomenon of a phenomenon as it is that is complete and profound of an entity. Data can be obtained through observation, interviews and documentation. Thus, the research report will contain data citations to give an overview of the presentation of research carried out at MTs Kanjeng Sepuh Sidayu Gresik. (Miles, 2020) .

This data analysis technique is a systematic qualitative data analysis approach, where data collected during classroom observation during learning and also religious activities, interviews with Islamic religious education teachers, and documentation studies obtained in schools are excavated from the curriculum waka by arranging regularly. Data is processed through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and making conclusions, so that the data becomes meaningful and easy-to-understand information.

RESULTS

Religious Character of MTs Students Kanjeng Elders Sidayu Gresik

Based on the results of observations and interviews conducted by researchers, it can be concluded that the religious character of students at MTs Kanjeng Sepuh in general is quite good, but still needs additional guidance and assistance from teachers so that they can develop even better. This is because MTs students are still in their teens who are looking for their identity. MTs Kanjeng elders apply the 7S culture, namely smile, greeting, greeting, politeness, courtesy, patience, and solidarity. The researcher also observed that before entering the school gate, students were greeted by the teacher and greeted. In addition, students are also accustomed to praying before and after studying. In addition, there is the implementation of zuhur and ashar prayers in congregation which are carried out in the school mosque. Based on the results of observations of prayer hours, students and teachers will carry out congregational prayers in the prayer room. When viewed from the level of tolerance, students in MTs have a fairly high sense of tolerance. This can be seen from the school environment, where students studying there come from various religions, races, and cultures. Even so, they can still live in harmony and blend in with each other without paying attention to differences. In addition, students also respect each other

Strategies of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Shaping Students' Religious Character

In educational institutions, teachers have a role as educators who have a responsibility in shaping the character of students. So in this case, the right strategy is needed in order to create students with character. Likewise, at MTs Kanjeng Sepuh, Islamic religious education teachers have a strategy to shape the religious character of their students. Islamic Religious Education teachers use habituation and exemplary strategies to form students' religious character.

Education through habituation is the main strategy carried out by Islamic religious education teachers at MTs Kanjeng Sepuh Sidayu Gresik, because this method is one of the most effective ways to help in shaping the character of

students. Education through habituation is the main strategy used by Islamic religious education teachers at MTs Kanjeng Sepuh Sidayu Gresik, because this method is very effective in helping to shape the character of students. With the habits applied at school, students' behavior and attitudes can change slowly and gradually. In MTs Kanjeng Setung, teachers apply habituation strategies to form students' religious character, in this strategy teachers hold habituation through various kinds of religious activities, such as routine activities every day, every week and also activities every month. All teachers at the school participate in helping to shape the religious character of students. At MTs Kanjeng Sepuh Sidayu Gresik, the task of shaping the character of students is not only held by Islamic religious education teachers, but also by all other teachers. In addition to familiarizing themselves, researchers also found several ways used by Islamic religious education teachers in shaping students' religious characters. Islamic religious education teachers not only teach, but also supervise, encourage, foster, and guide students in a better direction so that they do not stray from the right goal. Islamic religious education teachers in the teaching process relate the subject matter to experiences that occur in real life, give examples that can be found in everyday events, and convey the majesty of Allah SWT. Teachers are also an example that is followed by their students, because what teachers do will be imitated by students.

Therefore, teachers set an example for their students by speaking politely, coming on time, saying greetings when entering the class, and participating in implementing the 7S culture in schools and participating in various religious activities held at school. By giving these examples, it will indirectly have a positive impact on students and this will help increase students' self-awareness.

Innovation of Islamic religious education teachers in instilling religious character

In the learning process, Islamic religious education teachers at MTs Kanjeng elders use certain methods so that students can easily understand;

1. The strategies used by Islamic religious education teachers in providing religious character learning to students are integrated with religious values related to daily life. And to obtain information about the strategies of Islamic religious education teachers in shaping students' religious character, the researcher conducted three types of observations, namely observation, interviews, and documentation. Based on observations and interviews, the researcher concluded that there was an increase in religious materials in the classroom as well as an increase in school culture that had Islamic values. Enrichment programs are activities aimed at students who have good academic ability, meaning they are students who tend to be quick in completing their assignments. In addition, enrichment programs are a form of additional learning that aims to provide new learning opportunities to students who have above-average abilities compared to other students. Thus, they can further develop in terms of their interests, talents, and abilities. Example; How to teach Islamic culture, this method is given to students so that they understand the various Islamic cultures that exist in schools. At MTs Kanjeng Sepuh, the strategy in implementing Islamic culture is carried out by

accustoming students, setting a good example, applying ethical methods, and through extracurricular activities.

2. The strategy of Islamic religious education teachers in fostering the character of students' religious awareness. Based on the results of observations and interviews, the strategy of Islamic religious education teachers in shaping students' religious character is to give habituation to students at school and to set a good example for students, because teachers are considered role models. The strategy carried out to form the religious character of students is to make habituation. Every morning, before starting learning, students are required to read prayers and read short letters from the Quran. Dhuha prayers and congregational prayers were also carried out in the school prayer room. The habituation carried out is expected to affect students, so that students have a religious character. The habituation carried out is expected not only to be carried out by students at school, but also it is hoped that students can continue the habituation at home. And based on the results of observations and interviews with Islamic religious education teachers, he said that one of the strategies that I do in shaping the religious character of students is of course with a good example, before forming the religious character of students, a teacher must first have a religious character in order to be an example and role model for his students.
3. The strategy of Islamic religious education teachers in supervising the religious character of students. To realize the religious character of students, there are several strategies carried out by Islamic Religious Education teachers in supervising the religious character of students, including: providing rewards and punishments to students and supervising their presence in prayer attendance and religious activities. In forming the religious character of students, we apply the giving of gifts and punishments. This is done as an effort to supervise so that the religious character of students is maintained. The form of reward given is in the form of adding value points to students who are active in class, performing dhuha prayers, and congregational dzuhur prayers, this is done by taking attendance for the prayer implementation. Meanwhile, the application of punishment is in the form of writing verses or reading short letters that have been memorized in front of the class.

DISCUSSION

Educators are the best example in the eyes of students and will be imitated through their behavior, their manners whether they are aware of it or not, even it is directly imprinted in their souls and feelings, both in words and deeds. The example of parents and teachers in instilling religious character in children is something that children need in developing their personality.

The religious character of students at MTs Kanjeng elder Sidayu Gresik.

Religious character is the attitude and behavior of a person in daily life who is obedient in carrying out the religious teachings he adheres to and tolerance between religious people. (Jayani & Nuha, 2025) The religious character of the students at MTs Kanjeng is quite good as a whole, This happens

because Islamic Religious Education teachers have succeeded in shaping the religious character of students by setting an example and teaching regularly. Indicators of the success of the formation of students' religious character at MTs Kanjeng Sepuh can be seen from the behavior and attitude of students, namely students begin to realize the importance and are used to carrying out religious activities at school, increasing their awareness to carry out their obligations, especially in Carrying out prayers, students show good ethical attitudes in the school environment, polite, polite, respect for each other, and behave according to the religious teachings adopted in daily life. The indicators of success in shaping the religious character of students at MTs Kanjeng Sepuh are in accordance with the indicators of religious character set by the Ministry of National Education in 2010.

Students of MTs Kanjeng elder Sidayu Gresik already have religious values, namely values related to god (*Ilahiyah*) and values related to humans (*Insaniyah*), with these two values proving that students have characters related to divinity such as, faith and fear of Allah by carrying out Allah's commands and staying away from Allah's prohibitions, not only that students also have characters related to God With fellow humans and the surrounding environment, it can be seen by the attitude of manners, respect and obedience to parents, loving each other, helping and maintaining brotherhood (*ukhuwah*). (Sahuri, 2022)

Islamic Religious Education Teachers' Strategies in Shaping Students' Religious Character

Based on the findings of the researcher in the previous discussion, that Islamic religious education teachers have a greater responsibility to educate, because Islamic religious education teachers are not only educators who teach subjects but Islamic religious education teachers also concurrently serve as *murabbi*, *mursyid*, *mudarris* and *muaddib* who are responsible for imparting knowledge as well as deep physical and spiritual maintenance to students. The strategy used by Islamic religious education teachers in shaping the religious character of students at MTs Kanjeng Sepuh is through habituation and example. The strategy used by Islamic religious education teachers at MTs Kanjeng Sepuh in shaping the religious character of students is in line with the opinion of experts, previously there were two ways to educate, namely the first by getting used to doing pious deeds or (Pratama & Rivauzi, 2024) *mujahadah*. Second, doing these acts repeatedly so that it becomes a habit. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education teachers must choose the right strategy so that the strategy can be implemented effectively and efficiently in learning Islamic Religious Education which is also adjusted to the existing curriculum. The strategies used by Islamic religious education teachers at MTs are exemplary strategies and habituation strategies;

a. Habituation

Education by habituation is the main strategy carried out by Islamic religious education teachers. Because habituation strategies are one of the effective ways to shape students' character. With good habits applied in the school environment, it will help change students' behavior and attitudes gradually. The habits carried out by Islamic religious education teachers are as follows: (Pitri, et al., 2022)

- a) Accustoming students to smile, greet, greet, politeness, politeness,

- patience
- b) and solidarity,
- c) Getting used to reading the Qur'an, tahfidz tasmi' and reciting short surahs,
- d) Accustoming students to pray dhuha and zuhur in congregation.
- e) To participate in religious activities held by the school.
- f) Getting used to the yasinan together, pilgrimage to the tomb of Sheikh Kanjeng elders and the celebration of the big days of the Muslim ummah and teaching mutual tolerance towards adherents of other religions.

With good habits applied in schools, it will help in shaping students' behavior and attitudes gradually towards a better attitude as expected.

b. Example

Exemplary means giving examples, both in behavior, speech, nature and so on. This exemplary strategy also involves all aspects of the school to provide good. Some examples of examples are, mutual respect and appreciation especially to the elders and teachers are models for their students, because what teachers do will tend to be followed by their students. In addition, teachers also show good behavior, come on time, say greetings when entering the classroom and participate in implementing the 6S culture and also participate in religious activities carried out in the school environment. Exemplary is one of the strategies carried out by Islamic religious education teachers at MTs Kanjeng Sepuh Sidayu Gresik in shaping the religious character of students. With this exemplary strategy, it helps to cultivate religious character in MTs Sidayu Gresik students well. Because if you only use commands, it will not be enough, but real examples and actions are also needed from the Islamic religious education teacher himself.

Providing a good example will indirectly have a positive impact on students, because students will see positive actions and behaviors shown by teachers. And make students motivated to do the same, and start applying it in their daily lives. So this will help in increasing the gradual change in students' attitudes and behaviors.

The strategy used by Islamic religious education teachers in shaping the religious character of students at MTs Kanjeng Sepuh can be said to be successful. This success is because Islamic religious education teachers not only move alone in the implementation of the strategy, but are also assisted by the principal, other teachers and supportive school conditions and environment. This can be seen from the change in students' attitudes and behaviors in their daily lives, students who want to participate in religious activities held, tolerance, politeness and manners, praying before and after studying, and when prayer time arrives students rush to go to the school prayer room, success is also proven by the creation of a religious and conducive school environment.

Innovation The strategy of Islamic religious education teachers in fostering students' religious character

The strategy of PAI teachers in fostering awareness of the religious character of MTs Kanjeng students is through giving habituation to students at

school and providing a good example to students. Education by habituation is the main strategy carried out by Islamic religious education teachers. Because habituation strategies are one of the effective ways to shape students' character. With good habits applied in the school environment, it will help change students' behavior and attitudes gradually. Exemplary in education is the most convincing method of success in preparing and forming good moral, spiritual and social attitudes of children. This is important to do, because parents and teachers as educators are the best examples in the view of children who will be imitated through their behavior, their manners whether they are aware of it or not, even it is directly imprinted in their souls and feelings, both in words and deeds. The example of parents and teachers in instilling religious character in children is something that children need in developing their personality.

Teacher Pai's strategy in supervising the religious character of MTs Kanjeng elder students is: providing rewards and punishments to students and taking prayer and religious attendance. Awards are a form of recognition for students' achievements in learning. Giving rewards to students can increase motivation to learn and give students confidence. Awards can also motivate students to keep trying and achieving more. Awards can be given in the form of compliments, prizes, points, or other appropriate forms. Meanwhile, punishment is a form of consequence for student behavior that is not in accordance with applicable rules or norms. Punishment can help shape student behavior for better and reduce negative behavior. Character formation strategies through the following attitudes, examples, instilling or enforcing discipline and habituation. To realize the religious character of students, there are several strategies carried out by Islamic religious education teachers in supervising the religious character of students, including taking attendance for prayer five times after learning, collecting Friday infaq, and performing dhuhā prayers. The teacher also provides rewards and punishments to students in the form of providing additional value for those who do it and providing sanctions for those who do not do it

CONCLUSION

Related to the results of the research that has been carried out, the author draws conclusions related to teachers' strategies in shaping the religious character of students at MTs Kanjeng Sepuh as follows:

1. The religious character of students at MTs Kanjeng elder Sidayu Gresik has been well formed, this can be seen from the daily life of students at school, the growth of students' self-awareness to carry out their obligations as a Muslim, students who are used to religious activities and students applying the 6S culture in their daily lives.
2. The strategy used by Islamic religious education teachers, in forming the character of the religious siswa at MTs Kanjeng elder Sidayu Gresik, namely through habituation and example. The habituation carried out starts from getting used to the 6S culture, praying in congregation, praying before and after studying, tahfidz and tasmi' and celebrating the big days of Muslims. Furthermore, through example, example starts from teachers who participate in the implementation of congregational prayers, participate in every activity

held and provide a good example starting from coming on time, providing motivation and advice and being good at speaking.

3. Innovative teacher strategies as a support in shaping the religious character of students at MTs Kanjeng Sepuh Sidayu Gresik including; provide learning about religious character to students, cultivate the character of students' religious awareness. and supervision of students' religious character. Of course, it is also supported by good cooperation between Islamic religious education teachers and other teachers, positive support from the school environment and family, as well as school infrastructure facilities that provide shade While the inhibiting factors in shaping students' religious character are the influence of the student's social environment, lack of self-awareness in students, and different characteristics and backgrounds of students. The innovative strategy of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in shaping the religious character of students at MTs Kanjeng Elders has been carried out as much as possible. Teachers have provided examples for students both outside and in the classroom. It begins with teachers applying examples to form religious character by way teachers set examples, discipline in modest dress, discipline in worship and respect for time. The teacher invites students to make habituation so that students have a religious character by conditioning students in the classroom, getting used to throwing garbage in its place because it includes cleanliness of part of the faith, getting used to religious literacy according to the schedule and getting used to germanit (a five-minute movement to clean the classroom) in between learning. Teachers provide exercises that aim for students to do with awareness without coercion. After that, the teacher invites students to have a religious character and good religious values. and also provides prohibitions on what should not be done. In addition, teachers also provide correction and supervision in activities during the learning process and activities at school, and finally, teachers provide punishments that aim to have a deterrent effect for those who violate school rules.

The innovative strategy of Islamic Religious Education Teachers to form religious character will certainly meet with supporting and inhibiting factors. The involvement of supporting factors is the role of teachers because teachers are the main role models for students, the role of parents to motivate students, and students' self-awareness greatly affect the effectiveness of strategies in forming religious character. Inhibiting factors, namely including family, can be an obstacle in innovative strategies to form students' religious character when the family is not supportive, the friendship environment if students are not good at getting along or choosing friends, then it can be an obstacle for students and the community environment if it is not in accordance with applicable religious and ethical norms. (Anida, 2022)

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