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Implementation of Aqidah Akhlak Learning in Forming Students' Religious Character

Dian Kurnia Lestari[1]*, Imam Syafe'i[2], Waluyo Erry Wahyudi[3]

[123]Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung, Indonesia
e-mail:diankurnialestari02@gmail.com[1], imams@radenintan.ac.id[2], waluyoerry@radenintan.ac.id[3]

ABSTRACT   This study aims to describe the implementation of Akidah Akhlak learning and its role in shaping the religious character of students at MTs Negeri 1 Pringsewu. The approach used is descriptive qualitative with data collection techniques through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The research subjects consisted of Akidah Akhlak teachers, students, the principal, and parents of students who were selected purposively. Data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman model which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study indicate that Akidah Akhlak learning is implemented in a planned and contextual manner, by combining an active pedagogical approach, teacher role models, and support for the school's religious culture. Learning not only emphasizes cognitive aspects, but also encourages the internalization of spiritual and moral values in students' daily lives. Routine religious activities, such as congregational prayer and the habituation of Islamic morals, have been proven to strengthen students' religious character. However, challenges such as limited learning time and lack of synergy with the family environment remain obstacles that need to be overcome. This study concludes that the implementation of Akidah Akhlak learning plays a strategic role in shaping students' religious character. Therefore, synergy is needed between schools, teachers, parents, and the social environment to create an educational ecosystem that supports Islamic values in a sustainable manner.

Keywords   : *Learning, Faith, Morals, Character, Religion.*

INTRODUCTION

Education will be perfect if it is accompanied by religious education, such as subjects on faith and morals.(Skrzypińska, 2021). Aqidah and morals are the science that studies how students know, understand, internalize, and believe in Allah SWT and apply it in life, so that it allows for a good relationship between the Creator and creatures as well as relationships between individuals.(Sakolan, S., Husti, I., & Olive, 2022). In the process of learning faith and morals, there are materials to improve the character of students to become better.(Sunarko, A., Defi, D., & Nugroho, 2024)This lesson relates to everyday life. If the learning is carried out well, it will shape the character of students who have good character and students who have bad character.(Anshori, I., Putri, AS, Qonitah, A., & Ramadhan, 2024)can be better by following the Akidah Akhlak learning.

Character education is a system of naming character values which includes components of knowledge, awareness or will, and actions to implement these values, both towards God Almighty, oneself, others, the environment, and nationality.(Kardinus, 2022) Character education must be studied and taught from an early age, especially among Indonesian students.(Mustoip, S., Dz, AS, & Wulan, 2023) Good character education has several important tasks that must be completed so that students have good character.(Makbul, M., Ismail, I., Ismail, W., & Ahmad, 2021) In an effort to build and strengthen the nation's character, several values are realized, namely religious, honest, tolerant, disciplined, creative, hardworking, independent, democratic, curious, national spirit, love of the homeland, appreciate achievement, kind, communicative, peaceful, love to read, care about the environment, have a social spirit and be responsible.(Wasehudin, W., Wathoni, K., Hassan, RB, Anshori, I., & Akbar, 2022).

Character building through role models needs to be implemented as an instrument for developing attitudes that are rooted in students.(Main, 2019). An appropriate formulation is needed, especially the implementation of character education as a basis for moral strength and a deep-rooted religious culture to form noble morals in students.(McGrath, RE, Han, H., Brown, M., & Meindl, 2022). Religious character is a character that is expected, one of which is in the educational process at school, religious character has a big impact on the progress of students.(Nurmaliyah, Y., Aripin, S., & Nurdiansyah, 2023). Cultivating character through practice is necessary for a person to instill it in their soul and cultivate it into a habit. People with character don't carry out activities out of fear of punishment, but out of love for goodness. This love leads to good deeds.

It can be said that religious character education through learning Aqidah Akhlak is very important to instill in order to equip students in their daily lives.(Anshori, I., Husaini, UM, Nurhidayati, D., & Fidiyani, 2025) By carrying out good habits in religious values contained in character education through learning of faith and morals taught and exemplified by teachers in the school environment and outside of school, it is hoped that religious character will be formed in students.(Anshori, I., Islam, NN, & Husaini, 2025)

Based on the researchers' observations, there are still students whose religious character needs further development. Factors that can influence a person's religious character can come from their social environment, from within themselves, and from those they associate with.(Anshori, I., Setiaji, H., & Anita, 2023) This study aims to explore in depth how the implementation of Akidah Akhlak learning in schools contributes to the formation of students' religious character. Specifically, this study focuses on the pedagogical strategies used by educators, the curriculum content, and the approach to Islamic values applied in the learning process. Through a qualitative approach, this study aims to identify key factors that support or hinder the effectiveness of Akidah Akhlak learning in instilling religious values such as faith, honesty, responsibility, discipline, and tolerance.

Although the teaching of Aqidah and Akhlak has become an integral part of the Islamic education curriculum in various countries, including Indonesia, academic studies specifically evaluating the implementation of this learning in shaping students' religious character are still very limited, especially in a global context and with internationally reputable publications. Most existing studies focus more on the cognitive aspects.(Nurdin, N., Jahada, J., & Anhusadar, 2021)or students' academic achievement in religious subjects (Pardede, L., Pasaribu, KM, Siahaan, MM, Sinaga, AMSB, Tinambunan, A., & Safitri, 2022), without delving deeply into the affective and psychomotor dimensions related to the formation of religious character.

In addition, previous research tends to be descriptive in nature.(Fajrussalam, H., Mansyur, AS, & Zaqiah, 2020) and have not used much of the analytical-critical approach in assessing the effectiveness of the learning strategies used.(Yunyanto, RD, Khozin, K., & Rahim, 2021). It is still rare to find studies that link the learning of Aqidah Akhlak with contemporary character

education theories or that integrate innovative pedagogical approaches, such as value-based, contextual, or experience-based learning, in the context of religious learning.

Thus, there is a significant gap in the literature: the lack of a comprehensive study that systematically and based on field data links the implementation of Aqidah Akhlak learning with the outcomes of students' religious character. This research aims to fill this gap and provide a theoretical and practical foundation for developing Islamic religious curriculum and learning strategies that are more impactful in shaping students' character.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach.(Lexi & MA, 2022) with the aim of understanding in depth how the implementation of Akidah Akhlak learning is carried out in practice (Nasir, A., Nurjana, N., Shah, K., Sirodj, RA, & Afgani, 2023), and how this process contributes to the formation of the religious character of students at MTs Negeri 1 Pringsewu. This approach was chosen because it is suitable for exploring social and educational phenomena in a natural context and exploring the subjective meaning of the experiences of individuals involved in the learning process.(Achjar, KAH, Rusliyadi, M., Zaenurrosyid, A., Rumata, NA, Nirwana, I., & Abadi, 2023) The research location was determined purposively, namely MTs Negeri 1 Pringsewu, because this institution is known to have a fairly strong and systematic religious education program. The research subjects consisted of the subject teacher of Akidah Akhlak, the principal of the madrasah, students, and several parents of students. The technique for determining informants was carried out through purposive sampling, with the criteria that informants have direct experience in the process of learning Akidah Akhlak or are involved in strengthening the religious character of students.

Data collection was conducted through several techniques, namely observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted in a participatory manner to directly observe the learning process in the classroom, including interactions between teachers and students, as well as the implementation of religious activities in the school environment. In-depth interviews were conducted with teachers, students, and the principal to gain a more comprehensive understanding of strategies, obstacles, and perceptions regarding the effectiveness of Akidah Akhlak learning. Documentation was obtained from the syllabus, learning process design, records of school religious activities, and results of student attitude assessments. To ensure the validity of the data, triangulation techniques of sources and methods were used. Data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation were compared and tested for suitability to obtain a complete and valid picture. The data analysis process was carried out in stages using the Miles and Huberman model.(Annisa, IS, & Mailani, 2023), which includes the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

Research ethics was a key concern in the implementation of this study. All participants were provided with an explanation of the research objectives and their rights as informants, including the right to keep their identity confidential and to withdraw from the study at any time. Consent for participation was obtained through verbal and written informed consent. With this method, it is hoped that the study will objectively and in-depthly describe how Akidah Akhlak learning plays a role in shaping students' religious character, while also providing useful input for the development of Islamic values-based character education at the madrasah level.

Table 1. Focus of Observation

No	Focus of Observation
1	Learning methods and strategies used by teachers
2	Student responses and participation in learning
3	Integration of religious values in the learning process

4	Religious practices of students in the madrasa environment (congregational prayer, reading the Qur'an)
5	Teachers' exemplary behavior in implementing the values of Aqidah Akhlak

Table 2. Interview Guidelines

No	Interview Guidelines	Target
1	Teacher of Faith and Morals	To find out the planning, strategies, and evaluation of learning and their perceptions about the success of learning in forming students' religious character.
2	Head of Madrasah	To explore school policies and institutional support for religious character education
3	Learners	To understand their perceptions, experiences and changes in attitudes towards learning the Aqidah Akhlak
4	Parent	To see the continuity of character formation in the family environment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Based on results study through observation, interview and documentation,so, the following is a presentation of the findings related to the implementation of learning about faith and morals in forming the religious character of students;

No	Research result	Findings
1	Curriculum Integration and Value Relevance	The curriculum includes core Islamic values such as faith, honesty, discipline, and respect, which are emphasized both inside and outside the classroom.
2	Pedagogical Strategy	Teachers use learning methods, such as storytelling, group discussions, written reflections, and real-life case studies to make moral values more contextual and easier to understand.
3	Character Transformation Indicator	increasing religious behavior in students, such as punctuality in performing prayers, polite communication, participation in religious activities, and increasing empathy towards others.
4	School Environment and Culture	Congregational Dhuha prayers, Quran recitation before classes begin, and regular weekly religious studies reinforce the internalization of the values taught in the Aqidah Akhlak (Islamic Faith) class.
5	Challenges and Obstacles	Challenges in implementing learning include limited learning time, lack of variety in learning media, and differences in students' family backgrounds which do not always support religious values.
6	Moral Aqidah Learning Plan	Most teachers at MTs. 1 Pringsewu have implemented a learning process plan that includes important aspects of the learning process, from greetings to closing and reflection.
7	The learning process in forming religious character	Faith and morals are taught in the school environment through habituation activities such as reading the Quran, praying Dhuha and Dhuhur, giving sermons, and giving alms. Outside of school, students socialize with others regardless of ethnicity, culture, race, or religion.

Overall, this study found that effective implementation of Aqidah Akhlak learning, supported by a conducive school environment, active teacher involvement, and student involvement, can significantly shape students' religious character. However, further strengthening of the curriculum, increased parental involvement, and a sustainable approach are needed to optimize learning outcomes.

Discussion

The Aqidah Akhlak learning activities at MTs Negeri 1 Pringsewu make a significant contribution to shaping students' religious character. The learning process is not limited to theoretical delivery, but rather emphasizes internalizing Islamic values into students' actual behavior in their daily lives. This is evident in the learning approach used by teachers, which involves active and contextual methods such as discussions, case studies, exemplary stories, and value reflection. These strategies enable students to not only understand concepts cognitively but also internalize them affectively and apply them in real life.

Teachers play a role beyond mere instructors; they also serve as role models who directly demonstrate the values they teach. Teachers' exemplary behavior has proven to be a crucial factor in the process of forming students' religious character.(Agus, C., Saktimulya, SR, Dwiarso, P., Widodo, B., Rochmiyati, S., & Darmowiyono, 2021). Students more easily accept and imitate religious behavior that they witness directly rather than just listening to theoretical explanations.(Taufik, 2020)This aligns with the concept of the hidden curriculum, where educational values are conveyed not only through subject matter but also through the daily interactions and behaviors demonstrated by educators.

Apart from the learning approach used by teachers, the school environment as a whole also plays an important role in supporting the process of forming religious character.(Setyowati, 2023). A religious school culture, such as congregational Dhuha prayers, reading the Qur'an before lessons, and regular weekly religious studies, creates a consistent ecosystem of values that supports the subject matter of Aqidah Akhlak.(Anshori, I., & Wasehudin, 2024)This conducive environment provides space for students to apply and reinforce the values they have learned in real-world situations that are repetitive and structured.

However, this study also identified several challenges in implementing Akidah Akhlak learning. One of these was the limited learning time available, which was deemed insufficient to cover the material in depth and guide students in the process of internalizing values.(Setiaji, H., Zaenal Arifin, A., Sopyan, MH, & Anshori, 2025). Furthermore, some teachers stated that there is still a lack of innovative media and learning resources to support more engaging and relevant learning in the context of students' current lives. External factors such as family and social influences also influence the process of developing students' religious character. In some cases, the values instilled in schools are not fully aligned with parenting styles at home, creating obstacles to consistent character formation.

Theoretically, these findings reinforce the understanding that Islamic religious education, particularly the subject of Aqidah Akhlak (Islamic Creed and Morals), holds significant potential for shaping students' affective dimensions. It serves not only as a means of transmitting religious knowledge but also as a vehicle for spiritual and moral transformation. These findings also offer practical implications, suggesting that Aqidah Akhlak learning requires reinforcement from various perspectives, including the development of a more applicable curriculum, enhancing teachers' pedagogical competence, and actively involving parents and the community in supporting the development of students' religious character.

Aqidah Akhlak learning which is implemented in a planned, interactive and contextual manner, and supported by the example of teachers and a religious school culture, has been proven to have a positive impact on the formation of students' religious character.(Wasehudin, W., Anshori, I., Rahman, MT, Syafe'i, I., & Kesuma, 2021)However, for this impact to be sustainable and comprehensive, strong synergy is needed between the school, family, and the students' social environment. Interviews with the Aqidah Akhlak teachers revealed supporting

factors, such as the Aqidah Akhlak teachers and other teachers at MTs 1 Pringsewu providing good examples to students. Teachers participate in student activities. Facilities such as the Quran, mosques, prayer tools, and ablution facilities are available to help shape students' religious character. Furthermore, the Aqidah Akhlak teachers themselves, who have mastered the material and understand the students' characters, ensure a smooth learning process.

Interviews with religious aqidah and akhlak teachers revealed that the inhibiting factor is students' lack of willingness, as evidenced by their behavior, which is often inconsistent with regulations, such as not participating in Quran recitation activities and the Dhuha prayer. Another inhibiting factor is the community. The environment, as a place for students to socialize with the community, also influences them both directly and indirectly. The environment surrounding students' homes plays a crucial role in the formation of religious character. Success and failure in developing religious character are also influenced by the surrounding environment.

The findings of this study provide several important implications for the formulation of educational policy, particularly in strengthening Islamic values-based character education through the subject of Aqidah Akhlak (Islamic Creed). These findings underscore the need for the government and education policymakers, both at the central and regional levels, to strengthen the position of Aqidah Akhlak in the national curriculum. This can be achieved by allocating more time within the lesson schedule and integrating Aqidah Akhlak values into various other subjects and school activities.

These findings underscore the importance of developing the professional competency of Akidah Akhlak teachers, not only in mastery of the material but also in contextual, reflective, and transformative pedagogical strategies. Therefore, policies for ongoing teacher training and mentoring that encourage the use of active and values-based learning methods are needed. The government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs or related agencies, can develop teacher capacity-building programs focused on religious character education.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of Aqidah Akhlak learning at MTs Negeri 1 Pringsewu provides a real and significant contribution in shaping the religious character of students. Aqidah Akhlak learning not only serves as a means of conveying religious material cognitively, but also as a process of internalizing moral and spiritual values in students' lives. This is realized through an interactive, contextual, and reflective learning approach, which enables students to understand and practice religious values in their daily behavior. Teachers play a crucial role as facilitators and role models in instilling Islamic values. Strategies applied in learning, including role models, value discussions, and strengthening religious practices, have been shown to encourage changes in students' attitudes and behaviors toward a more religious direction. In addition, a religious school culture and a supportive learning environment strengthen the process of religious character formation through routine activities such as congregational prayer, recitation of the Qur'an, and the instilling of noble morals. This study found challenges in implementing learning, such as time constraints, a lack of varied learning media, and differences in background values brought from the family environment. These factors demand a more integrative and sustainable approach to religious character education. Therefore, holistically implemented Aqidah Akhlak (Islamic Faith and Akhlak) learning, involving cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, can be an effective instrument in shaping the religious character of madrasah students. The successful implementation of this learning depends on the synergy between teachers, schools, families, and students' social environments in creating an educational ecosystem that consistently supports Islamic values.

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