

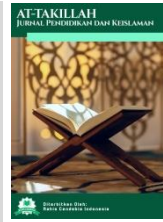


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Strengthening Students' Character through Islamic Religious Education

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A B S T R A C T

This study aims to analyze the role of Islamic Religious Education in strengthening students' character in schools. Character education has become an important issue in modern education because many students are influenced by negative behaviors such as dishonesty, lack of discipline, bullying, and low social awareness. Islamic Religious Education is expected to help students develop positive moral values, ethical awareness, and responsible behavior in their daily lives. This research employed a quantitative approach using a survey research design. The population of this study consisted of students at a selected school, while the sample was determined using purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected through questionnaires, observations, and documentation. The questionnaire used a Likert scale to measure students' perceptions regarding Islamic Religious Education learning and character strengthening. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and simple linear regression analysis. The findings revealed that Islamic Religious Education has a positive and significant influence on strengthening students' character. Students who actively participated in religious learning activities demonstrated better honesty, discipline, responsibility, tolerance, and respect toward others. Teachers, school environments, and religious activities also contributed significantly to students' moral development. However, several challenges such as low learning motivation, monotonous teaching methods, and negative environmental influences were still identified. Therefore, schools are encouraged to improve the quality of Islamic Religious Education learning through innovative teaching methods, technology integration, and collaboration among teachers, parents, and communities. Overall, this study concludes that Islamic Religious Education plays an essential role in developing students with strong moral values and positive social behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Education plays an important role in shaping students' intellectual abilities, attitudes, and moral values in society. Education is not only aimed at improving academic achievement but also at developing students' character and personality. Strong character is needed to help students become responsible individuals who can contribute positively to their communities. Therefore, character education has become one of the major priorities in modern educational systems (Lickona, 2013).

The rapid development of technology and globalization has influenced students' behavior and lifestyles significantly. Many students are exposed to negative influences such as bullying, dishonesty, violence, and lack of discipline. These conditions indicate that schools need to strengthen moral and character education continuously. Educational institutions are therefore expected to provide students with both intellectual competence and moral guidance (Koesoema, 2018).

Character education is considered essential because it helps students develop positive attitudes and ethical awareness. Good character includes honesty, responsibility, discipline, tolerance, empathy, and respect for others. These values are important for students in building healthy social relationships and becoming responsible citizens. Consequently, schools need to integrate character education into daily learning activities (Muhaimin, 2018).

Islamic Religious Education is one of the important subjects that contributes significantly to character formation. Islamic Religious Education teaches students about Islamic values, morality, spirituality, and ethical behavior based on Islamic teachings. Through this learning process, students are expected to understand and apply Islamic values in their daily lives. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education has a strategic role in strengthening students' character (Daradjat, 2014).

Islamic Religious Education emphasizes not only cognitive understanding but also affective and behavioral development. Students are encouraged to practice positive attitudes such as honesty, patience, responsibility, discipline, and social care. These values are important for shaping students into morally responsible individuals. As a result, religious education becomes an important foundation for character building (Tafsir, 2016).

Teachers play a significant role in strengthening students' character through Islamic Religious Education. Teachers are not only responsible for teaching academic materials but also for becoming role models for students. Positive behavior demonstrated by teachers can influence students to imitate good moral attitudes. Therefore, teachers have a strong impact on students' character development (Mulyasa, 2020).

The effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education depends greatly on teaching methods and learning strategies. Interactive learning approaches such as discussions, collaborative learning, demonstrations, and practical activities can improve students' understanding of moral values. Effective teaching methods also encourage students to participate actively in classroom learning activities. Consequently, students become more motivated to practice positive behavior (Nata, 2017).

The school environment also contributes significantly to students' character strengthening. Schools that create disciplined and religious atmospheres help students internalize moral values consistently. Religious activities such as congregational prayer, Qur'an recitation, and Islamic celebrations provide opportunities for students to practice Islamic teachings directly. These activities strengthen students' spiritual and moral awareness (Ramayulis, 2015).

Parental involvement is another important factor in supporting students' character development. Families are the first educational environments where children learn values, attitudes, and behavior. Students who receive positive guidance from parents tend to show better discipline and responsibility at school. Cooperation between schools and parents is therefore necessary for successful character education (Hasbullah, 2015).

In the digital era, technology has become an inseparable part of students' daily lives. Technology provides easy access to information and communication, but it also creates challenges related to morality and ethics. Some students misuse digital media and become exposed to inappropriate content and negative behavior. Therefore, students need moral guidance to use technology wisely and responsibly (Bates, 2019).

Islamic Religious Education can help students develop ethical awareness in facing technological and social challenges. Religious values guide students to think critically and behave responsibly in both real and digital environments. Students who possess strong religious understanding are more likely to avoid harmful behavior and make positive decisions in their daily lives (Muslim, 2025).

Several previous studies have shown that Islamic Religious Education positively influences students' character formation. Students who actively participate in religious learning activities tend to demonstrate better honesty, discipline, and social responsibility. These findings indicate that religious education contributes significantly to moral development among students (Ismail et al., 2024).

Character strengthening through Islamic Religious Education should be conducted continuously and systematically. Character building is a long-term process that requires consistent guidance and practice. Schools need to provide opportunities for students to apply moral values in both academic and extracurricular activities. Continuous practice helps students internalize positive values more effectively (Lickona, 2013).

Extracurricular activities also support students' character development. Religious organizations, leadership training, and social service programs provide opportunities for students to practice cooperation, empathy, and responsibility. Through these activities, students can apply Islamic values in real-life situations. As a result, students develop stronger moral awareness and social sensitivity (Neni, Handayani, & Basori, 2025).

Despite its importance, Islamic Religious Education still faces several challenges in implementation. Some students show low motivation during religious learning activities because of monotonous teaching methods and limited learning innovation. External influences such as peer pressure and social media also negatively affect students' attitudes and behavior. Therefore, schools need to improve learning quality continuously (Desti, n.d.).

Technology integration can become one solution to improve Islamic Religious Education learning. Educational videos, digital applications, online learning platforms, and interactive presentations can make learning more engaging and effective. Technology-based learning also helps students understand Islamic concepts and values more easily. Consequently, students become more interested in participating in learning activities (Saepudin, 2025).

The government also emphasizes the importance of character education through educational policies and curriculum development. Schools are encouraged to integrate moral and religious values into teaching and learning processes. This policy reflects the awareness that education should develop students holistically, including intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and social aspects (Sugiyono, 2019).

Islamic Religious Education contributes significantly to achieving national educational goals. Religious education helps students become individuals who possess strong moral values, discipline, responsibility, and social awareness. Students with good character are expected to contribute positively to society and avoid destructive behavior. Therefore, strengthening character through religious education remains highly important (Daradjat, 2014).

The success of character education depends on collaboration among teachers, parents, schools, and communities. Students need consistent guidance and support from all environments in which they interact. Positive cooperation among these parties creates supportive conditions for students' moral growth and development. Without collaboration, character education may not achieve optimal results (Hasbullah, 2015).

Based on these explanations, strengthening students' character through Islamic Religious Education is highly important in modern education. Islamic Religious Education provides moral guidance that helps students develop positive attitudes, ethical awareness, and responsible behavior. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the role of Islamic Religious Education in strengthening students' character in schools (Tafsir, 2016).

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research approach to analyze the role of Islamic Religious Education in strengthening students' character in schools. The quantitative approach was selected because it allows researchers to measure relationships between variables systematically through numerical data analysis (Creswell, 2018). This study used a survey research design to collect data regarding students' perceptions and experiences related to Islamic Religious Education learning and character development. Through this approach, the researcher was able to identify the influence of Islamic Religious Education on students' moral behavior and attitudes.

The research was conducted at a selected school where Islamic Religious Education is implemented as part of the formal curriculum. The population of this study consisted of all students enrolled at the school. The sample was determined using purposive sampling techniques because respondents were selected based on specific criteria relevant to the objectives of the study (Arikunto, 2019). Students who actively participated in Islamic Religious Education learning activities and school religious programs were chosen as research respondents.

The primary instrument used in this study was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to measure two variables, namely Islamic Religious Education learning as the independent variable and students' character strengthening as the dependent variable. The questionnaire used a Likert scale consisting of strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree categories (Sugiyono, 2019). Indicators of Islamic Religious Education learning included teaching methods, teacher competence, learning media, classroom interaction, and religious activities, while indicators of character strengthening included honesty, discipline, responsibility, tolerance, respect, and social care.

In addition to questionnaires, observation and documentation techniques were also used to support the research data. Observation was conducted to examine students' behavior during learning activities and religious programs at school. Documentation techniques included collecting school profiles, lesson plans, photographs of activities, and records related to character education implementation. These techniques helped the researcher obtain comprehensive and accurate data regarding the implementation of Islamic Religious Education in schools (Moleong, 2017).

Before distributing the questionnaire, the research instrument was tested for validity and reliability. Validity testing was conducted to ensure that each questionnaire item accurately measured the intended variables, while reliability testing was used to determine the consistency of the instrument (Arikunto, 2019). Questionnaire items that met the validity and reliability criteria were retained and used in the research process. This procedure was important to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the collected data.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the implementation of Islamic Religious Education learning and students' character strengthening in general. Meanwhile, inferential statistical analysis, particularly simple linear regression analysis, was conducted to determine the influence of Islamic Religious Education learning on students' character development (Creswell, 2018). The results of the

analysis were then interpreted and discussed based on relevant theories and previous studies related to character education and Islamic Religious Education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study showed that Islamic Religious Education has a significant role in strengthening students' character in schools. Based on the questionnaire data, most students gave positive responses regarding the implementation of Islamic Religious Education learning activities. Students stated that religious learning helped them understand moral values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, tolerance, and respect for others. The findings indicate that Islamic Religious Education contributes positively to students' moral and social development (Ismail et al., 2024).

The descriptive statistical analysis revealed that the implementation of Islamic Religious Education learning in schools was categorized as good. Teachers were considered capable of delivering learning materials effectively through various teaching methods such as lectures, discussions, demonstrations, and collaborative learning activities. Interactive teaching strategies increased students' participation and motivation during the learning process. Students became more active in expressing opinions, participating in religious discussions, and practicing Islamic values in everyday activities (Nata, 2017).

The study also found that teachers played an important role in strengthening students' character. Teachers were not only responsible for teaching religious concepts but also for becoming role models for students. Positive teacher behavior such as discipline, honesty, patience, and responsibility encouraged students to imitate similar attitudes in their daily lives. Students viewed teachers as moral examples who guided them in developing positive behavior and ethical awareness (Mulyasa, 2020).

Religious activities conducted at school also contributed significantly to students' character development. Activities such as congregational prayer, Qur'an recitation, Islamic celebrations, and social service programs strengthened students' spiritual awareness and moral values. Through these activities, students learned the importance of cooperation, empathy, discipline, and social responsibility. The findings indicate that practical religious activities are effective in helping students internalize Islamic values (Ramayulis, 2015).

The regression analysis showed that Islamic Religious Education learning had a positive and significant influence on students' character strengthening. Students who actively participated in religious learning activities demonstrated better discipline, honesty, responsibility, and respect toward teachers and classmates. This finding supports previous studies stating that religious education contributes significantly to students' moral development and behavioral improvement (Lickona, 2013).

However, the study also identified several challenges in implementing Islamic Religious Education effectively. Some students showed low motivation during religious learning activities due to monotonous teaching methods and limited learning innovation. In addition, external factors such as peer pressure, social media, and negative environmental influences sometimes affected students' attitudes and behavior negatively. Therefore, schools are encouraged to improve learning quality through innovative teaching methods, technology integration, and stronger

collaboration among teachers, parents, and communities to strengthen students' character more effectively (Saepudin, 2025).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that Islamic Religious Education plays an important role in strengthening students' character in schools. Islamic Religious Education learning contributes positively to the development of students' moral values, attitudes, and social behavior. Students who actively participate in religious learning activities tend to demonstrate better honesty, discipline, responsibility, tolerance, and respect toward others. These findings indicate that religious education is not only focused on cognitive understanding but also on affective and behavioral development.

The study also revealed that teachers have a significant role in the success of character education. Teachers are expected not only to deliver learning materials but also to become positive role models for students. Effective teaching methods, supportive school environments, and religious activities such as congregational prayer and Qur'an recitation contribute greatly to strengthening students' moral awareness and ethical behavior. In addition, cooperation between schools, parents, and communities is necessary to support successful character formation among students.

However, several challenges were identified during the implementation of Islamic Religious Education learning, including low student motivation, monotonous teaching methods, and negative external influences from social environments and digital media. Therefore, schools are encouraged to improve the quality of Islamic Religious Education learning through innovative and interactive teaching strategies, technology integration, and continuous moral guidance. Overall, this study concludes that strengthening students' character through Islamic Religious Education is essential for developing responsible individuals with strong moral values and positive social behavior in modern society.

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