

THE IMPORTANCE OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN BUILDING THE SUPERIOR CHARACTER OF THE YOUNGER GENERATION

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the important role of Islamic religious education in shaping superior character in the younger generation. The focus is to understand how Islamic religious education can contribute in developing the morality, ethics, and values necessary to form qualified and noble moral individuals. This research uses qualitative and quantitative approaches by conducting a comprehensive literature review and case studies involving participants from various walks of life. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and analysis of documents related to Islamic religious education and character building of the younger generation. The results showed that Islamic religious education plays an important role in shaping superior character in the younger generation. Through a deep understanding of religious values, young people can internalize the principles of honesty, justice, compassion, and social responsibility. In addition, Islamic religious education also provides a strong foundation for developing attitudes of tolerance, respecting diversity, and strengthening religious identity. This study confirms that Islamic religious education has a strategic role in shaping superior character in the younger generation. The recommendations resulting from this study include expanding the Islamic religious education curriculum, increasing training for educators, and increasing the role of family and community in supporting the formation of character with integrity and ethics in the younger generation.

Keywords: *Islamic Religious Education, Superior Character, Young Generation.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The background of research on the importance of Islamic religious education in shaping superior character in the younger generation illustrates a complex dynamic, where social, cultural, and educational contexts are interrelated in shaping individuals. In the midst of the boundless flow of globalization and rapid technological development, the younger generation is often the main target of various influences that can affect the formation of their character. Moral challenges such as misdirection, paradigm shifts, and identity upheaval are major concerns in social development in many countries, including Indonesia. In this context, Islamic religious education plays an important role as one of the main foundations in shaping the character of the younger generation. Through universal values taught in Islam, such as honesty, justice, compassion, and social responsibility, the younger generation can be developed into individuals who are not only academically qualified, but also have solid

morals and ethics in the face of the complexities of the modern world. Therefore, research on the role of Islamic religious education in shaping superior character in the younger generation becomes very relevant and important to be deepened in the context of evolving social and cultural dynamics (Saputra & Ahmadi, 2022).

Indonesia, as a country with a majority Muslim population, does have Islamic religious education as an integral part of the formal education curriculum. However, although Islamic religious material is taught systematically in schools, challenges remain in applying these religious values to the daily lives of the younger generation. Changes in mindset, increasingly modern lifestyles, and the strong influence of social media are factors that can influence the understanding and practice of Islam in the younger generation. Amid the rapid flow of information and the increasingly open diversification of cultures, understandings of the religion of Islam are often influenced by varied and sometimes contradictory narratives. This poses its own challenges in ensuring that the younger generation understands and internalizes Islamic religious values correctly and relevant to the context of the times. Therefore, it is important to continue to develop adaptive and inclusive Islamic religious education strategies, as well as strengthen the role of families, schools, and communities in providing a deep understanding and consistent practice of Islamic religious teachings. Thus, the younger generation can grow as individuals who are not only spiritually strong, but also able to face the complexities of the modern world with unwavering integrity and courage (Hakim, 2023).

This is where the importance of research on the role of Islamic religious education in shaping superior character in the younger generation. Through Islamic religious education, it is hoped that the younger generation can gain a deep understanding of religious values, ethics, and morality which are the foundation for the formation of strong character and noble character. In addition, Islamic religious education also has the potential to form a tolerant attitude, respect diversity, and have a high sense of social responsibility. By understanding the universal values taught in Islam, such as compassion, justice, and peace, young people can internalize these principles in their daily lives, strengthen harmonious relationships with others, and contribute positively to building an inclusive and just society. Therefore, in-depth research on the role of Islamic religious education in shaping the character of the younger generation is not only important to understand its impact academically, but also to design effective educational strategies in facing the challenges of an ever-evolving era. Thus, Islamic religious education can serve as the main vehicle in forming a young generation who are qualified, have integrity, and are ready to face various changes and challenges in their lives (Rohana, 2019).

By understanding this background, research on the importance of Islamic religious education in shaping superior character in the younger generation becomes relevant and

important to do. This research is expected to provide deep insight into the challenges and opportunities in the implementation of Islamic religious education, as well as provide recommendations to increase its effectiveness in shaping quality character in the younger generation in Indonesia. Through comprehensive research, researchers can identify various factors that influence the success of Islamic religious education, such as teaching methods, the role of family and society, and the influence of secular and digital environments. In addition, this research can also explore the potential of Islamic religious education in developing the social, emotional, and intellectual skills of the younger generation, so that they can become agents of positive change in society. Thus, this research is not only useful for education policy makers and religious education practitioners, but also for all communities who care about building the character of a qualified and ethical young generation (Sahri & Soleh, 2023).

2. IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

This research uses field research, by establishing locations that reflect various social and cultural realities in Indonesia (Sugiono, 2012). Meticulously, they devised a plan to collect primary data directly from the field. Visits to schools, Islamic religious education centers, and local communities in selected locations open a window into the daily lives of students and educators. Through careful observation, they record classroom interactions, extracurricular activities, and evolving social dynamics. Interviews with students, teachers, parents, and religious leaders revealed various views on the role of Islamic religious education in shaping the character of the younger generation. In addition, team members are also actively involved in various religious activities and group discussions to gain deeper insights. After collecting substantial data, the team then carefully analyzed their findings. Through this method, they hope to produce a comprehensive understanding of the importance of Islamic religious education in shaping superior character in the younger generation in various communities in Indonesia.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research reveals that Islamic religious education plays a very important role in shaping the superior character of the younger generation in Indonesia. Through data collected from various sources and methods, we found that Islamic religious education not only provides an understanding of religious values, but also provides a solid foundation for the formation of sustainable morality, ethics, and attitudes in the younger generation. In a context that is constantly changing and often fraught with moral challenges, Islamic religious education provides clear direction and solid principles for young people to navigate their lives. Students not only learn religious concepts, but are also given real-life examples and moral dilemmas that allow them to apply these values in real situations. This provides immersive, hands-on experience and makes learning more meaningful. In addition, Islamic religious education also includes practical aspects in guiding the younger generation in living their daily lives with integrity and noble morals. Thus, Islamic religious education is not

only about theoretical understanding, but also about character building and the application of these values in practical life, which is the key to producing a qualified and ethical young generation in society (Fata et al., 2023).

Islamic religious education helps in building strong character and noble morals by instilling values such as honesty, justice, compassion, and social responsibility. Through systematic and structured teaching, young people are given the opportunity to understand and internalize these principles in their daily lives. Thus, they not only have knowledge of what is right and wrong, but also able to apply these values in concrete actions. In addition, Islamic religious education also plays a role in shaping inclusive and tolerant attitudes in the younger generation. Through an understanding of diversity in beliefs and cultures, young people are taught to value differences and treat all people with respect and equality. This helps in building harmonious and mutually beneficial relationships in a multicultural society. In addition, young people who receive Islamic religious education consistently tend to have a high sense of empathy for others. They learn to recognize and feel the suffering of others, and respond with compassion and support. Thus, Islamic religious education is not only about providing knowledge about religious teachings, but also about forming an integrity, inclusive, and empathetic character in the younger generation .

In addition, this study also shows that Islamic religious education plays an important role in shaping the religious identity of the younger generation. Through structured and in-depth learning about the teachings and practices of Islam, young people are given the opportunity to understand the core of their faith. They not only learn about religious rituals and doctrines, but also about the values underlying their beliefs. This helps them to develop a deeper understanding of their religious identity, strengthen their bonds with religious communities, and deepen their relationship with God. Moreover, younger generations involved in Islamic religious education tend to have a stronger commitment to religious practice in their daily lives. They are more motivated to practice religion in every aspect of their lives, including in social relationships, careers, and other daily activities. Thus, Islamic religious education not only shapes the character of the younger generation, but also strengthens and revives their religious identity, which becomes an important part of their spiritual and mental balance.

The results of this study confirm that Islamic religious education is not only about academic aspects, but also about the formation of individual character and identity. It was found that through Islamic religious education, the younger generation not only gained knowledge about religious teachings, but was also given guidance in building strong attitudes, values, and morality. This underscores the important role of Islamic religious education in shaping individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also ethical in various aspects of life. The recommendations resulting from this study include concrete steps to improve the effectiveness of Islamic religious education in shaping the character of the younger generation in Indonesia. First, it is important to strengthen the Islamic religious education curriculum by emphasizing the teaching of universal values such as honesty, justice, compassion, and social responsibility.

The curriculum should be designed to enable students to relate religious concepts to real-life situations. Furthermore, it is necessary to increase training for Islamic religious educators so that they have sufficient skills and knowledge to teach and guide the younger generation effectively. This training should cover aspects of teaching, classroom

management, and character building, so that teachers can be good facilitators in the character building process. Finally, involving family and community in supporting the character building process is also key. Family and community have a very important role in setting an example and supporting the younger generation in applying the values they learn in school. Therefore, collaborative efforts between schools, families, and communities are needed to create an environment that supports the growth of character with integrity and ethics in the younger generation in Indonesia.

Discussion

Islamic religious education plays a central role in shaping the superior character of Indonesia's young generation. The importance of this role is reflected through several relevant aspects. First, Islamic religious education provides a strong moral foundation for students, guiding them in understanding the values of ethics, honesty, patience, and empathy. This is important in building good and responsible character in society. Second, Islamic religious education teaches tolerance and harmony between religious communities, helps reduce conflicts and strengthens a sense of unity in Indonesia's diversity. Third, through understanding the teachings of Islam, students are invited to develop spiritual awareness and a deeper relationship with God, which can give them moral strength and courage in facing life's challenges. Thus, Islamic religious education not only teaches faith, but also provides a solid foundation for the formation of character that is dignified, integrity, and contributes positively to the nation and state (Aziz et al., 2023).

Moral and Ethical Foundations

Islamic religious education not only provides an understanding of religious teachings, but also has a crucial role in forming a solid moral foundation for the younger generation. By exploring values such as honesty, fairness, and compassion, students not only know these concepts, but are also guided to apply them in everyday life. They learn to respect the rights of their fellow human beings, uphold the principle of justice, and show empathy for others. Through this teaching, they not only become self-responsible individuals, but also realize their social responsibility towards the surrounding community (Mansir, 2021).

Islamic religious education plays an important role in shaping a noble character. Integrity and morality are not just empty words, but principles of life that are upheld. Thus, Islamic religious education provides a solid foundation for the development of superior character. This not only positively impacts the individual himself, but also for the nation and the country as a whole. With a young generation that has strong character, Indonesia can move forward with a solid foundation, promoting peace, justice, and prosperity for all its citizens.

Religious Identity

Islamic religious education has a significant role in strengthening the religious identity of the younger generation. Through a deep understanding of the teachings and practices of the Islamic religion, they not only acquire knowledge of their faith, but also

internalize those values in their daily lives. Thus, they can identify themselves as part and parcel of the wider religious community.

A strong religious identity provides important social and spiritual support for young people in facing life's challenges. They feel connected to fellow Muslims, support each other in their worship practices, and build strong bonds based on shared beliefs. This gives them a sense of confidence and moral strength to deal with pressure from the surrounding environment that may differ in beliefs or views. A strong religious identity also helps them maintain fidelity to religious values in testing situations, so that they are able to maintain integrity and consistency in the principles they hold.

Thus, Islamic religious education not only provides knowledge about religious teachings, but also helps strengthen the religious identity of the younger generation. This solid identity not only provides social and spiritual support, but also forms a solid foundation for the formation of responsible and dignified character. As part of a wider religious community, young people can be agents of positive change in society, promoting tolerance, justice, and peace based on their religious values (Chanifah et al., 2021).

Tolerance and Respect for Diversity

Although Islamic religious education teaches fundamental Islamic values, it does not hinder but rather encourages tolerance and respect for diversity. Through a deep understanding of the universal principles in Islam, the younger generation is taught to respect differences in beliefs and cultures. They learned that Islam teaches compassion, generosity, and peace, values that are inclusive and relevant to all humanity. With this understanding, the younger generation is invited to view differences as a source of wealth and build harmonious relationships with everyone, regardless of differences in religion, culture, or other backgrounds.

Islamic religious education plays an important role in building bridges between community groups and paving the way to unity in diversity. Young people are given the opportunity to interact with people from different backgrounds, broaden their horizons about the world, and deepen their understanding of the values that exist between all of us. Thus, Islamic religious education not only enriches the understanding of Islam, but also shapes inclusive attitudes and inspires the younger generation to become agents of peace and tolerance in the midst of a multicultural society (Harianto & Kandedes, 2023).

Overcoming Moral Challenges and Value Crises

During globalization and rapid technological advances, the younger generation is often exposed to various influences that can potentially affect the formation of their character. In this context, Islamic religious education is important because it provides a solid foundation to respond to the moral challenges and value crises they may face. By delving into the principles of Islam, they are not only given an understanding of what is right and wrong, but also equipped with tools to distinguish between values that conform to religious teachings and those that do not.

Islamic religious education provides a deep understanding of morality, ethics, and social responsibility. Through teaching about values such as honesty, justice, compassion, and compassion, young people are prepared to deal with complex situations in their lives.

They are taught to consider the moral implications of every action and decision they take, as well as understand the possible consequences of their behavior.

With a strong understanding of the principles of Islam, young people can make informed decisions and maintain their moral integrity, even under pressure from the surrounding environment which often tends to lead to moral mistakes. They have a solid foundation from which to face temptations and challenges that may threaten their values. As a result, they can become agents of positive change in society, bringing inspiration and hope to those around them. Thus, Islamic religious education not only provides knowledge about the religion, but also equips the younger generation with the necessary tools to live a meaningful and dignified life in the midst of a growing stream of change.

In conclusion, the importance of Islamic religious education in shaping superior character in the younger generation cannot be doubted. Through Islamic religious education, the younger generation can gain more than just knowledge about religious teachings; They also gain a deep understanding of religious values, ethics, and morality that form the foundation for the formation of strong character and noble character. Islamic religious education provides a solid foundation for the younger generation to live a life with good and responsible principles. They are not only taught to practice worship, but also given guidance on how to apply religious values in interacting with fellow humans and the surrounding environment. Thus, they not only become religious persons, but also become individuals with noble morals and make positive contributions to society (Tamuri, 2015).

With a solid moral foundation of Islamic religious education, the younger generation is equipped with the necessary tools to face various challenges in their lives. They have a clear grip on what is right and wrong, as well as an awareness of their responsibility to themselves, society, and God. Thus, they can be good leaders, wise decision makers, and agents of positive change in society. Therefore, it is important for governments, educational institutions, and society as a whole to continue to support and strengthen Islamic religious education as an integral part of the education system. Only by ensuring that young people have adequate and quality access to Islamic religious education can we ensure that they grow into individuals who are moral, responsible, and able to bring positive change for a better future for Indonesia.

4. CONCLUSION

In this study, we have highlighted the importance of Islamic religious education in shaping superior character in the younger generation. Our findings show that Islamic religious education not only provides knowledge of religious teachings, but also forms a strong moral foundation for dignified and responsible character development. Through a deep understanding of religious values such as honesty, justice, and compassion, young people are prepared to face various challenges in their lives. We found that Islamic religious education plays an important role in strengthening the religious identity of young people, providing crucial social and spiritual support in the face of various pressures from the surrounding environment. In addition, Islamic religious education also encourages tolerance and respect for diversity, helping the younger generation build harmonious relationships with all people regardless of differences. In conclusion, the results of our research confirm that Islamic religious education is an integral component in building the superior character

of the younger generation. By strengthening religious values, supporting religious identity, and encouraging tolerance, Islamic religious education provides a solid foundation for young people to live lives with moral integrity, social responsibility, and readiness to face various challenges in this era of globalization. Therefore, efforts to strengthen Islamic religious education need to be prioritized to ensure a better future for the nation and state.

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