

The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Fostering Students' Noble Character in the Era of Communication Technology Development

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ABSTRACT

The development of communication technology has had a significant impact on students' behavior and character. This study aims to analyze the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in fostering students' noble character at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah PP Al-Ihslah Saren Bandar. The research employs a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The findings reveal that PAI teachers play a central role in fostering noble character through the implementation of adaptive learning methods aligned with technological advancements, providing behavioral role models, and integrating moral values into daily learning activities. This study emphasizes the importance of teachers' roles as moral guides in the digital era, enabling students to internalize moral values despite exposure to modern communication technologies.

Keywords: PAI Teachers, Character Building, Noble Character, Communication Technology Era, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.

I. Introduction

The rapid development of communication technology in the digital era has significantly transformed various aspects of human life, including education. In 2025, the widespread use of the internet, social media platforms, and digital devices has become an integral part of students' daily activities. At the elementary level, particularly in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, students are increasingly exposed to diverse sources of information that shape their perspectives, attitudes, and behaviors. While technological advancement offers numerous educational benefits, such as access to unlimited learning resources and interactive learning environments, it simultaneously poses serious challenges to the moral and character development of students (Rahman, 2024; Prensky, 2012). The influence of communication technology on students' character is multidimensional. On the one hand, digital media can enhance creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration skills. On the other hand, uncontrolled exposure to inappropriate content, cyberbullying, misinformation, and excessive screen time may negatively affect students' moral values and social behavior (Livingstone & Smith, 2014). This dual impact necessitates the presence of strong moral guidance within the educational process, particularly in religious-based institutions such as Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, where character formation is a primary educational objective.

In the context of Islamic education, the concept of *akhlak* (noble character) occupies a central position. Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of moral integrity, ethical conduct, and spiritual

awareness as fundamental aspects of human development. The Prophet Muhammad is regarded as the ultimate role model in demonstrating noble character, as reflected in the Qur'anic verse describing him as possessing exemplary morals. Therefore, fostering *akhlaq al-karimah* (noble character) is not merely an educational goal but also a religious obligation within Islamic pedagogy (Al-Attas, 1991; Halstead, 2007). Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers play a crucial role in achieving this objective. They are not only responsible for delivering religious knowledge but also for shaping students' moral character through modeling, habituation, and value internalization. According to character education theory, effective moral education requires consistent integration of values into all aspects of learning, rather than treating it as a separate subject (Lickona, 1991). In line with this, Transformative Learning theory highlights that meaningful learning occurs when individuals critically reflect on their experiences and reconstruct their understanding, leading to changes in attitudes and behavior (Mezirow, 2000). Thus, PAI teachers are expected to facilitate not only cognitive learning but also transformative moral development.

The challenges faced by PAI teachers in the digital era are increasingly complex. Students today are often referred to as "digital natives" who are highly familiar with technology but may lack the ability to critically filter information and apply ethical considerations in their online interactions (Prensky, 2012). Consequently, teachers must adopt innovative and adaptive teaching strategies that align with technological advancements while maintaining a strong emphasis on moral values. This includes integrating digital media into learning activities, promoting digital ethics, and guiding students in responsible technology use (Rahman, 2024). Furthermore, previous studies have emphasized the importance of teachers' roles in character formation. Sari and Hidayat (2023) found that consistent implementation of character-based learning significantly improves students' discipline, responsibility, and social awareness. Similarly, Pratama (2024) demonstrated that the integration of communication technology in Islamic education can enhance learning effectiveness when accompanied by proper moral guidance. However, these studies tend to focus on general character education or technology integration, with limited attention to the specific role of PAI teachers in fostering noble character within the context of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in the current technological landscape.

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah PP Al-Ihslah Saren Bandar represents a unique context for examining this issue. As an Islamic elementary institution, it combines formal education with religious values and traditions. The interaction between traditional moral education and modern technological influences creates a dynamic environment that requires careful management. Understanding how PAI teachers navigate this complexity is essential for developing effective strategies in character education. In addition, the Indonesian educational context places strong emphasis on character education as part of national educational goals. The integration of religious and moral values into the curriculum is expected to produce students who are not only academically competent but also morally responsible citizens (Mulyasa, 2023). Therefore, the role of PAI teachers becomes even more significant in ensuring that students can internalize these values amidst rapid technological changes. Based on the above considerations, this study seeks to explore the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in fostering students' noble character in the era of communication technology development. Specifically, it aims to analyze how teachers implement moral education strategies, adapt to technological challenges, and facilitate the internalization of *akhlaq al-karimah* among students. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of more effective character education models that are relevant to the digital era.

II. Literature Review

The role of teachers in shaping students' moral character has been widely discussed in educational research, particularly within the context of Islamic education. Moral development, or *akhlak*, is considered a fundamental objective in Islamic pedagogy, where teachers are not only responsible for transferring knowledge but also for nurturing ethical behavior and spiritual awareness. According to character education theory, effective moral formation requires consistent integration of values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, and respect into daily learning activities. This perspective emphasizes that character building is

not a separate subject but an integral part of the entire educational process. In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), teachers serve as central figures in instilling these values. They act as role models (*uswah hasanah*) whose behavior is observed and imitated by students. As highlighted in previous studies, the success of moral education is strongly influenced by the teacher's ability to demonstrate exemplary conduct, provide guidance, and create a conducive learning environment. Research by Sari and Hidayat (2023) indicates that consistent implementation of character-based learning significantly improves students' discipline and sense of responsibility. Similarly, Hidayat (2023) emphasizes that PAI teachers play a strategic role in shaping students' character through both formal instruction and informal interactions.

The theory of Transformative Learning provides a relevant framework for understanding how moral values can be internalized by students. This theory posits that learning involves not only acquiring knowledge but also transforming one's perspectives through critical reflection and meaningful experiences. In this regard, teachers function as facilitators who guide students to interpret and apply moral values in real-life situations. Mezirow (2000) argues that transformative learning occurs when learners engage in reflective thinking, dialogue, and experiential activities that challenge their existing assumptions. Rahman (2024) supports this view by stating that moral education becomes effective when students actively participate in learning processes that connect values with their daily experiences. In the digital era, the rapid development of communication technology presents new challenges and opportunities for moral education. Students are increasingly exposed to various sources of information through the internet, social media, and digital devices. While technology can support learning, it also has the potential to negatively influence students' behavior if not properly guided. Aziz (2021) and Yulianti (2021) highlight that uncontrolled use of digital media may lead to moral degradation, including decreased discipline and increased exposure to inappropriate content. Therefore, the role of teachers becomes even more crucial in guiding students to use technology responsibly and ethically.

Recent studies also underline the importance of integrating technology with moral education. Pratama (2024) found that the use of communication technology in PAI learning can be effective when combined with proper moral guidance. Teachers are expected to not only utilize digital tools for instructional purposes but also to educate students about digital ethics, such as responsible online behavior and critical evaluation of information. This integration reflects an adaptive approach to education, where traditional values are maintained while responding to contemporary challenges. Additionally, the concept of holistic education supports the idea that moral development should involve collaboration among all stakeholders, including teachers, school leaders, and parents. Mulyasa (2023) argues that character education is most effective when implemented consistently across various aspects of school life, including classroom activities, extracurricular programs, and daily routines. This approach ensures that students receive continuous reinforcement of moral values in different contexts. In summary, the literature indicates that PAI teachers play a vital role in fostering students' moral character, particularly in the era of digital communication. The integration of character education principles, transformative learning approaches, and responsible use of technology forms a comprehensive framework for moral development. These theoretical and empirical insights provide a strong foundation for analyzing the role of teachers in guiding students toward becoming morally responsible individuals in a rapidly changing world.

III. Research Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in fostering students' noble character at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah PP Al-Ihslah Saren Bandar, particularly within the context of the development of communication technology. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is capable of describing phenomena in a factual and contextual manner through direct interaction in the field, while the case study design was used since the research focuses on a single site with specific characteristics. Research informants were determined using purposive sampling techniques based on their relevance to the research objectives.

These included Islamic Religious Education teachers, the madrasah principal, students, and, when necessary, students' parents. Data were collected through observations of the learning process and social interactions within the madrasah environment, semi-structured interviews to explore information regarding the roles, strategies, and challenges faced by teachers, as well as documentation such as lesson plans (RPP), school regulations, and records of religious activities. Data analysis was conducted interactively using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing carried out continuously from the beginning to the end of the study. To ensure the validity of the data, the researcher applied source and technique triangulation, member checking, and prolonged engagement in the field so that the research findings achieve a high level of credibility.

IV. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

Based on interviews with Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, it was found that teachers play a central role in fostering students' noble character. Teachers emphasized that values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, and mutual respect are consistently integrated into every learning activity. One teacher stated, *"We always emphasize honesty and discipline. In every lesson, we incorporate real-life stories or examples of behavior so that students can emulate good character in their daily lives."* Teachers also highlighted the importance of small habitual practices, such as greeting others, queuing, and sharing with peers, as part of character development. Interviews with the head of the madrasah revealed that Madrasah Ibtidaiyah PP Al-Ihslah Saren Bandar has a special program that integrates character development into all educational activities. The head explained, *"In addition to classroom learning, we organize morning and afternoon activities in the boarding school, including group guidance and habituation of worship practices. All activities are designed to help students become accustomed to noble character values."* The head also emphasized that these programs are aligned with the development of communication technology, enabling students to use technology wisely.

Informants from the boarding school caregivers added that character development does not stop in the classroom but continues throughout daily activities in the boarding school. They stated, *"We always supervise students when they use gadgets. They are guided to seek beneficial information and avoid negative content. In addition, through daily activities such as prayers, task rotation, and group work, students learn responsibility, patience, and social care."* The results of observations reinforced these findings. In every PAI learning session, teachers applied an interactive approach by asking questions, providing examples of good behavior, and motivating students to practice moral values. Observations showed that students actively engaged in discussions about moral stories, expressed their opinions about good and bad behavior, and practiced the etiquette taught. Furthermore, teachers connected moral learning with communication technology, such as discussing how to use gadgets for learning, engaging in da'wah through social media, and avoiding negative content.

Documentation further supported these findings. Madrasah Ibtidaiyah PP Al-Ihslah Saren Bandar possesses structured character development program books, daily activity schedules, evaluation records, and learning media that consistently emphasize values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, and respect. This documentation confirms that character development is implemented in an integrated manner, involving teachers, the head of the madrasah, and boarding school caregivers, and is embedded in both classroom and boarding school activities. Overall, data from interviews, observations, and documentation provide a comprehensive picture that PAI teachers act as active moral guides. They do not merely teach religious content but also guide students in practicing noble character in their daily lives, both in the classroom and in the boarding school environment, while adapting to the influence of communication technology development. Character development is shown to involve collaboration among teachers, school leaders, and

caregivers, as well as consistency in implementing structured programs and daily activities designed to holistically shape students' character.

4.2. Discussion

Based on the research findings, it is evident that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah PP Al-Ihslah Saren Bandar play a central role in fostering students' noble character, both through classroom instruction and boarding school guidance. These findings are consistent with Transformative Learning theory, which posits that teachers act as facilitators who guide students to understand, internalize, and apply moral values in their daily lives (Mezirow, 2000; Rahman, 2024). Teachers are not only responsible for delivering knowledge but also for guiding students through real-life experiences, interactive dialogue, and the habitual practice of moral values. The interview results indicate that teachers consistently instill values such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, and mutual respect. This aligns with character education theory, which emphasizes that moral development can be achieved through role modeling, habituation, and the integration of ethical values into the learning process (Mulyasa, 2023). For instance, teachers utilize moral stories, real-life behavioral examples, and supervision of students' use of communication technology as tools for moral education. Through this approach, students are able to understand the moral implications of their actions, both in school environments and in the digital world.

Field observations support these findings, showing that PAI learning is conducted in an interactive and contextual manner, where teachers adapt the material to students' conditions and the challenges of communication technology. Daily boarding school activities, such as collective prayers, task rotation, and group work, also serve as practical means for character habituation. These findings reflect the fundamental principle of descriptive qualitative research, which aims to present phenomena comprehensively and contextually based on real experiences and field observations without data manipulation. The documentation obtained, including character development program books, activity schedules, and evaluation records, strengthens the conclusion that character development is implemented in an integrated manner. This indicates that the strategies employed by teachers, school leaders, and boarding school caregivers are aligned with character education theory, which emphasizes consistency, value integration, and the involvement of all stakeholders in moral education (Mulyasa, 2023).

Moreover, the supervision of students' use of communication technology emerges as a crucial component in guiding moral development. This demonstrates teachers' adaptation to the challenges of the digital era, in line with Transformative Learning principles, which encourage educators to guide students in understanding moral values within contemporary contexts. Thus, character development extends beyond the classroom into daily life, encompassing digital experiences, social interactions, and boarding school activities. The findings indicate that the role of PAI teachers in fostering students' noble character in the era of communication technology in 2025 is carried out through an integrated strategy that combines interactive learning, value habituation, supervision of digital behavior, and the involvement of all stakeholders within the school environment. These findings support Transformative Learning and character education theories, while affirming that moral development is most effective when implemented holistically, adaptively, and consistently with students' real-life experiences.

V. Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah PP Al-Ihslah Saren Bandar play a central role in fostering students' noble character in the era of communication technology development. PAI teachers are not only responsible for delivering religious knowledge but also for guiding students through role modeling, habituation, and the integration of moral values into both teaching and learning activities as well as daily boarding school routines. The findings indicate that character development is implemented in an integrated manner, involving teachers, the head of

the madrasah, and boarding school caregivers. The strategies applied include interactive learning, group activities, guidance on the wise use of communication technology, and supervision of students' behavior within the boarding school environment. Data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation consistently support one another, demonstrating that character development practices are carried out systematically and adaptively in response to digital challenges. This conclusion affirms that the role of PAI teachers as moral guides remains crucial in the digital era, and that fostering noble character is most effective when conducted holistically, contextually, and continuously. This study highlights that the integration of moral values into both learning processes and daily activities can shape students into disciplined, honest, responsible, and respectful individuals, even in the presence of modern communication technology exposure.

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