

The Pedagogical Role of Islamic Religious Teachers in Guiding Students' Self-Control in Secondary Schools

Ahmad Luthfi*

Universitas Islam Sumatera Utara

Email: lutfiahmad12@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the pedagogical role of Islamic religious teachers in guiding students' self-control at *Madrasah Aliyah Zakiyun Najah*, located in Firdaus Village, Sei Rampah District, Serdang Bedagai Regency. The research employs a field study method with a descriptive-analytical narrative approach. Primary data were obtained through direct observation and in-depth interviews with Islamic religious teachers and seventh-grade students as key informants. Data analysis was conducted through stages of reduction, categorization, and narrative interpretation to reveal the pedagogical meaning of the implemented teaching practices. The findings indicate that Islamic religious teachers play a strategic role through three main approaches: habituation of moral values, demonstration of moral exemplarity in daily behavior, and the application of educational sanctions that emphasize character formation. These approaches contribute to the development of students' religious character, internal discipline, and the ability to regulate emotions and actions in accordance with Islamic ethical norms.

Keywords: *Islamic Religious Teachers; Self-Control; Pedagogical Role*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran pedagogis guru agama Islam dalam membimbing pengendalian diri siswa di Madrasah Aliyah Zakiyun Najah, Desa Firdaus, Kecamatan Sei Rampah, Kabupaten Serdang Bedagai. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode studi lapangan dengan pendekatan deskriptif-analitis naratif. Data primer diperoleh melalui observasi langsung dan wawancara mendalam dengan guru agama dan siswa kelas VII sebagai informan kunci. Analisis data dilakukan melalui tahapan reduksi, kategorisasi, dan interpretasi naratif untuk mengungkap makna pedagogis dari praktik pembelajaran yang diterapkan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru agama Islam memainkan peran strategis yaitu: pembiasaan nilai-nilai akhlak, pemberian teladan moral dalam perilaku sehari-hari, dan penerapan sanksi edukatif yang bersifat mendidik. Pendekatan ini berkontribusi pada terbentuknya karakter religius, kedisiplinan internal, serta kemampuan siswa dalam mengontrol emosi dan tindakan sesuai norma Islam.

Kata Kunci: *Guru Agama Islam; Pengendalian Diri; Peran Pedagogis*

Introduction

Islamic religious education holds a strategic position in shaping students' moral and spiritual identity, particularly at the secondary school level. In the Islamic educational framework, learning is not limited to the transmission of knowledge (*ta'lim*) but is also directed toward character formation, self-regulation, and spiritual consciousness. Values such as patience, honesty, discipline, and responsibility constitute essential components of Islamic education that must be internalized in students' daily behavior. Therefore, the Islamic religious teacher serves not merely as an instructor but as a moral and spiritual mentor who cultivates students' capacity for self-control as a foundation for navigating the moral complexities of contemporary life (Jenuri et al., 2025).

However, in practice, the moral integrity of students has increasingly been challenged by globalization, digital culture, and popular media that often conflict with Islamic ethical principles. This tension has generated a pedagogical debate between normative educational theories—which emphasize moral cultivation through example and habituation—and modern educational paradigms that prioritize student autonomy and self-expression. The central challenge, therefore, is how Islamic religious teachers can harmonize traditional moral pedagogy rooted in faith-based values with contemporary educational approaches responsive to current realities. This dual responsibility positions the teacher not only as a transmitter of religious knowledge but also as a transformative guide who integrates moral discipline with intellectual freedom (Rahayu et al., 2025).

Previous studies have consistently emphasized the pivotal role of religious teachers in character formation. For example, Hasan (2021) demonstrated that Islamic teachers significantly contribute to fostering students' discipline and responsibility through religious habituation programs. Similarly, Sari and Abdullah (2022) highlighted the effectiveness of moral reasoning approaches in strengthening students' self-control within Islamic school settings. Nevertheless, most existing research remains limited to instructional methods, lacking a comprehensive exploration of the pedagogical dimension in moral regulation and self-discipline. Hence, this study seeks to fill that gap by examining the intersection of pedagogical, spiritual, and psychological aspects in nurturing students' self-control.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the pedagogical role of Islamic religious teachers in guiding students' self-control in secondary schools. It aims to elucidate how pedagogical practices such as moral modeling, habituation, and behavioral regulation are systematically applied to cultivate disciplined and morally grounded individuals. Furthermore, this study is expected to offer theoretical contributions to the development of an Islamic educational model that is both ethically anchored and contextually responsive, while also providing practical implications for strengthening character education among students in contemporary secondary school settings.

Method

This study employed a field research design conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Zakiyun Najah, located in Firdaus Village, Sei Rampah District, Serdang Bedagai Regency. The research setting was chosen purposively to explore the pedagogical role of Islamic religious teachers in guiding students' self-control within a real educational environment. The primary data sources consisted of Islamic religious teachers and seventh-grade students, who served as the main informants. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and direct observation, allowing the researcher to capture authentic interactions between teachers and students as well as the pedagogical dynamics that occur during the learning process.

The collected data were analyzed using a descriptive-analytic narrative approach, which focuses on interpreting the meanings behind participants' experiences and behaviors. This method enabled the researcher to describe, understand, and interpret the pedagogical practices of Islamic teachers in regulating students' moral and emotional conduct. Through a careful process of data reduction, categorization, and narrative interpretation, patterns were identified that reveal how teachers implement self-control guidance both inside and outside the classroom. The descriptive-analytic narrative approach thus provided a comprehensive understanding of the pedagogical strategies employed by religious teachers and their impact on shaping students' self-discipline and moral awareness.

Results and Discussion

Pedagogical Role of Religious Teachers

In general, the pedagogical role of religious teachers serves as the fundamental foundation in an educational process that emphasizes the formation of students' personality, morality, and spirituality. The term *pedagogical* in this context does not merely refer to the technical ability to teach but also encompasses the capacity to guide, direct, and shape character through the internalization of religious values. Religious teachers hold a distinctive position compared to general subject teachers, as their task is not only to transmit knowledge but also to cultivate moral and spiritual awareness that becomes a guiding principle for students. Thus, Islamic education functions not merely as an academic discipline but as a vital means of fostering moral development and self-control among learners (Febriani et al., 2022).

The pedagogical role of religious teachers is closely related to their ability to integrate Islamic teachings into both the learning process and daily life. A competent religious teacher connects theoretical religious concepts with practical moral applications, enabling students to understand Islamic values contextually. By employing approaches that touch the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, religious teachers help students not only to comprehend Islamic principles intellectually but also to internalize and apply them in real life. This

integrative process represents the strength of religious pedagogy — transforming abstract values into living moral behaviors that guide students in their everyday conduct.

In practice, religious teachers function as moral and spiritual role models for their students. Exemplary behavior is the most effective medium of education because students tend to imitate what they observe rather than what they merely hear. For instance, *Akidah Akhlak* teachers do not simply explain concepts such as responsibility, honesty, and courtesy but demonstrate these virtues through their own actions and interactions with students. Through consistent advice, practical examples, and moral guidance, religious teachers become mentors who instill virtuous values in a gradual yet profound manner. In this way, the principles of *akhlak al-karimah* (noble character) are nurtured to become an inseparable part of the students' personality.

Furthermore, the pedagogical dimension of religious teachers functions as a guiding force in fostering holistic religious consciousness within students. Religious education is not solely intended to expand Islamic knowledge but also to cultivate awareness that every human action must be grounded in spiritual values. Religious teachers play a pivotal role in developing students' reflective thinking and self-control, helping them resist negative impulses and align their behavior with Islamic teachings. Through continuous learning, consistent moral reinforcement, and genuine role modeling, religious teachers contribute significantly to shaping a generation that is not only intellectually capable but also morally upright and spiritually mature (Metcalfe et al., 2024).

Religious Teachers and Students' Self-Control

Religious education plays a fundamental role in shaping students' character and personality. Through religious instruction, students not only acquire theoretical knowledge of Islamic teachings but are also guided to understand the moral and ethical values that serve as principles of life. Values such as responsibility, discipline, and courtesy form the essence of character education rooted in religion. Therefore, religious education in secondary schools serves as an essential foundation for enabling students to distinguish between right and wrong actions and to develop self-control when facing various moral challenges in their social environment (Manea, 2014).

The role of religious teachers is highly strategic in cultivating students' religious character. In practice, *Akidah Akhlak* teachers do not merely act as transmitters of knowledge but as spiritual mentors who provide moral guidance through both words and personal example. Based on an interview with Drs. H. Maralutan Siregar, an Islamic Education teacher at Madrasah Aliyah Zakiyun Najah, character education should be instilled by presenting concrete examples such as respecting parents, teachers, and peers, as well as demonstrating politeness in speech and behavior. Through such modeling and habituation, students are

encouraged to internalize positive values that gradually develop into integral aspects of their character.

Students' perspectives further emphasize the significance of religious teachers as moral guides. As expressed by Riski, a Grade XI student at Madrasah Aliyah Zakiyun Najah, the *Akidah Akhlak* teacher consistently offers advice and direction before lessons begin and even outside class hours. These reminders are not limited to academic contexts but are also given during informal situations, such as recess or casual interactions. The purpose of these constant moral reminders is to help students understand their responsibilities as learners, maintain good behavior, and avoid actions contrary to religious values. Consequently, the influence of religious teachers extends beyond classroom instruction and permeates students' daily moral development.

Overall, religious education guided by *Akidah Akhlak* teachers serves as a vital foundation for developing students' self-control. Learning that integrates moral advice, exemplary conduct, and the habituation of virtuous behavior strengthens students' spiritual awareness and sense of personal responsibility. Religious teachers function not only as educators but also as mentors who nurture values grounded in Islamic teachings. Through this pedagogical approach, students are expected to grow into individuals of strong character, noble morals, and deep religious consciousness capable of navigating the moral challenges of modern life (Hastasari et al., 2022).

The Pedagogical Regulation Role of Religious Teachers in Students' Self-Control

The pedagogical regulation role of religious teachers occupies a vital position in shaping students' moral awareness and self-discipline within Islamic education. As educators, religious teachers are not merely transmitters of religious knowledge but moral architects who guide students toward internalizing values that foster ethical behavior and emotional balance. Their pedagogical function extends beyond cognitive instruction; it involves cultivating a holistic character that integrates intellectual, spiritual, and behavioral dimensions. Through structured guidance, moral habituation, and exemplary conduct, religious teachers create a learning environment that encourages students to develop self-control based on conscious adherence to divine and moral principles rather than external coercion. In this framework, education becomes an ethical process of transformation—where knowledge and spirituality merge to regulate human behavior in accordance with Islamic teachings (Masuwai et al., 2025).

Furthermore, pedagogical regulation by religious teachers emphasizes the integration of moral reasoning and disciplinary structure as a coherent system of moral formation. The teacher's role as a regulator manifests in two essential domains: fostering positive habituation and implementing educative sanctions. Through consistent moral habituation, students learn to associate virtue with daily actions, transforming ethical

values into personal habits. Meanwhile, the implementation of educational sanctions functions as a corrective mechanism that reinforces accountability and respect for institutional norms. Both approaches complement each other in cultivating self-control—habituation instills proactive moral awareness, while sanctions provide reflective correction for moral lapses. Together, they represent a comprehensive pedagogical model that balances compassion with discipline, freedom with responsibility, and faith with moral action, thereby nurturing the ideal of an ethically conscious and self-regulated Muslim individual (Amini et al., 2025).

First Cultivating Good Habits among Students

The development of students' self-control within the religious educational environment of Madrasah Aliyah Zakiyun Najah is not achieved solely through formal instruction but also through the habituation of virtuous conduct rooted in Islamic values (CHANDRA et al., 2020). Religious teachers act as moral regulators who instill positive habits from an early stage. This process of habituation includes simple yet meaningful actions such as greeting teachers with "salaam," performing congregational prayers at the mosque, speaking politely, and showing respect to others. Such practices serve as a medium for internalizing Islamic ethics (*akhlakul karimah*), transforming them into part of the students' everyday behavior.

An interview with Dani, a tenth-grade student, revealed that the *Akidah Akhlak* teacher consistently reminds and teaches students to perform good deeds toward everyone. The teacher emphasizes practical moral training beyond classroom instruction—demonstrating kindness, discipline, and devotion through daily behavior. Through repeated practice, these moral teachings evolve from abstract knowledge into habitual actions that reflect self-awareness and personal discipline. The process of moral habituation allows students to form a spiritual and behavioral foundation for self-control, guided by intrinsic religious consciousness rather than fear of external punishment.

Field observations also showed that the religious teacher embodies the values being taught by modeling ethical behavior both inside and outside the classroom. The teacher provides gentle yet firm guidance, helping students align their actions with Islamic and social norms. Regular worship practices, respectful communication, and moral reminders help students internalize religious values as the core of their self-regulation. Consequently, this pedagogical approach—based on consistent moral habituation—plays a crucial role in shaping disciplined, courteous, and morally grounded students.

Second Administering Sanctions as Moral Regulation

In addition to habituation, the cultivation of students' self-control is further reinforced through the application of educational sanctions. At Madrasah Aliyah Zakiyun Najah, disciplinary measures are not punitive but rather pedagogical, designed to promote moral awareness and responsibility. The religious teachers, together with school administrators,

enforce rules that emphasize discipline, neatness, and adherence to Islamic principles. Students who arrive late or violate school regulations receive corrective actions such as performing push-ups, picking up litter, or other constructive tasks, accompanied by moral advice to reinforce understanding of the lesson behind the sanction.

According to Drs. H. Maralutan Siregar, the *Akidah Akhlak* teacher, sanctions serve as a method to cultivate students' sense of accountability and respect for institutional norms. The enforcement of such measures is always educational, proportional, and accompanied by explanation and guidance. This ensures that students do not view discipline as coercion but as an opportunity for moral growth. Headmaster Nurhadi Azhar, M.Pd., further explains that repeated offenses are handled through a collaborative approach involving parents and counselors, ensuring that the resolution process remains rehabilitative and reflective rather than punitive.

Such regulatory pedagogical practices serve as an essential mechanism for moral formation in Islamic education. Sanctions act as an external control that gradually shapes internal moral discipline within students. Through consistent implementation, learners begin to understand the consequences of their actions and the moral reasoning behind behavioral expectations. Ultimately, this pedagogical regulation by religious teachers nurtures a balance between individual autonomy and moral obedience, embodying the essence of self-control in the framework of Islamic educational philosophy (Rusman et al., 2023).

Conclusions

In conclusion, the pedagogical regulation role of religious teachers in fostering students' self-control reflects a comprehensive moral-educational approach that integrates intellectual, spiritual, and behavioral dimensions. By combining habitual moral training with the implementation of educational sanctions, religious teachers effectively nurture self-awareness, discipline, and ethical sensitivity among students. This dual strategy not only strengthens the internalization of Islamic values but also develops students' ability to regulate behavior consciously and responsibly. The implication of this approach extends beyond the classroom it contributes to the formation of morally grounded individuals capable of navigating social challenges with integrity and self-restraint. Hence, the pedagogical guidance of religious teachers serves as a transformative force in shaping both personal virtue and the moral fabric of society.

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