The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Character Education: A Qualitative Study at Mutiara Hikmah Vocational High School (SMK)

Agus Nasrullah[1✉], Abdus Salam DZ[1], Amin Haedari[2], Abdul Karim[1]

[1] Universitas Islam Bunga Bangsa Cirebon, Indonesia
[2] Universitas Muhammadiyah Cirebon, Indonesia
Corresponding author: agusnasrullahanalis@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Purpose – This research aims to investigate the critical role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in character education at Mutiara Hikmah Vocational High School (SMK) during the 2022/2023 academic year. Within the context of globalization, which has significantly influenced moral values in Indonesia, this study seeks to address the noticeable decline in student discipline and morality. By focusing on the contributions of PAI teachers, the study aims to highlight effective strategies for enhancing student character development, shaping individuals who are intelligent, independent, and morally upright.

Design/methods/approach – A descriptive qualitative methodology was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the dynamics at Mutiara Hikmah Vocational High School (SMK). This research involved participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Data were collected from July 1 to August 20, 2023, through daily observations, interviews with PAI teachers, the principal, and other teachers, as well as analysis of school documents such as academic records and activity reports. Thematic analysis was used to identify key themes and patterns related to character education.

Findings – The findings indicate that PAI teachers play a crucial role in instilling discipline and moral values through classroom instruction and extracurricular activities such as congregational prayers and Qur'an literacy sessions. However, challenges such as inconsistent disciplinary standards and limited parental involvement were noted. The study also highlights the need for improved facilities and ongoing training for teachers to support character education.

Research implications – The results suggest that a holistic approach involving collaboration among teachers, parents, and the community is essential for effective character education. Policymakers and educators should prioritize the development of comprehensive character education programs that integrate cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. Future research should explore the long-term impacts of such programs and the specific contributions of various extracurricular activities.

Jurnal Pendidikan Islam

1. Introduction

Character education has become a primary focus in the educational realm, especially in the context of globalization, which has brought significant changes to moral values in Indonesia. Globalization poses a considerable challenge to national character values, as evidenced by the drastic decline in student morality and discipline. Thus, enhancing the quality of human resources through

character education is crucial for producing intelligent, talented, independent, and morally upright individuals.

The decline in disciplinary behavior within school environments indicates serious issues in discipline and morality education (Qodriah et al., 2019). Student indiscipline reflects a lack of understanding of character education, which should positively impact students' daily lives, particularly in school behavior. Teachers, especially Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, play a vital role in guiding students' mindsets to evaluate spiritual and social attitudes that support the learning process (Mbagho et al., 2021).

According to Article 3 of the National Education System Law Number 20 of 2003, national education aims to develop the nation's intellectual life by forming individuals who believe and fear God Almighty, possess noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, competent, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens (Salsabilah et al., 2021). Character education, as part of moral education, is integrated into religious subjects and becomes the primary responsibility of Islamic religious teachers (Fikriyah et al., 2021).

Numerous challenges exist in achieving the goals of character education. The decline in civility, deteriorating student character, lack of respect for others, and rising individualism are significant obstacles. While Islamic Religious Education teachers play an essential role in implementing character education, the outcomes have not been optimal (Al Hakim, 2020). Therefore, this study focuses on character education.

Student character can emerge and be applied if teachers serve as role models who uphold their words and actions and can build students' self-confidence, enabling them to become resilient individuals not easily swayed by negative influences (Widiantari et al., 2022). The education system must teach not only cognitive but also affective and psychomotor aspects to achieve comprehensive educational goals (Dewi & Nurkholis, 2022).

Character education involves fostering an educational environment that promotes moral reasoning, personal accountability, and respect for universal principles among students. Support from family, friends, and the environment is crucial in character education (Dewi & Nurkholis, 2022). Disciplinary character education in schools should involve collaboration between teachers, parents, and school committees to teach and supervise student discipline (Zakarya et al., 2023).

Moral education in Islam does not merely teach right and wrong but instills habits of doing good and avoiding evil so that students become aware of moral values (Faishol et al., 2021). During the time of Prophet Muhammad SAW, character education was a primary concern to ensure the perfection of his followers' morals (Syabibi et al., 2021).

This research focuses on the role of PAI teachers in shaping student character at Mutiara Hikmah Vocational High School (SMK Mutiara Hikmah) during the 2022/2023 academic year, aiming to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors of these efforts. Interviews with PAI teachers, the principal, and other teachers were conducted to gather information about the implementation of character education at this school.

Discipline is an internal character trait that students must possess, encompassing adherence to rules, neat appearance, punctuality, and promptness in completing tasks. Disciplinary character education should start early to develop strong and consistent character traits in students' lives (Faiz, 2021).

2. Methods

This study uses a descriptive qualitative methodology to explore the characteristics of the population, interpersonal relationships, and factors influencing the character of students and teachers at Mutiara Hikmah Vocational High School (SMK Mutiara Hikmah). This method was chosen because

it allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomena being studied through direct observation, interviews, and document analysis. The strength of this approach lies in its ability to capture the complexity and nuances of social interactions and individual character that cannot be measured by quantitative methods (Creswell, 2014; Sugiyono, 2018).

2.1. Research Instruments

The primary instruments in this research are observation, interviews, and documentation.

a. Observation:
- Type of Observation: The study uses participatory observation, where the researcher is directly involved in daily school activities to obtain a more authentic picture of the character of students and teachers (Angrosino, 2007).
- Duration and Frequency: Intensive observations were conducted daily during the research period from July 1 to August 20, 2023, to ensure the data collected was representative (Patton, 2015).
- Observation Criteria: Indicators observed included disciplinary behavior, social interactions, students' responses to school rules, and teachers' teaching practices.

b. Interviews:
- Interview Method: Semi-structured interviews were conducted to allow flexibility in exploring in-depth information. Interview participants included PAI teachers, the principal, and several students to obtain diverse perspectives (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).
- Interview Procedure: Interviews were recorded and transcribed, with the transcripts analyzed to identify key themes relevant to the research objectives.

c. Documentation:
- Types of Documents: Collected documents included photos of school activities, academic records, student activity reports, and observation notes. These documents were analyzed to support findings from observations and interviews (Bowen, 2009).
- Document Analysis: Data from documents were analyzed using content analysis methods to identify patterns and themes related to student character and the implementation of character education.

2.2. Research Location

The research was conducted at Mutiara Hikmah Vocational High School (SMK Mutiara Hikmah), located at Jl. Tamanjaya, Desa Tamanjaya, Kecamatan Ciemas, Kabupaten Sukabumi, West Java, postal code 43177. This school was chosen due to its relevant background to the research objectives, with a diverse student profile in terms of socio-economic status and adequate facilities to support character education.

2.3. Research Period

The research was conducted from July 1 to August 20, 2023. This timeframe was selected because it encompasses a sufficient period to conduct comprehensive observations and gather the necessary data. It also includes school activities relevant to the research objectives.

2.4. Data Collection Techniques

a. Observation: The researcher systematically recorded observations daily during the research period. Observational data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques to identify major themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

b. Interviews: Interview results were analyzed using thematic analysis methods. Data were analyzed to find patterns and themes relevant to character education (Gibbs, 2007).

c. Documentation: Collected documents were analyzed using content analysis methods. These documents were used to confirm findings from observations and interviews and ensure data validity (Krippendorff, 2004).

2.5. Validity and Reliability

Several steps were taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the research:

a. Triangulation: Using multiple data sources (observation, interviews, and documentation) to confirm findings (Denzin, 1978).
b. Member Checking: Confirming findings with research participants to ensure data accuracy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
c. Audit Trail: Maintaining complete records of the research process for transparency (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

2.6. Research Ethics

The following ethical aspects were considered in this research:

a. Research Permission: Obtaining permission from the school authorities before conducting the research.
b. Informed Consent: Securing consent from all research participants after explaining the purpose, procedures, and their rights during the research.
c. Confidentiality: Ensuring the confidentiality of participants' identities and personal data. Data will be securely stored and used only for research purposes.
d. Anonymity: Guaranteeing that participants' identities will not be revealed in the research report.
e. Participants' Rights: Respecting participants' rights to withdraw from the research at any time without any consequences.

2.7. Data Analysis

The obtained data were analyzed using thematic analysis and content analysis techniques. No specific software was used, but the researcher ensured that the analysis was conducted systematically and thoroughly to obtain valid and reliable findings.

3. Results

3.1. School Description

Mutiara Hikmah Vocational High School (SMK Mutiara Hikmah) is located on Tamanjaya Street, Tamanjaya Village, Ciemas District, Sukabumi Regency, West Java Province. The school spans an area of 10,000 m² and operates under the 2013 curriculum, boasting a B accreditation rating. The school is well-equipped with facilities that support character education, such as a mosque, classrooms, and a library. These facilities are integral to various character-building activities, including religious and sports activities, which play a vital role in character education.

3.2. Learning and Character Building Activities

3.2.1. The Role of PAI Teachers in Character Building Through Classroom Learning

During a classroom observation on May 3, 2023, at Mutiara Hikmah Vocational High School (SMK), the researcher noted the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher's significant role in character building. At the school gate, teachers greeted students who arrived on time, while

latecomers were given the task of memorizing short surahs. This practice, according to one teacher, "encourages punctuality and discipline among students" (Informant A, Teacher).

In the classroom, the PAI teacher led the students in prayer and the recitation of Asmaul Husna before starting the lesson. The teacher also emphasized cleanliness and discipline, ensuring all trash was cleared before beginning the day's activities. Students who were late had to recite the memorized surah before joining the class, reinforcing the importance of punctuality.

The teaching methods used by the PAI teacher included lectures and practical demonstrations on worship practices. These methods aimed to instill good habits and values. At the end of the lesson, the class concluded with a prayer, and the teacher provided motivational words to keep the students enthusiastic about their studies.

3.2.2.   The Role of PAI Teachers in Character Building Through Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities, particularly the congregational Dhuha and Dzuhur prayers, were observed to be crucial in building character among students. Teachers supervised these activities, ensuring students performed ablution correctly and participated in prayers. One student shared, "Participating in congregational prayers teaches us discipline and the importance of punctuality" (Informant B, Student).

The school's structured guidance during these activities helped students develop respect for their peers and teachers, patience, and proper etiquette in worship. These sessions also strengthened the communal bond among students and teachers, enhancing the overall school environment.

3.2.3.   Qur'an Reading and Writing (Baca Tulis Al-Qur'an or BTQ)

On September 28, 2022, an observation of the BTQ sessions revealed the program's impact on students' discipline and religious knowledge. Held every Thursday from 09:00 to 10:00 AM, the sessions grouped students based on their proficiency levels. Each student maintained a progress book to track their learning. According to a teacher, "This system helps us provide tailored support to each student, ensuring they advance at their own pace" (Informant C, Teacher).

Students who disrupted the sessions faced the consequence of memorizing additional short surahs, a method designed to improve both discipline and memorization skills. This practice was confirmed by a teacher who stated, "Discipline through memorization helps students internalize the lessons better and prevents repeated misbehavior" (Informant D, Teacher).

3.3. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Character Building

From observations and interviews with the school principal, several supporting and inhibiting factors were identified:

3.3.1.   Supporting Factors:

a. School Programs: The structured programs for Dhuha and Dzuhur prayers, along with the availability of a spacious mosque and ablution area, provide strong support for character-building activities.
b. Teacher and Parental Involvement: Active participation from teachers and parents plays a significant role in reinforcing character education. A parent mentioned, "Supporting my child in memorizing surahs at home aligns with the school's efforts and strengthens their discipline" (Informant E, Parent).

3.3.2.   Inhibiting Factors:

a. Teacher Assessment Standards: Variability in teachers' assessment standards, particularly regarding uniform and attribute discipline, can hinder consistent character building.
b. Limited Religious Lesson Hours: The restricted time allocated for religious lessons limits the ability of teachers to supervise and guide students adequately.

These findings align with Basri's (2017) research, which underscores the importance of Islamic education in character development. Islamic education aims to nurture well-rounded individuals with noble character, emphasizing the critical role of parents in this process from an early age.

3.4. Analysis of Findings

3.4.1.   Enhancement of Facilities

The existing facilities at Mutiara Hikmah Vocational High School (SMK), such as classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and mosques, are essential in supporting character education. However, there is a need for further improvement to accommodate more comprehensive learning and extracurricular activities. For example, adding dedicated spaces for extracurricular and religious learning activities can create a more conducive environment for student character development.

3.4.2.   Collaboration with Parents

The study found that parental involvement is crucial in shaping students' character. Parents who actively support character education at home reinforce the lessons taught at school. Organizing workshops or socialization programs for parents on the importance of character education can enhance this collaboration. A parent noted, "Understanding how to support my child's character education at home has helped me align with the school's efforts" (Informant E, Parent).

3.4.3.   Development of Extracurricular Programs

Extracurricular activities like congregational Dhuha and Dzuhur prayers and BTQ sessions have been effective in building student character, particularly in terms of discipline and moral values. However, increasing the number and variety of these programs can further optimize their impact. For instance, adding social and humanitarian activities can help students develop empathy and social responsibility.

3.4.4.   Teacher Training

Continuous training for PAI teachers is necessary to enhance their effectiveness in character education. This training should include active learning techniques, effective classroom management, and ways to be role models for students. Well-trained teachers can create a supportive learning environment that fosters holistic character development.

3.4.5.   Use of Data for Program Development

Regular collection and analysis of data on students' character development are essential for evaluating the effectiveness of existing programs. This data, derived from observations, interviews, and surveys, can help identify areas needing improvement. For instance, a decline in student discipline can prompt the school to implement corrective measures, such as additional counseling sessions or workshops on discipline.

This research underscores the importance of a holistic approach to character education, involving facility enhancement, parental collaboration, extracurricular program development, teacher training, and data-driven program adjustments. By implementing these strategies, Mutiara Hikmah Vocational High School (SMK) can more effectively shape students who are disciplined, morally upright, and well-rounded individuals. Active collaboration between the school, parents, and the community is essential in achieving these goals, providing a model for other schools facing similar challenges in character education.

4. Discussion

The role of teachers in various capacities within a school is crucial, particularly in character formation among students. At Mutiara Hikmah Vocational High School (SMK), the Islamic Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam or PAI) teacher not only serves as an instructor but also as a facilitator, motivator, and role model for students. Concrete examples from this study's findings indicate that PAI teachers commence each lesson with collective prayers and the recitation of Asmaul Husna, which fosters discipline and reinforces spiritual values. Furthermore, teachers implement educational punishments, such as memorizing short Quranic verses for tardy students, to instill a sense of responsibility and discipline (Mulyana et al., 2023).

This research enriches the existing literature on the role of teachers in shaping students' character. As Dewi & Nurkholis (2022) stated, a person's character reflects the moral and ethical values accepted by society. This study finds that routine interactions between teachers and students, such as performing congregational prayers and Quran reading activities, significantly influence students' character development. These findings align with previous research highlighting the importance of teachers in the moral and ethical development of students.

Teachers at Mutiara Hikmah Vocational High School (SMK) assist students in time management and behavior through various strategies. For instance, PAI teachers ensure classroom cleanliness before starting lessons, teaching students to be responsible for their environment. Additionally, the implementation of punishments such as memorizing short Quranic verses for tardy students helps instill time discipline. Other methods used include assigning challenging yet educational tasks, such as memorizing and understanding the Quran, which enhances students' academic abilities and discipline (Tuna, 2022).

This study found that a disciplined learning environment positively impacts students' academic achievements. Students actively involved in religious activities such as Quran Reading and Writing (Baca Tulis Al-Qur'an or BTQ) show improvements in their Quran reading and writing skills and other academic performances. Observational data indicate that students engaged in disciplined and structured activities have better academic grades, supporting the claim that a disciplined learning environment can enhance student learning outcomes (Qodriah et al., 2019).

The study emphasizes the importance of character education conducted by PAI teachers at Mutiara Hikmah Vocational High School (SMK). PAI teachers do not only impart religious knowledge but also moral and ethical values, helping shape students' character for the better. The practical implications of these findings suggest that other schools aiming to implement character education programs need to provide adequate support to teachers through training and facilities. For example, training in active learning methods and classroom management can help teachers become more effective role models for students.

This research highlights the crucial role of PAI teachers in shaping students' character through various religious activities and classroom learning. The findings suggest that routine interactions between teachers and students, time and behavior management strategies, and support from school facilities play vital roles in shaping students' character. With adequate support, this character education

program can be effectively implemented in other schools, helping students develop into disciplined, ethical, and high-achieving individuals.

5. Conclusion

This study reveals the significant role of Islamic Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam or PAI) teachers in character education at Mutiara Hikmah Vocational High School (SMK). The findings underscore the importance of a holistic approach involving parents, teachers, and the community to address the challenges of globalization affecting moral values.

Character education is essential for developing disciplined, morally upright, and independent individuals. PAI teachers play a crucial role in instilling these values through classroom instruction and extracurricular activities. This study found that PAI teachers significantly impact students' character development by integrating religious teachings and moral values into daily routines and activities. For example, starting classes with collective prayers, encouraging cleanliness, and imposing educational punishments such as memorizing short Quranic verses for tardy students effectively promote discipline.

Additionally, active parental support is vital in shaping their children's character. Parents who are involved and support the values taught at school at home contribute positively to their children's character development. Extracurricular activities such as Dhuha and Dzuhur congregational prayers and Quran Reading and Writing (Baca Tulis Al-Qur'an or BTQ) sessions have also proven effective in shaping students' character, particularly in terms of discipline, time management, and respect for religious practices.

Adequate facilities at Mutiara Hikmah Vocational High School (SMK), such as classrooms, prayer rooms, and sports fields, play an essential role in supporting the effective implementation of character-building activities. Furthermore, integrating cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects is crucial for comprehensive character education.

In practical applications, continuous training for teachers in active learning methods and classroom management is necessary to enhance their effectiveness as role models. Workshops for parents on strategies to support character education at home are also essential to bridge the gap between school and family values. Additionally, introducing more extracurricular activities focused on character development, such as social activities and humanitarian projects, can further develop students' empathy and social responsibility.

For future research, it is recommended to explore the long-term impact of character education programs on students' behavior and academic performance. Further studies on the specific contributions of various extracurricular activities to character development will also provide deeper insights.

However, this study has limitations due to its qualitative nature and focus on a single school. More comprehensive data can be obtained through broader studies involving multiple schools and incorporating quantitative methods.

In conclusion, this study affirms the significant impact of PAI teachers and a holistic educational approach on students' character development. By addressing the identified challenges and implementing the recommended strategies, schools can better prepare students to face the moral complexities of a globalized world. This approach not only enhances individual character but also contributes to the development of a more disciplined and moral society.

Declarations

ORCID

Agus Nasrullah

Abdus Salam DZ

Amin Haedari https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9273-7768

Abdul Karim https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3402-3828

References

Al Hakim, I. (2020). Manajemen Kegiatan Ekstrakurikuler Di Madrasah. AL-HIKMAH. Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pendidikan Agama Islam, 2(2), 149–153.

Angrosino, M. (2007). Doing Ethnographic and Observational Research. Sage.

Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. Qualitative Research Journal, 9(2), 27–40.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77–101.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches (4th ed.). Sage.

Denzin, N. K. (1978). The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods. McGraw-Hill.

Dewi, M., & Nurkholis, N. (2022). Manajemen ekstrakurikuler dalam penguatan karakter peserta didik di sd sains islam al farabi. 8(2).

Faishol, R., Fadlullah, M., Hidayah, F., Fanani, A., & Silvia, Y. (2021). Peran Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam Sebagai Motifator Dalam Membentuk Akhlak Siswa di MTs An-Najahiyyah. Jurnah Ilmiah Pendidikan Panasila Dan Kewarganegaraan (JPPKn), 6(1), 43–51.

Faiz, A. (2021). Tinjauan Analisis Kritis Terhadap Faktor Penghambat Pendidikan Karakter Di Indonesia. Jurnal Penelitian Bidang Pendidikan, 27(2), 82. https://doi.org/10.24114/jpbp.v27i2.24205

Fikriyah, Karim, A., Huda, M., & Sumiati, A. (2021). Kepemimpinan spiritual: Kasus penanaman nilai-nilai pada santri melalui program Kiai di era globalisasi. Jurnal Kepemimpinan Dalam Organisasi, 3(1), 16–30. https://doi.org/10.22146/jlo.63922

Gibbs, G. R. (2007). Analyzing Qualitative Data. Sage.

Krippendorff, K. (2004). Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology. Sage.

Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing (2nd ed.). Sage.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). Naturalistic Inquiry. Sage.

Mbagho, F., Khulailiyah, A., & Naelasari, D. (2021). Peran Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam dalam Pembentukan Sikap Tanggung Jawab Siswa di Tingkat Madrasah Tsanawiyah. Jurnal Studi Kemahasiswaan, 1(2), 116–129.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook (2nd ed.). Sage.

Mulyana, R., Kurahman, O., & Fauzi, R. (2023). Pengembangan Profesi Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Guru Madrasah. Jurnal Pendidikan Islam, 9(1), 55–66. https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v0i0.23511

Patton, M. Q. (2015). Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods (4th ed.). Sage.

Qodriah, S., Hartati, W., & Karim, A. (2019). Kepemimpinan diri dan kesuksesan karir: Motivasi dosen perguruan tinggi. Jurnal Kepemimpinan Dalam Organisasi, 1(2), 79–95.

Salsabilah, A., Dewi, D., Furnamasari, Y., Studi, P., Guru, P., & Dasar, S. (2021). Peran Guru Dalam Mewujudkan Pendidikan Karakter. Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai, 5(3), 7158–7163.

Sugiyono. (2018). Metode Penelitian Kombinasi. Penerbit Alfabeta.

Syabibi, M., Karim, A., Kulkarni, S., & Sahil, A. (2021). Dakwah budaya komunikatif Abdurrahman Wahid dalam masyarakat majemuk. Karsa: Jurnal Sosial Dan Kebudayaan Islam, 29(2), 1–33. https://doi.org/10.19105/karsa.v29i2.5220

Tuna, M. (2022). Profesionalisasi guru pendidikan agama Islam. Jurnal Pendidikan Keagamaan Inggris, 44(2), 188–199. https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2021.1999905

Widiantari, D., Bin Samadi, M., & Karim, A. (2022). Pengaruh Kepemimpinan Karismatik Guru Dalam Menumbuhkan Mutu Lulusan SMA. Jurnal Kepemimpinan Dalam Organisasi, 4(2), 179–190. https://doi.org/10.22146/jlo.74872

Zakarya, Hafidz, Martaputu, & Nashihin, H. (2023). Peran Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam dalam Meningkatkan Motivasi Belajar peserta didik di SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Surakarta. Menarik : Jurnal Pendidikan Inovatif, 5(2), 909–918.