

The Role of Teachers in Shaping Students' Religious Character

Ridha Dwi Minanti*

Universitas Islam Sumatera Utara

Email: dwiridha@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the role of teachers in the formation of students' religious character in MTsS Nurul Amaliyah. In the midst of increasing concerns about student delinquency and weakening moral values, the formation of religious character has become a central issue in educational discourse. This research uses a qualitative approach, with data collection techniques in the form of direct observation, in-depth interviews with teachers and principals, as well as documentation and literature studies from journals, theses, books, and field notes. The results of the study show that teachers have an important role, not only through the religious learning process, but also through the habit of good speech, the provision of moral advice, and discipline that is carried out consistently. Students' religious character is formed through the integration of formal learning and ongoing religious practices in daily life at school. These findings confirm that character formation is not only obtained from the subject matter, but also from the examples and real experiences that teachers continue to foster in the school environment.

Keywords: *Teacher; Character; Students; MTsS Nurul Amaliyah*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji peran guru dalam pembentukan karakter religius siswa di MTsS Nurul Amaliyah. Di tengah meningkatnya kekhawatiran terhadap kenakalan siswa dan melemahnya nilai-nilai moral, pembentukan karakter religius menjadi isu sentral dalam diskursus pendidikan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, dengan teknik pengumpulan data berupa observasi langsung, wawancara mendalam dengan guru dan kepala sekolah, serta dokumentasi dan studi kepustakaan dari jurnal, skripsi, buku, dan catatan lapangan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru memiliki peran penting, tidak hanya melalui proses pembelajaran agama, tetapi juga melalui pembiasaan ucapan yang baik, pemberian nasihat moral, serta pendisiplinan yang dilakukan secara konsisten. Karakter religius siswa dibentuk melalui integrasi antara pembelajaran formal dan praktik keagamaan yang berkelanjutan dalam kehidupan sehari-hari di sekolah. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa pembentukan karakter tidak hanya diperoleh dari materi pelajaran, tetapi juga dari keteladanan dan pengalaman nyata yang terus dibina oleh guru dalam lingkungan sekolah.

Kata Kunci: *Guru; Karakter; Siswa; MTsS Nurul Amaliyah*

Introduction

The role of teachers not only functions as a material presenter, but also as an exemplary figure who has a great influence in internalizing moral and spiritual values in students. A learning approach that integrates cognitive, affective, and spiritual aspects is important in forming religious character, but its implementation is not always easy, given the complexity of students' backgrounds and the dynamics of educational institutions. Some people consider that the formation of religious character should be the main responsibility of the family and religious institutions, while others emphasize that schools and teachers have a strategic space as the most systematic and structured social institutions in the process of value education (Mubarok & Muslihah, 2022).

In the school environment, teachers play a central role in guiding, directing, and being role models for students, especially in instilling religious values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, and concern for others. Teachers are not only curriculum implementers, but also moral actors who bring religious values to life through daily behavior and interaction. A teacher's example is often more influential than mere verbal instruction. Therefore, the role of teachers cannot be reduced only to the teaching aspect, but must also be seen from their function as a coach of character and spirituality of students in the classroom and outside the classroom (Putri & Husmidar, 2021).

Recent phenomena, such as the increase in juvenile delinquency in the school environment—ranging from violations of discipline, bullying, to lack of respect for teachers' authority—have become alarms for the world of education. This reinforces the urgency of the formation of religious character as a solid foundation of personality. Religious character is one of the solutions in fostering moral, ethical, and spiritual awareness that can restrain students from negative actions. In this context, the role of teachers becomes very important in transforming religious values into the daily life practices of students through a holistic and humanistic approach to learning (AB. Musyafa Fathoni et al., 2024).

Various previous studies have shown the relevance and urgency of this topic. For example, a study conducted by Syaiful Anwar (2021) shows that the formation of students' religious character is greatly influenced by pedagogical approaches and teacher examples. Another study by Nurhasanah and Sobandi (2020) confirms that the integration of religious values in general subjects can strengthen students' character as a whole. These studies are an important foundation in understanding the dynamics of the formation of students' religious character in schools, as well as the strategic role played by teachers as agents of change.

Based on the above background, this article aims to describe and analyze in depth how the role of teachers in shaping students' religious character in the school environment. It is hoped that this article can make

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a conceptual and practical contribution to strengthening character education in schools.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with the aim of understanding in depth the role of teachers in the formation of students' religious character in the school environment. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore meaning, experiences, and social dynamics that take place naturally in the field. The research was conducted at MTsS Nurul Amaliyah. Primary data was collected through direct observation techniques of learning activities and social interaction in the school environment. Observation is carried out in a participatory manner by recording various phenomena related to the formation of students' religious character.

Primary data was also obtained through in-depth interviews with Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers and MTsS principal Nurul Amaliyah. Interviews are conducted in a semi-structured manner. The information obtained from this interview provides a direct perspective from education actors regarding their role and contribution in shaping the character of students. The secondary data was obtained from various relevant sources, such as journal articles, theses, books, and documentation of school activities. This data is used to enrich the analysis and strengthen findings in the field with theoretical foundations and similar results of previous research.

Data analysis is carried out with a descriptive-analytical approach, namely by presenting data naturally through the narrative of words that describe reality as it is. The analysis process starts from the stage of data reduction, data presentation, to drawing conclusions. The data that has been collected is systematically analyzed to understand the meaning behind the actions, policies, and patterns of interaction between teachers and students in the context of religious character formation.

Results and Discussion

Teachers have an important role in efforts to build character through the development of personality and desired values. In the learning process, the role of teachers is difficult to replace with others, even though the technology that can be used in learning is developing very quickly. Teachers have an important role in shaping and instilling character values in schools because teachers are a guide, a model and an advisor to students. The things that can form Islamic character in students in Islam include forming responsible, disciplined, honest, polite, humble and tolerant human beings (Nurbaiti et al., 2020). Habit is the process of forming attitudes and behaviors that are repetitive and carried out continuously.

Familiarize students through commendable speech

Habits with Islamic character applied in schools with guidance from teachers will show commendable behavior in students. The purpose of the habituation of Islamic character itself is so that students are able to familiarize themselves with these good things.

As conveyed by the Islamic religious education teacher (Mr. Suhendra) as the teacher of Aqidah Akhlak, he said that: Teachers have a responsibility to improve the behavior of their students to be better, especially as teachers of Islamic religious education, we are very blamed if there are students who have bad morals. Therefore, there are several activities implemented in schools that are expected to make students accustomed to doing these good things, for example teaching that *bismillah* is the opening of all activities, getting students used to reading prayers and reading the Qur'an before starting the first lesson, *dhuha* prayer and congregational *dhuhr* prayer and accustoming students to have a high discipline attitude. And in learning moral beliefs, there are also lessons about avoiding reprehensible morals such as *hasad*, *riya*, arrogance. And teachers here are expected to teach students to be able to avoid reprehensible morals and be able to apply them in daily life (Diana & Rodhiyana, 2023).

Then the results of the interview with Nabila Safira, a student of grade VIII-2, mentioned that the routine every morning before starting the lesson was to recite first and then continue with reading the prayer before studying led by the class leader.

Based on the results of the interview with Mikail Al-Hafiz class VIII-1, it turns out that what has been explained by the Islamic religious education teacher is indeed true that: Every morning students and teachers at MTsS Nurul Amaliyah school carry out *dhuha* prayers according to the schedule that has been set. If there are students who are caught not performing prayers intentionally, they will be punished to memorize short letters or daily prayers.

The statement from the Islamic religious education teacher was justified and then added as conveyed by the Vice President of Student Affairs (Mrs. Sri Asih) who also serves as a vocational teacher that each student is given a handbook for memorizing letters and prayers and students are told to memorize their memorization in every learning of the Qur'an hadith. And in the activities of *dhuha* prayer and congregational prayer prayers are carried out by each class according to the schedule, except for those who are in the hurry. This activity is indeed carried out continuously or continuously by Islamic religious teachers in order to build students' disciplined attitudes and accustom them to be on time in carrying out their responsibilities and getting closer to Allah. Teaching does require sacrifice, tenacity and perseverance, not just transferring knowledge or even just looking for finances.

More than that, a teacher has an obligation to how his students are in accordance with what is expected, at least to be an honest human being and have good ethics. As explained by Islamic religious education teachers, that: In instilling honesty and good manners, we as teachers

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must instill and get used to small things first, for example, in the learning process students are prohibited from cheating on friends' work both during exams and doing homework.

Based on the results of an interview with Devira Kamalina, a student of grade VIII-2 who explained that the teacher always reminds students to always be honest. Teachers often supervise and check the results of student assignments, if there are similarities in the student's answers, additional assignments will be given to the student.

Then the Islamic religious education teacher as a Fiqih teacher (Mrs. Rakhmayani) explained that instilling Islamic character related to politeness and manners itself has been programmed through the habituation of 5S (smile, greeting, greeting, politeness, manners). Habib Alfinza, a student of grades VIII-3, also mentioned that students are accustomed to smiling, saying greetings, shaking hands with teachers and greeting each other to other students. The same thing was also conveyed by the Student Affairs Officer who stated that so far the Islamic culture that has become a habit in this school is the 5S program (smile, greeting, greeting, politeness, manners) and I think the daily behavior of students has reflected Islamic behavior, thank God.

Based on the results of observations made by the author at the MTsS Nurul Amaliyah school, it can be seen that students at the school are used to the 5S culture, shown by the presence of some students who say greetings and kiss hands every time they meet their teachers, as well as carry out dhuha prayers and dhuh prayers in congregation. Thus, it can be concluded that good instilling and habituation is expected so that students get used to doing these things without any coercion from anyone, and is not only done at school but also at home.

Results of Interview with Suhendra as a Teacher of Aqidah Akhlak at MTsS Nurul Amaliyah Based on the presentation of the above data through the results of interviews and observations, it shows that the cultivation and implementation of habituation is in line with the theory that has been explained, the role of Islamic religious education teachers in shaping the Islamic character of students has been illustrated by showing the habituation of teachers who every morning welcome the arrival of students at the school gate, then students say greetings while shaking hands with their teachers before entering their respective classes and reading the Qur'an before the lesson begins. The activities of dhuha prayer and congregational prayer also look quite good, with most of the awareness of students when prayer time no longer needs to be ordered, let alone angry.

Setting an Example for Students

Example is part of some of the most effective methods in preparing and shaping students morally, spiritually and socially, because an educator is an ideal example in the student's view, whose behavior and manners will be imitated by students, as explained by Islamic religious education teachers that: Being a PAI teacher can at least provide the

best example among other teachers, We try to set an example for students in various ways. For example, in terms of discipline, always take the time to come to school early, try to be a good and patient teacher for students, be fair, speak good words, always look neat, get used to reprimanding fellow teachers and students, be responsible and always act honestly. In the same way, in terms of speech, personality and behavior, we are always careful (Putra et al., 2024).

Based on the results of an interview with Azira Ayra, a student of grade VIII-2, said that teachers are always kind to students, always patient in reexplaining the material to students who do not understand. The results of an interview with one of the school's students, Nabila Spira, also confirmed the explanation from the Islamic religious education teacher that the teacher always looked neat, always spoke well, and always acted fairly to all students. Based on the results of an interview with Boby Aditya, he said that: Every Monday the teachers come early and then welcome the arrival of students to shake hands as well as check the completeness of the students' attributes.

This is the same as what was conveyed by the Vice President of Student Affairs, he said that: The teachers here are trying to set a good example. For example, the teacher comes early, although not all teachers, then prays dhuha, the teacher here also does that even though it is not in congregation, then looks neat, gets used to the 5S (greeting, smile, greeting, politeness, manners), is responsible for his teaching duties, and acts politely not only to fellow teachers but also to students. Based on the results of observations made by the author, it has been illustrated that Islamic religious education teachers have a high discipline attitude. It is shown by always coming to school early, always dressing neatly, and speaking polite and kind words.

Based on the results of the interview above, it shows that the implementation of the teacher's example is in line with the theory, which states that teachers must set a good example to their students, both speech, personality, way of dressing, getting along and behaving. This has been illustrated by the Islamic religious education teacher at MTsS Nurul Amaliyah who has provided an example of discipline. Strengthened by the observation made by the author that Islamic religious education teachers come to school early, always dress neatly, speak polite and gentle words and are friendly to anyone.

Providing guidance to students functionally

The functional approach is an effort to provide religious materials that emphasize the benefits for students in their daily lives according to their level of development. The implementation of learning is not only about developing knowledge, but also internalizing religious values such as honesty, independence, fairness, hard work, care and so on. To achieve these goals, it is necessary to have a learning process that is integrated with the nuances of Islam given to students, this process is expected to achieve the goal (Andriani et al., 2020).

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As conveyed by the Islamic religious education teacher SKI teacher (Mrs. Rakhmayani) that: In instilling character values in students, one of them is by associating learning materials with daily life. Not only in theory but rather in its application in daily life. For example, in the material of Khulafaur Rasyidin, of course, we do not always give a theory of Umar's attributes. But more than that, what things can be exemplified by Umar's attitude and what we often do on a daily basis. Islamic religious education is highly emphasized so that students have the desired character. This is done so that the benefits of the learning results can be felt in the community.

Contextual learning will bring students closer to what they are learning Based on the results of interviews with several students, in general students stated that: Every time explaining the subject matter, the teacher gives examples related to the life that students often do, then explains what benefits will be obtained if they apply it in daily life. Not only that, a statement by an Islamic religious education teacher was then added as conveyed by the Vice President of Student Affairs that: A teacher does not only teach theories about human noble values. However, educating how the students are able to implement, practice and apply it in daily life. The application of noble values will give birth to students with Islamic character.

Based on the above explanation, it can be seen that teachers in each learning process not only convey Islamic material but also explain the benefits of the theory for students. Based on the results of the interview above, it shows that teachers in providing guidance functionally are in line with the theory that has been presented. In accordance with the results of the observations made by the Author that in the teaching and learning process, Islamic religious education teachers always associate the material presented with the daily lives of students and always convey the benefits of the material presented.

Giving Advice to Students

Advice is a way used by teachers to give instructions, warnings, and reprimands to students. Counsel plays a very important role in efforts to form students' faith, prepare them morally, psychologically, and in explaining to students all the essences, values of religion and teaching them Islamic principles. Through teaching and learning activities (KBM) in the classroom, a teacher can have closeness to his students, so that teachers can easily provide advice related to the cultivation of Islamic values in students (Ashoumi & AH, 2019).

As conveyed by the Islamic religious education teacher SKI (Mrs. Rakhmayani) who said that: Before the class is over, I always remind and advise the children to study diligently, and the most important thing is to remind them to always worship, and take care of themselves. Although there are some students who make mistakes or violate school rules, the teacher does not scold them in public, but calls the child and then talks to them in a good way.

Based on the results of an interview with Nabila Safira, class VIII-2 said that teachers always give advice and motivation before leaving the classroom. A statement by an Islamic religious education teacher was then added as conveyed by the Student Affairs Deputy that "In educating students, there is no need for physical punishment, it is enough to reprimand or advice. Counsel will be more towards its goal, and the child will also understand and accept it better."

Based on the presentation of the data above through the results of interviews, it shows that the teacher's way of giving advice to students is through a heart-to-heart approach so that students can accept it well. Based on the results of the presentation through the interview above, it shows that the role of teachers in giving advice to students is in line with the theory that has been presented. This has been illustrated by the provision of advice at the end of each learning process. Islamic religious education teachers always provide motivation and direction and remind students to be more active in terms of worship.

Conclusions

Teachers have a strategic role in shaping the religious character of students in the school environment. This role is realized through various approaches, such as habituating commendable speech in daily interactions, providing constructive advice, and discipline efforts that are carried out consistently and educationally. Teachers also play an active role in shaping students' character through integrated religious learning activities and religious activities, such as congregational prayers, tadarus, and other worship practices that are guided directly by teachers.

Efforts to form religious character are not only carried out in the classroom through the delivery of subject matter, but also through the habituation of religious values in all aspects of student life at school. This process shows that character education does not only come from the content of the curriculum alone, but is formed through example, social interaction, and religious school culture. Thus, students' religious character can grow as a whole as part of a transformative and sustainable educational process.

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