



Islamic Religious Education Learning Management in Shaping Student Character in Schools

Rindi Legista*, Syukri Amin, Desi Firmasari, Lety Febriana

Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu, Indonesia

Email: rindilegista7@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Islamic Religious Education (PAI), Character Development, Independent Curriculum, Self-Reflection

*Corresponding Author

This study explores the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in character formation, particularly in the context of the Independent Curriculum and integrated Islamic schools. The research highlights the importance of religious activities, such as Tadarus (Quran recitation), in fostering a disciplined, focused classroom atmosphere, while also integrating key character values, such as religiosity, discipline, responsibility, honesty, and noble morality, into the curriculum and teaching practices, by using a qualitative case study approach with observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that while religious practices and value discussions engage students, self-reflection remains moderate, suggesting the need for a more systematic approach to foster deeper personal reflection. The study's contribution lies in providing a comprehensive framework for managing PAI learning, emphasizing the integration of character education within Islamic schools. Future research should explore the impact of socio-cultural contexts, technology integration, and enhanced self-reflection on character development strategies in PAI education.

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a crucial role in shaping the character and moral integrity of students, especially in the context of rapid technological advancements and the demands of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 (Munawarsyah, 2023). In an era where intellectual competence is no longer sufficient, students are expected to demonstrate not only cognitive skills but also strong moral values, religious devotion, and personal integrity (Surbakti et al., 2024; Boiliu, 2025). Educational institutions, especially schools, hold the responsibility of fostering a learning environment that not only focuses on academic achievements but also consistently instills Islamic values (Moslimany

et al., 2024). This is vital in ensuring that students grow into individuals who are not only intellectually capable but also morally upright and religiously committed (Gherasim, 2024). Thus, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is an essential pillar in character formation, ensuring that students are equipped to face modern challenges with strong religious and ethical foundations.

Despite the recognition of the importance of Islamic Religious Education in character development, challenges persist in its effective implementation (Komalasari et al., 2023). The rapid pace of technological development and the demands of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 require a more dynamic and flexible educational approach (Aithal et al., 2023; Adel, 2024). But the fact is that schools still struggle to integrate Islamic values into the learning process, which impacts the moral and religious development of students (Ibrahim et al., 2024; Guna et al., 2024). This issue is compounded by the fact that many PAI teachers face difficulties in adopting methods that promote character-building effectively. Moreover, the implementation of the Independent Curriculum has introduced new expectations for PAI teachers, requiring them to design learning that is more student-centered and flexible, while also aligning with the broader goals of the curriculum (Rasyidi et al., 2024). These challenges highlight the need for more effective and comprehensive approaches to PAI learning management (Saifudin, 2024).

At Insan Kamil Islamic School in Bengkulu City, various religious and character-building activities, such as congregational prayers, tadarus (Quran recitation), and moral mentoring, are actively carried out to instill Islamic values among students. However, there are still challenges in ensuring that these activities are systematically integrated into the broader educational framework. Despite the school's efforts, there remains a gap between the intended character outcomes and the actual behavior exhibited by students. Some students still show behavior that is inconsistent with the school's character expectations. This points to potential inefficiencies in the integration of character values into the learning process and highlights the need for a more systematic approach to PAI learning management.

Previous studies have extensively explored the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in character formation. For example, Abdi (2021) suggests that character values can be internalized through Islamic subjects such as fiqh, Qur'an and Hadith, faith, morals, and Islamic teachings. This aligns with the broader understanding that PAI contributes significantly to developing students' moral and ethical foundations. However, much of the existing research has focused on specific aspects of character development, such as religious devotion or

discipline, without fully considering how PAI learning management integrates all dimensions of character education. Furthermore, the practical application of character education within Islamic schools, particularly in terms of comprehensive planning, implementation, and evaluation, remains underexplored.

Recent studies, such as Karwadi et al. (2023), emphasize that the success of character formation depends largely on the teacher's ability to model and internalize Islamic values in the classroom. While these findings are important, they often fail to provide a comprehensive analysis of the entire PAI learning system, including its planning, implementation, and evaluation stages. In addition, the integration of character values with the Independent Curriculum and how it aligns with the unique needs of Islamic-based schools in specific regions, such as Bengkulu, has not been fully addressed (Nasution, 2024). This gap in the literature is significant, as it leaves room for improvement in how PAI teachers design and implement character-oriented learning.

This research offers a novel approach by holistically examining Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning management, especially within the context of the Independent Curriculum and integrated Islamic school environments. It addresses the gap in existing literature by exploring how PAI learning can be effectively managed to support character formation in students. The study focuses on the integration of five key character values: religiosity, discipline, responsibility, honesty, and noble morality into the curriculum and teaching practices. This is crucial for addressing the challenges faced by PAI teachers in creating a more effective, character-oriented learning process. The findings aim to provide practical insights to improve the quality of PAI education and character development in schools.

The primary research problem this study addresses is how to effectively integrate character values into PAI learning management, particularly in the context of the Independent Curriculum and integrated Islamic schools. The study will investigate how PAI learning can be planned, implemented, and evaluated to foster students' religious and moral character. Additionally, it will explore obstacles hindering character formation and propose strategies for overcoming them. The research argues that a systematic and holistic approach to PAI learning management will lead to more consistent and effective character development, contributing to the creation of individuals with strong moral integrity and religious commitment. Ultimately, the study aims to support the development of teaching strategies that foster students who are both academically competent and ethically grounded in Islamic values.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research design with a case study approach. The case study design was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning management in schools, focusing on the natural context where the learning process occurs. This approach facilitates understanding the planning, implementation, and evaluation of PAI through the perspectives of teachers, school principals, and students. The case study provides a concrete understanding of the phenomenon under investigation in a holistic and detailed manner, which cannot be achieved through quantitative methods.

The research was conducted at Insan Kamil Islamic School Middle School in Bengkulu City. The choice of this location was based on the school's well-structured Islamic Religious Education (PAI) program, which focuses on character development through an approach based on religious values. Additionally, the school has extensive experience in implementing PAI learning, making it an ideal setting to obtain in-depth data about the practices and management of PAI learning in a real-world school context.

The data collection in this study involved three primary techniques. This method was used to observe the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning activities at the school. Observations included teacher-student interactions, religious habituation activities, and the implementation of character evaluations. In-depth Interviews, interviews were conducted with the principal and three PAI teachers (Umami Syafira Rahmah, Abi Firdaus, and Abi Mahendro). The aim was to gather information regarding lesson planning, methods used in teaching, and strategies for character evaluation within PAI learning. Documentation study, this technique was used to collect data in the form of lesson plans, grade books, character journals, records of religious activities, and other supporting documents related to PAI learning.

Data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of three main stages. First, data condensation, the process of filtering and simplifying raw data obtained from the field, ensuring that only relevant and significant information is retained for the study. Second, data reduction, the condensed data was further organized and filtered to create a more structured format. Irrelevant or less supportive data was eliminated. Third, data display, the organized data was presented in the form of descriptions, tables, or charts to facilitate understanding and interpretation. This step enables the researcher to identify patterns and relationships between the variables being

studied. Fourth, data verification, the final step involves drawing conclusions and verifying the findings while ensuring the validity and reliability of the data.

To ensure the validity of the data, the study employed both source triangulation and method triangulation techniques. Source triangulation was used by comparing the information obtained from various informants (teachers, school principal, and students). Method triangulation involved comparing the results from different data collection methods (observation, interviews, and documentation). These techniques helped increase the validity of the data and ensured that the research findings accurately reflect the real situation in the field.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Opening of Learning

The opening of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) lessons is a structured routine that sets the tone for the class. It includes a series of religious activities such as greetings, prayers, and Quran recitation. These activities are aimed at creating a conducive and spiritual learning environment, ensuring that students engage in a calm and focused atmosphere right from the start. The consistent implementation of these activities plays an important role in classroom management and the overall atmosphere of the lesson.

The interviews with the PAI teachers revealed that these opening activities, such as Tadarus (Quran recitation), were essential in ensuring that students could begin the lesson with focus and discipline. Teacher Ummi Syafira Rahmah stated: "At the beginning of each lesson, we always start with Tadarus. It is important to settle the students and prepare them mentally for learning. This habit helps them enter a spiritual state, which reduces distractions and noise in the classroom." This statement highlights the importance of integrating spiritual activities, such as Quran recitation, into the opening of lessons as a means of setting the students' mindset for the rest of the class. This ritual is not only religious but also serves as an effective classroom management technique.

In addition, Principal Umi Masro Elmisa emphasized. "By beginning each class with a religious activity like Tadarus, students' behavior is better controlled, and the class tends to be more focused. These activities are a part of our strategy to foster a disciplined and respectful learning environment." Research interpretation, the principal's statement reinforces the role of religious activities as a tool for classroom management, highlighting their dual purpose in both spiritual and behavioral regulation. This aligns with the findings that such practices create a more orderly and engaging learning environment.

Observations conducted in the classroom confirmed that these opening activities were effective in fostering an environment conducive to learning.

Teachers ensured that all students participated in the activities without repeated instructions. The students appeared engaged and focused during the recitation, and there was a noticeable reduction in noise and distractions compared to the start of other classes. The structured nature of these religious activities and the students' active participation directly contribute to an orderly and focused classroom. The researcher observes that these activities go beyond religious rituals, serving as an essential classroom management tool that minimizes disruptions and promotes attentiveness.

The observations and interview responses from teachers and the principal consistently suggest that the opening activities, including greetings, prayers, and Quran recitation, play a critical role in classroom management and creating a spiritual learning atmosphere. This routine helps students transition from outside distractions to a focused, learning-centered environment. The habitual nature of these activities means that students are already prepared mentally and spiritually to engage in the lesson, allowing for a smoother transition into the academic content of the class.

From the data, it is evident that the opening religious activities contribute to a calm and focused classroom atmosphere. The repetitive nature of the activities helps students settle into a spiritual state that reduces distractions. Interviews with the teachers and principal, combined with observational data, reveal a consistent pattern: students are more engaged and disciplined after these religious activities. The activities also promote a positive and respectful classroom environment, which is conducive to learning.

Table 1. Practices for Classroom Atmosphere

Informant Position		Interview Excerpt	Indicator
Teacher	Ummi Syafira Rahmah	"At the beginning of each lesson, we always start with Tadarus. It is important to settle the students and prepare them mentally for learning."	Structured start, mental readiness
Principal	Umi Masro Elmisa	"By beginning each class with a religious activity like Tadarus, students' behavior is better controlled, and the class tends to be more focused."	Classroom control, focus on behavior
Student (Supporting Informant)		"Tadarus at the beginning made us more focused and less noisy."	Focus and discipline

The data consistently highlight the positive impact of religious activities, particularly Tadarus, on classroom management and student focus. Teachers, such as Ummi Syafira Rahmah, emphasize that these activities are crucial for mentally preparing students, helping them reduce distractions and stay engaged. Principal Umi Masro Elmisa underscores the role of these rituals in fostering classroom discipline, controlling behavior, and promoting focus during lessons.

Students also confirm that starting lessons with these religious practices, such as Tadarus, helps reduce noise and distractions, enabling them to concentrate better. Overall, there is a clear pattern that these activities not only serve as spiritual rituals but also function as effective strategies for classroom management, ensuring a focused and disciplined learning environment.

Core Learning

The core learning process in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) integrates various teaching methods such as interactive lectures, value discussions, religious practices, and teacher role modeling to internalize moral values and spiritual practices. Teachers use a dialogic approach to engage students, encouraging reflective thinking and active participation. For instance, teacher Abi Firdaus emphasizes the importance of reflective questioning, asking students questions like, "Why is honesty important in our lives?" or "What can we learn from the Prophet's morals in different situations?" These reflective questions help students think critically, relate lessons to their daily lives, and internalize moral values. Moreover, teachers set an example through their own behavior, demonstrating values like discipline, courtesy, and empathy, further enhancing the learning experience.

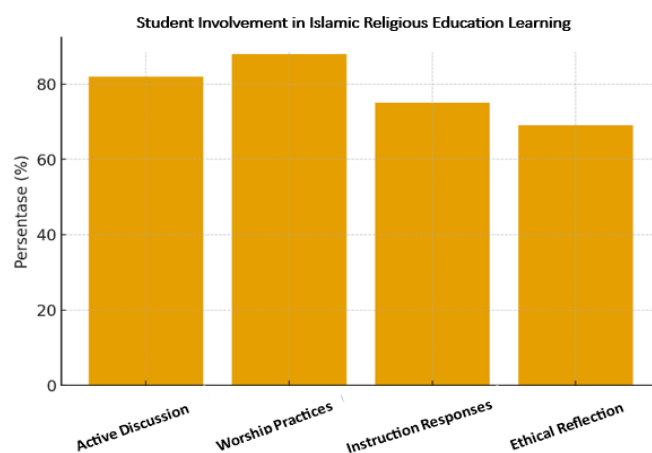


Figure 1. Diagram of Student Involvement in Islamic Religious Education Learning

Figure 1 illustrates the levels of student involvement in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, highlighting that involvement is highest in religious practice activities (88%) and value discussions (82%). However, self-reflection remains at a moderate level, indicating that while students are highly engaged in religious and moral activities, there is room for improvement in fostering deeper personal reflection among them.

Teacher Abi Mahendro emphasized the significance of role modeling in

motivating students, stating, "As teachers, we must be role models for our students. If we show discipline, respect, and empathy, the students are more likely to mirror those behaviors." This highlights how teachers' actions can deeply influence student behavior, encouraging them to adopt values like discipline, respect, and empathy. By embodying the values they teach, teachers foster an environment where students are more motivated to engage in class activities and internalize these qualities. Observations in PAI classes also showed frequent and impactful value discussions, where students actively participated in reflecting on moral principles such as honesty and emulating the Prophet's morals. The interactive nature of these discussions enhances students' engagement with the material.

The learning process in PAI also incorporates spiritual practices, such as ablution and prayer movements, where teachers actively guide students and provide real-time corrections to ensure proper adherence. These practices, combined with the reflective discussions, create a comprehensive approach to student engagement, where both intellectual and spiritual growth are emphasized. The seriousness with which students approach these practices indicates their commitment to the spiritual dimension of learning. Overall, the core learning process in PAI is a multifaceted approach that blends intellectual and spiritual components, ensuring that students not only engage in critical thinking but also internalize Islamic values in both thought and action.

Table 2. Level of Student Involvement in Islamic Religious Education Learning

Observation Aspects	Engagement Percentage
Active discussion	82%
Obedience in following religious practices	88%
Response to teacher instructions	75%
Willingness to reflect on morals	69%

The data reveal a clear pattern in which the combination of reflective value discussions, role modeling, and worship practices leads to a well-rounded learning experience. Teachers' use of dialogue and reflective questioning helps students think critically about their moral values and how they can apply them in their lives. Additionally, the emphasis on worship practices ensures that students not only learn about religious rituals but also take them seriously, adhering to proper procedures. This pattern shows that the integration of intellectual and spiritual aspects in the learning process creates a balanced and effective environment for character development and moral education.

The core learning process in PAI incorporates a combination of interactive teaching methods and religious practices that foster both intellectual and

spiritual growth. Teachers employ dialogue and reflective questions to deepen students' understanding of moral values, while also setting an example through their own behavior. The integration of worship practices further reinforces the internalization of these values. The data reveal a consistent pattern in which students engage deeply with both the intellectual and spiritual aspects of the learning process, demonstrating a holistic approach to education.

The lesson concludes with a reflective process where students identify areas for improvement, followed by a closing prayer. The teacher emphasizes key moral messages related to the material, reinforcing character development. As one student mentioned, the reflection section helped them become more aware of areas they could improve. Documentation also reveals that teachers consistently monitor students' attitude development through daily behavior records, ensuring continuous growth and reflection on their personal and moral progress.

Discussion

This study found that the opening activities of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), such as Tadarus (Quran recitation), significantly influence the classroom atmosphere. This finding aligns with existing literature, which states that religious rituals can create a more controlled and focused learning environment (Sirait et al., 2024; Papakostas, 2024). For example, research by Galenka et al. (2024) shows that religious activities at the beginning of lessons help students enter a spiritual state, which improves concentration and reduces distractions. This is also supported by statements from teachers like Umami Syafira Rahmah, who emphasized the importance of starting lessons with Tadarus to mentally prepare students for learning. Thus, this study confirms that opening lessons with religious activities not only spiritually prepares students but also facilitates more effective classroom management.

Additionally, the study's findings on the use of a dialogic approach in the learning process align with constructivist learning theories, which emphasize the importance of active student engagement through reflection and discussion. Dewey (1933) argues that effective learning involves students in critical thinking and connecting the lesson to their own lives (Pham, 2024; Chamisah, 2024). Teachers like Abi Firdaus in this study highlighted the significance of reflective questioning, such as "Why is honesty important in our lives?" These reflective questions help students think more deeply and relate moral values to their personal experiences. Thus, the dialogic approach in this study supports the idea that reflection-based learning deepens students' understanding and internalization of moral values, consistent with existing literature on value-based

learning (Minan et al., 2025).

However, while value discussions and religious practices like Tadarus showed high student engagement, the observation data revealed that students' self-reflection remained at a moderate level (69%) (Samdani et al., 2025; Nurjannah et al., 2025). This slightly differs from expectations in the literature, which suggests that self-reflection is a more dominant aspect of character-based learning. Previous research, such as Wong, (2023) work, indicates that effective character education often involves deep self-reflection by students regarding their behaviors and values. This discrepancy may be due to a learning routine focused more on active participation and moral understanding rather than on deeper self-evaluation (Dahlberg et al., 2024).

The theoretical implication of this finding is that while the teaching methods in PAI are effective in creating a structured and profound learning environment, there is a need to develop approaches that focus more on students' personal reflection. Based on these findings, moral education theory could be further developed by incorporating more systematic approaches to encourage students to reflect on their actions and values (Zhao et al., 2024; Harefa et al., 2024). The practical implication is that educators should create more opportunities for students to reflect on their personal experiences in relation to the lesson content, thus focusing not just on value discussions or religious practices, but also on continuous self-improvement and understanding.

Overall, this study shows that the combination of interactive teaching methods and religious practices in PAI creates a holistic learning environment that involves both intellectual and spiritual development. However, there is room to improve the level of personal reflection among students, which would enrich the process of internalizing moral values. Therefore, further research is needed to explore innovative ways to integrate deeper personal reflection into the PAI curriculum, with the aim of optimizing students' character and moral development.

CONCLUSION

This research highlights the significant role of religious activities, such as Tadarus (Quran recitation), in fostering a focused and disciplined classroom atmosphere in Islamic Religious Education (PAI). These activities not only prepare students mentally and spiritually for lessons but also serve as an effective classroom management tool, reducing distractions and enhancing student engagement. Additionally, the use of dialogic teaching methods, like reflective questioning, allows students to internalize moral values by connecting the lessons to their daily lives. However, the study also revealed that while students are highly engaged in religious and moral activities, their self-reflection remains

moderate, indicating a need for more emphasis on personal reflection in the learning process. This finding suggests that a more systematic approach to fostering personal reflection is necessary for comprehensive moral and character development.

The study's strength lies in its holistic approach to Islamic Religious Education, integrating character values like religiosity, discipline, responsibility, honesty, and noble morality into both the curriculum and teaching practices. By focusing on the management of PAI learning within the Independent Curriculum and integrated Islamic school settings, the research fills a gap in the literature regarding the practical application of character education. However, the study is limited by its focus on a single school, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future research could expand to multiple schools to compare approaches and explore how socio-cultural contexts or the integration of technology in PAI learning might influence the effectiveness of character development strategies. Additionally, further investigation into enhancing self-reflection in students would provide valuable insights into improving character-based learning in Islamic education.

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