

Teaching Strategies for Developing Islamic Character in Children: A Case Study of Tadika Al-Fikh Orchard, Pulau Pinang"

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how Islamic values are taught and internalized by children at Tadika Al-Fikh Orchard Pulau Pinang. Considering the developmental stage of children who are still closely related to the world of fairy tales, this study also examines the impact of intensive Islamic character teaching on the formation of their religious character. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, and their validity was tested using triangulation techniques. The results of the analysis show that the Islamic character teaching strategy at Tadika Al-Fikh Orchard Pulau Pinang is implemented through systematic planning, organizing, delivering, and managing stages. There are six main factors that influence the implementation of this strategy, namely child development, basic competencies to be achieved, availability of relevant teaching materials, proportional time allocation, completeness of learning facilities, and teacher abilities and competencies. These findings provide comprehensive insights into the implementation of Islamic character teaching and emphasize that the right strategy and in-depth understanding of the factors that influence the learning process are very important in forming a strong understanding of religion in children.

Keywords: *Islamic Religious Character, Teaching Strategy, Supporting Factors*

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INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in transferring knowledge and shaping the character and morals of students. In the context of Islamic education, this challenge is increasingly complex because although the main goal is to form individuals who are faithful and pious, in reality there are still many students who experience a moral crisis. Phenomena such as bullying, brawls, and declining social ethics show that character education has not been fully effective in building strong morality. One of the main causes is the lack of integration of formal education in schools and the values applied in the family and social environment. This study is important because it explores the teaching strategies applied in Islamic character education in early childhood, an aspect that has received little attention in academic studies. Many previous studies have highlighted the role of character education in the formal education system, but there are still limited studies that specifically discuss how the teaching of Islamic values is internalized from an early age through a systematic and sustainable approach.

Focusing on Tadika Al-Fikh Orchard Pulau Pinang, this study contributes by analyzing the learning strategies used by teachers in shaping children's Islamic character. The findings of this study are expected to provide new insights into effective approaches in teaching Islamic values at the early stages of children's development. In addition, this study can be a basis for the development of more comprehensive and applicable learning methods, which can be applied in various Islamic education contexts, including in Indonesia. this challenge is

increasingly complex in the context of Islamic education, where although the main goal is to develop individuals who are faithful and pious, many students still experience a serious moral crisis. By understanding the strategies and factors that influence the success of Islamic character education at Tadika Al-Fikh Orchard Pulau Pinang, this study can provide practical recommendations for educators and policy makers in improving the effectiveness of Islamic character education at the early childhood level. This is increasingly relevant considering the importance of building a strong moral foundation from an early age in order to create a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also has high morality in accordance with Islamic teachings.

The integration of Islamic values in the education system does not only apply to formal education in schools, but also plays a crucial role in the formation of character and basic values, especially in the context of early childhood education, where the foundation of character begins to be built (Zuliana et al., 2024). Negative behavior such as brawls and bullying show that character education has not been effective in forming good moral values. Factors such as the lack of integration between education in schools and values at home, the influence of the social environment, and traditional teaching methods are the main causes of this problem. In addition, the role of parents and teachers in educating children is often not optimal, while the character education curriculum is still lacking in depth. In this context, this study aims to analyze the teaching strategies applied by teachers at Tadika Al-Fikh Orchard Pulau Pinang and their impact on the formation of children's Islamic character. It is hoped that the results of this study can provide recommendations to improve the effectiveness of character education in the context of Islamic education in Indonesia.

Education goes beyond the mere transfer of knowledge, but is oriented towards the formation of character and morals. In line with the idea of Ki Hajar Dewantara, education aims to guide all the natural or natural forces that exist in humans so that they can achieve the highest possible safety and happiness, both as individuals and as part of society. Meanwhile, Al-Attas, education in the context of Islam is specifically aimed at humans, which means that Islamic education aims to form individuals who believe and fear Allah. (Rifka & Quddus, 2024)

Islamic education plays a very vital role in the process of forming Islamic character in students. Through Islamic education, Muslim individuals are guided to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the teachings of their religion. Thus, the main goal of Islamic education is to produce a generation that is intellectually superior, and has a strong moral and spiritual foundation (Nadliroh, 2024). These goals include the development of character, morals, and awareness of social responsibility in everyday life. Islamic education is not just a process of transferring knowledge, but also an effort to shape a personality that is in line with Islamic values, especially in the field of education. (Mukhlis et al., 2024) In the objectives of Islamic Religious Education, Education is to shape good morals and character, so that individuals have high morals, a clean heart, strong determination, noble morals, and always remember Allah. Furthermore, Islamic Religious Education seeks to strengthen the foundations of faith, deepen understanding, strengthen appreciation, and foster students' recognition of Islam. This process is expected to produce Muslims who believe, fear Allah SWT, and practice noble morals in all aspects of life, both personal, social, national, and state. According to the author, the ideal goal of Islamic Religious Education is the formation of individuals who have noble morals, noble character, and are able to make constructive contributions to the progress of society, religion, and the nation (Wirian & Zuliana, 2023).

Moral education focuses on developing positive instincts, such as forming character is very important in Islam, because having a good character is a requirement for achieving happiness. A person's character and morals have a major influence on students' lives. The practice of character education in schools can be carried out through dhikr activities, social services, and learning methods that prioritize character formation, such as problem-based learning (PBL) and project-based learning (PJBL). (Iskandar, 2023)

Islamic Religious Education plays a central role as the foundation for character education. Optimal character development is greatly influenced by the instillation of religious values from an early age. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education material taught in schools has a very significant role in shaping the character of students (Ali, 2022) Character formation that begins at an early age is one way to overcome the problem of moral crisis in education. This process requires significant contributions from parents, principals, teachers and other staff in the school environment. (Datunsolang et al., 2024)

Teachers play an important role in guiding and educating students, as well as shaping their personalities. In addition, education functions to change student behavior. Thus, the teacher's duties include not only the delivery of knowledge, but also the instillation of good moral values. Education also includes the transfer of skills and values. This process involves the transfer of knowledge from the source to the individual who receives it. (Iskandar, 2023)

Teachers have three essential functions in the formation of students' character: first, as educators, teachers internalize the values of character education into the curriculum and learning materials; second, as instructors, teachers implement relevant learning models to facilitate the formation and evaluation of students' character; third, as mentors, teachers provide actual examples in interpersonal interactions with students regarding the practice of character that is in line with applicable values and norms (Wally, 2022)

Islamic teachings place teachers in a central position in the development of student character. This character formation is based on main concepts such as morals, piety, patience, and ihsan. Teachers can be effective role models and guides by internalizing and practicing these concepts in everyday behavior. Through this example, teachers guide students to understand and apply Islamic teachings in their lives, so that a strong and dignified character is formed. Therefore, a deep understanding and internalization of Islamic teachings by teachers, as well as their ability to emphasize and exemplify morals, piety, patience, and ihsan, are very important factors for the formation of students' character holistically and sustainably (Iskandar, 2023) Teachers can apply the main strategy in habituation through routine activities, such as reading Iqro', memorizing daily prayers before lessons, which are supervised by teachers. In addition, Dhuhā and Zuhur prayers are carried out in congregation, to foster a sense of responsibility and discipline in worship among students. To instill Islamic values in everyday life, teachers invite students to pray before and after lessons, and say hello when meeting teachers or friends. This effort aims to accustom students to apply Islamic values consistently, both inside and outside the classroom. In addition, schools also hold annual activities such as Islamic holiday celebrations, which not only aim to celebrate important moments in the Islamic calendar, but also to deepen students' understanding of the religious values taught. (Syahrudin et al., 2024). This discussion is important to provide further insight into the teaching practices used and how these strategies can help students' character in accordance with Islamic teachings. Thus, it is hoped that the results of this study can contribute to the development of Islamic education teaching methods, especially in shaping the Islamic character of the younger generation.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore the teaching strategies of Islamic character at Tadika Al-Fikh Orchard Pulau Pinang. The case study was chosen because it allows researchers to explore in depth the process of internalizing Islamic values in early childhood education, as well as understanding the factors that influence it in a specific context. This study uses a qualitative method involving relevant methods. (Alaslan et al., 2023) Qualitative research methods that emphasize an in-depth understanding of the problem rather than producing generalizations. This approach focuses more on detailed analysis techniques to examine specific cases. This method assumes that each problem has unique characteristics, so that research is carried out individually.

The data for this study comes from two main categories: primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources include observation, interviews, and documentation. (Ardiansyah et al., 2023) Observations were obtained directly in the field, while interviews with principals and teachers aimed to obtain in-depth information about the teaching strategies applied. Documentation is also important for collecting archives related to teaching strategies. On the other hand, secondary sources include academic literature, literature reviews, and case studies relevant to Islamic education and teaching strategies.

This study uses three data collection techniques, namely observation, interviews, and documentation, to ensure data validity. The data analysis process was carried out systematically using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes four stages: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Alaslan et al., 2023). This research design provides a more comprehensive understanding of Islamic character teaching strategies, as well as the factors that play a role in their success. By using a case study approach, this study not only describes the phenomena that occur but also offers practical insights that can be adapted in other Islamic education contexts.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Strategy for Teaching Children's Islamic Character at Tadika Al-Fikh Orchard Pulau Pinang

The preparation of the Daily Teaching Plan (RPH) is very important because the RPH that is prepared will be applied in the teaching process. At Tadika Al-Fikh Orchard Perda Pulau Pinang, teachers prepare RPH based on the National Education Curriculum. Meanwhile, the Daily Activity Plan contains teaching activities carried out individually, in groups, or in class in one day. The organizational strategy includes sequence and synthesis. The sequence is related to the selection and preparation of Islamic character learning materials. The selection of materials must consider the depth of the material that is appropriate to the level of cognitive development of students. (Nurcahyono & Putra, 2022) Islamic character teaching materials are selected by paying attention to teaching indicators and stages of child development, and are considered relevant to their development and daily life. The materials taught include teachings about faith, worship, morals, short letters in the Qur'an, daily prayers, Hadith, chants, Asmaul Husna and a simple introduction to Arabic. Synthesis includes the process of connecting facts, concepts, principles, or procedures that are part of the teaching material. Teachers do this by linking new information to students' existing knowledge and applying an approach that integrates themes of students' learning experiences. Building connections between new information and what students already know provides opportunities to improve their memory. (Faradiba P & Arsad BAHRI, 2024)

The strategy for delivering material involves the use of various teaching media, student interaction with the media, and the teaching and learning process. Teachers apply various types of media to teach Islamic character. Teaching media plays an important role in the educational process. In choosing the right media, the four main aspects that must be considered are teaching objectives, the material taught, teaching methods, and student conditions. (Ridwanto et al., 2024) Teachers choose media that are appropriate for the material and teaching activities to be carried out. The use of media that is varied and relevant to teaching activities can increase student motivation, participation, and active involvement in the learning process, as well as foster interest in Islamic character. This makes students happier, more enthusiastic and interested in following lessons and understanding Islamic character well.

At Tadika Al-Fikh Orchard Perda Pulau Pinang, teaching Islamic religious character is known as religious activities. This activity is usually carried out before and after core activities and religious classes. During religious activities, circle time takes place in a class format, while during religious lessons, teaching can be done in a class or individual format. Effective teaching must involve a variety of teaching methods and media. (Wahyudi, 2023)

Strategy management includes selecting teaching methods, recording children's learning progress, motivation management, and controlling the teaching process. Teaching methods include planning when and how methods are applied in teaching Islamic character. (Hidayati & Musnandar, 2022) Teachers must be able to plan the selection of teaching methods by considering factors such as objectives, characteristics of the material and students. Teachers must adjust the teaching method to the teaching objectives, characteristics of students, and the material being taught. Various teaching methods, such as habituation methods, conversations, demonstrations, narratives, and analogies, can be applied by teachers. Preparing a report on children's learning progress involves determining the time, frequency, and method of implementation. Teachers conduct evaluations both during and after the teaching process. The types of evaluations carried out have been planned in advance, including evaluations through demonstrations, observations, and assignments. Motivation management aims to increase children's enthusiasm for learning in understanding Islamic characters.

Teachers can manage motivation in the following ways: 1) Cultivate children's interest in learning through interesting activities and stimulating discussions, as well as relevant questions. 2) Relate teaching materials to children's life experiences. In order for children to understand better, teachers need to connect the knowledge that children already have with the material being taught. (Farantika et al., 2024) 3) Maintain children's interest in learning by providing fun teaching activities and using media that is interesting to them. 4) Encourage children's self-confidence and enthusiasm by building confidence in their ability to learn. Building expectations of success is an important step in strengthening students' confidence in academic achievement. (Ahmad, 2024) Providing satisfaction to children in the learning process, especially by giving them the opportunity to apply new knowledge or skills that have been acquired, and providing positive feedback. Controlling teaching involves giving children the choice of material that they do not want to learn. However, in the context of teaching Islamic religious character, teachers do not give children the freedom to choose the material they want to learn, because Islamic religious character material is delivered in stages and systematically planned.

Factors that Influence the Implementation of Strategies for Teaching Islamic Religious Character to Children at Tadika Al-Fikh Orchard Pulau Pinang

In implementing Islamic character teaching strategies, teachers face various factors that influence their effectiveness. Recent research shows that there are six main factors that contribute to the implementation of strategies, namely, student characteristics, indicators of basic competency achievement, teaching materials, available time, conditions of facilities and infrastructure, and teachers' abilities in implementing strategies. In implementing teaching strategies, teachers must pay attention to student characteristics, including their developmental stages, which are very important in selecting teaching materials and methods. Teachers need to adjust their approach to suit the needs and abilities of students. (Farantika et al., 2024).

Indicators serve as guidelines in choosing the right teaching materials. Adjusting the material to the teaching indicators will affect the choice of media and teaching techniques used. (Awali, 2020) The material taught must be relevant and appropriate to the student's context. This includes developing materials that support the achievement of teaching indicators. (Awali, 2020). Time constraints are often an obstacle in teaching all the necessary material, especially when extracurricular activities that should allocate time that should be for religious education. (Khalida et al., 2024) The physical environment and resources available in schools can affect the quality of teaching. Inadequate facilities and infrastructure can hinder the character education process. (Sodikin, 2024) The quality of teaching is greatly influenced by the teacher's ability to apply effective teaching strategies. Teachers need to have skills in managing the class and delivering material in a way that is interesting to students. (Ma'ruf et al., 2021)

Based on research, teachers must pay attention to the characteristics of students as an important factor in the teaching process, because this can affect the final results of Islamic character education. Suboptimal delivery of material due to limited time and resources can have an impact on the achievement of teaching indicators, so that student learning assessment results are not optimal. In this context, it is important for teachers to develop expository strategies and other approaches that can improve student understanding and participation, and create a learning environment that supports the development of their religious character.

In addition, the condition of the teaching infrastructure also affects the strategies implemented by teachers. For example, when Circle Time for teaching Islamic character is carried out in a playroom without a divider between the Circle Time area and the children's playroom, this can interfere with children's concentration. To overcome this situation, the teacher uses a louder voice and invites children to actively participate in singing so that they are more focused. If the teacher successfully implements the initial strategy in teaching Islamic religious character, this will affect the next teaching strategy. Previous research shows that the selection of materials by teachers is adjusted to learning indicators, which ultimately affect the selection of media, methods, assessments, and subsequent strategies. Teachers' abilities are also influenced by various factors that play a role in achieving the desired teaching objectives.

Implications for teachers, curriculum developers, and policy makers at Tadika Al-Fikh Orchard Pulau Pinang

Based on the results of research on strategies for teaching Islamic character at Tadika Al-Fikh Orchard Pulau Pinang, there are several important implications for various parties involved in education, especially for teachers, curriculum developers and policy makers.

Implications for Teachers

Teachers play a crucial role in the successful implementation of Islamic character teaching strategies by enhancing their pedagogical competence, adapting teaching strategies, and improving classroom management and evaluation. Continuous training is essential for teachers to implement effective learning methods, such as using varied media, motivational strategies, and child-centered approaches to make lessons more engaging and developmentally appropriate. Flexibility in teaching strategies is also important, as teachers must adjust to classroom conditions, available facilities, and student characteristics, finding creative solutions to maintain focus on Islamic values in less conducive environments. Additionally, strong classroom management skills and diverse evaluation methods, including observation and demonstration, help ensure that students effectively understand and internalize Islamic character values.

Curriculum developers have a crucial responsibility in ensuring that the curriculum aligns with the goals of Islamic character education. One important implication is the integration of thematic and contextual approaches, where children's experiences are incorporated into learning activities such as project-based tasks and educational games that naturally instill Islamic values. This approach makes learning more meaningful and relevant to students' daily lives, fostering a deeper understanding of character education. Another key aspect is the provision of appropriate teaching materials. Learning resources should be designed according to the characteristics of early-age students to ensure they are engaging and easy to comprehend. Using visual, audio, and multimedia formats can enhance interactivity, making Islamic character education more enjoyable and effective. Well-structured materials will help students grasp moral lessons more easily and apply them in real-life situations.

Additionally, curriculum alignment with learning indicators is essential to ensure that every aspect of teaching contributes to achieving competency-based goals. By structuring the curriculum around clear learning objectives, educators can systematically instill Islamic values while maintaining coherence with broader educational standards. This

alignment helps measure student progress effectively and ensures that character education is an integral part of the overall learning process.

For policymakers, supporting the effective implementation of Islamic character education requires strategic policies, particularly in providing adequate facilities and infrastructure. Comfortable classrooms, interactive learning media, and other essential resources should be prioritized to create an optimal learning environment. Furthermore, strengthening teacher training and development programs is necessary to enhance pedagogical skills and promote innovative teaching methodologies that foster character building in children. Lastly, a well-regulated time allocation policy is crucial to ensure that Islamic character education receives sufficient attention in the daily schedule without being overshadowed by other extracurricular activities that may not align with its objectives.

CONCLUSIONS

The Islamic character teaching strategy at Tadika Al-Fikh Orchard Pulau Pinang consists of four main components: learning planning, organizing, and managing, all of which have been successfully implemented by teachers to achieve the expected educational goals. The effectiveness of this strategy is influenced by six key factors, including child development, established teaching indicators, equalized teaching materials, available time scheduling, learning facility conditions, and teacher competence in applying appropriate strategies. To enhance its implementation, educators should adopt flexible and experience-based learning designs, incorporating storytelling, role-playing, and group discussions to naturally instill Islamic values. Additionally, the use of varied learning media, such as visual, audio, and digital technology, can enhance understanding and application of these values in children's daily lives. Furthermore, continuous improvement in pedagogical competence and classroom management is essential, enabling teachers to create dynamic and conducive learning environments while utilizing diverse evaluation methods to assess students' comprehension and practice of Islamic character.

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