THE INTEGRATION OF RELIGIOUS CHARACTER EDUCATION IN LEARNING AT MTS SWASTA MIFTAHUL HUDA TUGU AGUNG LEMPUING

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Abstract, *This study aims to analyze and explore how religious character education is integrated into the learning process at Miftahul Huda Tugu Agung Lempuing Private Junior High School. Religious character education plays an essential role in shaping students' morals and ethics and supporting the formation of a strong religious identity. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to understand the curriculum implementation and extracurricular activities that support the integration of religious character education. Data were collected through interviews with teachers, the head of the school, and students, as well as direct field observations. The findings show that Miftahul Huda Private Junior High School integrates religious character education by incorporating religious values into every subject and through regular activities such as congregational prayers, Quran memorization (tahfidz), and religious study sessions. Although challenges exist in implementing this approach, such as limited resources and varying levels of student understanding, integrating religious character has proven effective in strengthening students' character development. This study is expected to contribute to developing more applicable and effective models of religious character education in madrasahs.*

Keywords: Religious character education, junior high school, learning, integration of religious values, character development.

Introduction

The rapid development of information technology has significantly impacted societal life, including in the field of education. On one hand, technological advancements provide convenience in accessing information and facilitate the learning process. On the other hand, technology can also negatively affect the formation of adolescent characters. The overwhelming exposure to information inconsistent with religious and cultural values can influence the behavior and attitudes of the younger generation, especially in terms of morality and spirituality.

Juvenile delinquency, drug abuse, brawls, and bullying are real examples of the moral crisis that occurs among students (Djazilan & Akhwani, 2022; Fauzieyah & Suyatno, 2024).

Madrasah Tsanawiyah, an educational institution focused on teaching Islamic religion, is vital in instilling religious character education among its students. However, despite many schools integrating religious values into their curriculum, its implementation still has challenges. The development of strong religious character in students requires an approach that relies on teaching materials and through habituation in daily life that can be consistently and integratively practiced (Ismail, 2020; Ranam et al., 2021). Based on this, this study aims to explore and analyze how integrating religious character education in learning at Madrasah Tsanawiyah can enhance student character quality and support the formation of a generation with noble morals.

The problem formulation in this study includes several key questions related to the implementation of religious character education in Madrasah Tsanawiyah: how to integrate religious character education into the learning process, what religious character values are applied, and what factors influence its implementation. This study will also examine the impact of integrating religious character education on students' attitudes and academic performance. The main objectives of this research are to understand how religious character education is integrated into learning at Madrasah Tsanawiyah, identify the religious character values applied, analyze the factors that affect the implementation of religious character education, and assess its impact on students' character development and academic performance. This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytic research design, where data is collected through in-depth interviews with the school principal, teachers, and students, as well as observations of learning activities and documentation of school events. The collected data is then analyzed using data reduction techniques, presenting the data in narrative form and drawing conclusions based on relevant theories.

Religious character education in the context of madrasah refers to teaching religious values that extend beyond mere knowledge but also involve shaping attitudes and behaviors by religious teachings. Character education that emphasizes religious values aims to develop individuals who are not only intelligent but also possess noble character. Religious character education encompasses two important dimensions: the *ilahiyah* dimension (relationship with God) and the *insaniyah* dimension (relationship with fellow humans), which mutually support the development of virtuous morals (Siregar et al., 2024).

Several previous studies have also shown that religious character education positively impacts students' moral development and attitudes. For example, research conducted by Wardi (2019) stated that character education in *madrasah ibtidaiyah* serves as the foundation for the development of a nation's character, and the

implementation of character education can help address the concerns of parents and the national education system (Wardi, 2019). Additionally, a study by Lutfiati (2024) emphasized the importance of education in shaping religious character in Madrasah Tsanawiyah, highlighting that the education applied in this country has a significant influence on society as a whole (Lutfiati, 2024).

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the integration of religious character education in the learning process at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Swasta Miftahul Huda Tugu Agung Lempuing, offering a unique case study that has not been widely explored in previous literature. This study highlights how religious character education is embedded in the curriculum and integrated into daily life practices, including extracurricular activities, religious rituals, and habituation routines, creating a holistic approach to character development. Additionally, the research explores the dual dimensions of religious education—*ilahiyah* (spirituality) and *insaniyah* (human interaction)—and examines their combined impact on students' moral development and academic performance. This perspective has yet to be fully explored in Indonesian madrasahs.

Research Method

This research was conducted at MTs Swasta Miftahul Huda, located on JL. Lintas Timur KM.130, Tugu Agung, Kec. Lempuing, Kab. Ogan Komering Ilir, South Sumatra Province, with a focus on the implementation of religious character education. The subjects of this study included the principal, vice principal for curriculum, vice principal for student affairs, educators, and students. This study used a descriptive-analytical method with a qualitative approach. Primary data were obtained from members of the academic community who were directly involved in religious character education. In contrast, secondary data were collected from documents and supporting materials available at the school, such as books, articles, academic journals, letters, and archives. Data collection techniques used included interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with informants to gather in-depth information about implementing religious character education. Participatory observation was performed to verify the data obtained from the interviews, with the researcher involved in the activities carried out by the informants. Documentation was used to complement the data obtained from interviews and observations by collecting various relevant documents. Data analysis is done by sorting, organizing, and categorizing data according to appropriate categories, then presenting it in narrative form that describes research findings and conclusions by the research objectives.

Discussion
Religious Character Values

Based on interviews with the school principal and religious teachers, as well as observations at MTs Swasta Miftahul Huda, it was found that two main dimensions

of religious character education applied are *Ilahiyah* (relationship with God) and *Insaniyah* (relationship with fellow humans). The *Ilahiyah* dimension includes habituation in worship taught to students, such as performing obligatory and Sunnah prayers, Qur'anic recitation (*tadarus*), morning and evening dhikr, and cultivating values of piety and sincerity. The school principal explained that these worship habits are practiced daily, where all students perform congregational prayers before starting academic activities. *Tadarus* Al-Qur'an also has a daily agenda, with students being given time to read and memorize Qur'anic verses. Morning and evening dhikr are conducted to habituate students to remember Allah and maintain the purity of their hearts.

Meanwhile, the researcher's interviews with several students revealed that they experienced benefits from this habituation of worship. The students felt closer to God after regularly performing congregational prayers and *tadarus*. Some students also mentioned that the morning and evening dhikr activities calmed them when carrying out their school activities. This routine made them feel that religious values had become more deeply ingrained in their lives.

The *Insaniyah* dimension focuses on social values applied in the student's daily lives. Based on the observations made by the researcher, it was found that students are taught to respect one another and work together in various school activities. Social values taught include tolerance, helping one another, politeness, leadership, cleanliness, and responsibility toward the surrounding environment. For example, in the monthly community service activities, students are taught to cooperate in maintaining the cleanliness of the school environment. Students are also encouraged to raise funds and organize charitable activities as a form of social awareness. These activities teach students to share with others and develop into individuals who care about those around them.

Implementing the two dimensions of religious character education at MTs Swasta Miftahul Huda Tugu Agung demonstrates a structured approach to shaping students who are not only academically intelligent but also possess noble character. The *Ilahiyah* dimension, which includes habituation in worship practices, strengthens the students' spiritual relationship with God. The routine of congregational prayers and Quran recitation is crucial in fostering discipline among the students while enhancing their spiritual awareness.

Jalwis (2023) states that faith-based character education can help students develop piety and sincerity in every aspect of their lives. This aligns with research showing that consistent school worship practices can reinforce discipline and religious character (Jalwis, 2023). Moreover, the habituation of morning and evening dhikr at MTs Swasta Miftahul Huda positively impacts students' inner peace. Dhikr serves as a reminder to God, helping students maintain emotional and mental balance, which is essential amidst the challenges of daily life. Research by Pradana and Istikomah (2024) demonstrates that the practice of dhikr can increase the tranquility of the soul

and assist students in coping with stress (Pradana & Istikomah, 2024). Thus, this habituation educates students about the importance of worship and teaches them to be grateful and remember God in every aspect of their lives.

In the Insaniyah dimension, social values such as tolerance, politeness, and helping others are applied in daily life at school. This habituation helps students understand and practice religious teachings in their social interactions. Activities such as gotong royong (community service) and other social activities foster a sense of care among students for the environment and others. Research by Sis emphasizes that character education involving social values helps students develop better empathy and social solidarity (Sis et al., 2025). By integrating religious character values into various activities, MTs Swasta Miftahul Huda Tugu Agung has successfully created an environment that supports the holistic development of student's character.

The implementation of religious character education at MTs Swasta Miftahul Huda Tugu Agung has proven to have a significant impact in shaping students who are not only academically intelligent but also possess strong morals and are ready to contribute positively to society. Through the consistent and well-planned habituation of worship and social values, both in classroom learning and extracurricular activities, the school has successfully created students with strong character and noble morals. This comprehensive approach has fostered an environment that supports the personal development of students as responsible, caring, and integral individuals.

Implementation of Religious Character Education in Learning

Based on the interviews conducted with religious studies teachers and observations made during the research, it was found that MTs Swasta Miftahul Huda Tugu Agung integrate religious character education into every aspect of the learning process. In this regard, the religious studies teachers at the madrasah not only teach the theory of worship but also instill religious character values through an applicable approach. Religious education is integrated with daily habits in the students' lives. For example, after explaining the values of piety and sincerity, the teacher encourages students to practice these values through activities such as Quran recitation (*tadarus*) and morning and evening dhikr (remembrance of Allah). This demonstrates that religious character education at MTs Swasta Miftahul Huda Tugu Agung goes beyond theory and is truly implemented in the students' daily lives at the madrasah.

Based on the observations made in the classroom, it is evident that religious character education is also integrated into other subjects, such as Civic Education (Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan) and Indonesian Language (Bahasa Indonesia). In the Civic Education lessons, students are taught national values that align with religious principles, such as tolerance and mutual respect. In the Indonesian Language lessons, students are encouraged to develop honesty and responsibility through writing activities that emphasize the moral values embedded in the stories they create. This demonstrates that religious character values can be applied across various subjects, creating a more holistic and meaningful learning environment.

Students can also develop their character through extracurricular activities integrating religious values, such as leadership, teamwork, and responsibility. Activities like student organizations, leadership training, and various competitions held at the school serve as platforms for students to apply religious character values in real-life situations. For example, in leadership training activities, Islamic teachings teach students to lead with fairness, honesty, and a sense of responsibility.

Through implementing religious character education in various aspects of learning, MTs Swasta Miftahul Huda Tugu Agung has successfully created an environment that supports the holistic development of student's character. Every religious value taught is theoretical and directly practiced in the student's daily lives. With this approach, students acquire religious knowledge and internalize these values in their attitudes and behaviors.

The integration of religious character values into other subjects, such as Civic Education (Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan, PKn) and Indonesian Language, demonstrates that religious character is not only linked to religious teachings but can also be applied in the context of social and national life. In PKn lessons, students are taught to appreciate differences, which aligns with the religious teachings of mutual respect among followers of different faiths. Lubis (2022) notes that extracurricular activities in madrasahs help students implement religious character in a tangible way, which aligns with Islamic teachings. This highlights that character education is focused on religious aspects and the development of positive social attitudes among students (Lubis, 2022).

Similarly, in Indonesian Language lessons, students can develop honesty and responsibility through writing activities that integrate moral and religious values. According to Al-Baihaqi (2024), religious character education aims to cultivate noble morals and behavior through Islamic teachings, including ethical knowledge and behavior (Al-Baihaqi et al., 2024). Therefore, Indonesian Language education can instill these values in a broader context.

Extracurricular activities that integrate religious character values also make a significant contribution to the formation of student character. In these activities, students can practice leadership, cooperation, and responsibility. Students involved in activities such as student organizations and leadership training can develop attitudes of honesty, fairness, and accountability, which align with Islam's teachings. By integrating religious character into every school activity, both in and outside the classroom, MTs Swasta Miftahul Huda Tugu Agung has successfully created an environment that supports the holistic development of students' religious character.

Implementing religious character education in this learning process has had a significant positive impact on students, not only in academic aspects but also in developing their character. Through consistent habituation and practice, students at MTs Swasta Miftahul Huda Tugu Agung have been able to internalize religious and social values in their daily lives. This proves that religious character education can be

effectively implemented in a structured and planned manner, involving all elements of the school, and carried out continuously.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of Religious Character Education

Based on interviews with the headmaster and teachers and direct observations, several factors support and hinder the implementation of religious character education at MTs Swasta Miftahul Huda Tugu Agung. The main supporting factors are the strong support from the school and good cooperation between educators, students, and parents. The headmaster stated that the school's commitment to implementing religious character education is essential in creating an environment that supports student character development. Teachers, especially religious education teachers, play an active role in instilling spiritual values and providing role models in their daily lives.

Other supporting factors include well-structured programs, such as routine worship practice and extracurricular activities supporting students' religious character development. These theoretical and practical programs provide opportunities for students to apply spiritual values in their daily lives. Additionally, the involvement of parents plays a significant role. The headmaster emphasized that when parents actively participate in their children's character education, the process of character development becomes more optimal.

However, several inhibiting factors need to be addressed. One is the challenge of consistently implementing religious character education, particularly with some students who may not have sufficient support from their home environment. Furthermore, time constraints are another challenge, as the packed learning schedule sometimes makes it difficult to allocate enough time for worship practices and other activities that support character education. The headmaster and teachers suggested the need for periodic evaluations to address these challenges effectively, ensuring that religious character education continues to run optimally.

Based on the observations made by the author show that adequate facilities are an important supporting factor in the implementation of religious character education. For example, the school provides space for worship activities, such as congregational prayers and recitation of the Qur'an, which students can easily access. Comfortable and adequate facilities, such as a mosque within the school, allow students to perform their religious duties with focus and regularity. Furthermore, extracurricular activities emphasizing social values, such as community service and other social activities, also develop students' religious character outside formal class hours.

However, several inhibiting factors need to be considered. One of the main hindering factors is the students' diverse social and economic backgrounds. Some students come from families with different levels of religious understanding, which sometimes affects their acceptance of the spiritual values taught at school. This was

discovered through interviews with several teachers, who stated that although the school has made efforts to provide a good understanding of religious values, there are sometimes differences among students from families with a weaker religious background.

In addition, the negative influence of social media also presents a significant challenge in maintaining the consistency of religious character education. Students who access information from various sources outside of school are sometimes exposed to content that does not align with spiritual and moral values. The religion teacher and school principal stated that although the school tries to guide students in understanding the correct values, external influences such as social media still affect the attitudes and behavior of some students. Therefore, the school needs to be more proactive in educating students on the importance of being selective in accessing information and maintaining their behavior in the online world.

Overall, despite the presence of several obstacles, the supporting factors at MTs Swasta Miftahul Huda Tugu Agung are far more dominant. The good collaboration between the school, teachers, and parents is key to successfully implementing religious character education at this school. As explained by Bali and Susilowati (2019), the collaboration between the school and parents is crucial in supporting the formation of a child's religious character. With strong support from all parties and the utilization of available facilities, MTs Swasta Miftahul Huda Tugu Agung has succeeded in creating an environment that fosters religious character education. However, the school needs to continue anticipating challenges from external factors, such as the influence of social media, by providing more intensive guidance to students (Bali & Susilowati, 2019).

Religius Impact of Religious Character Education Implementation

Based on interviews with teachers and students and direct observations at MTs Swasta Miftahul Huda Tugu Agung, several significant positive impacts of implementing religious character education on students were found. These impacts are reflected in changes in students' attitudes, behavior, and academic achievements, which can be divided into the following aspects:

Religious character education at MTs Swasta Miftahul Huda Tugu Agung has positively changed students' attitudes and behavior. Students have shown increased discipline in daily activities, such as consistency in study time, regular attendance at the madrasah, and more consistent religious practices. Additionally, values of politeness and responsibility are more apparent, both in social interactions among students and in social activities at the madrasah.

Students who were previously limited in their understanding of differences now show a more open attitude and accept diversity. Through teachings on tolerance and cooperation in extracurricular activities and class, students have learned to appreciate religious, background, and cultural differences within the school

environment. This impact is visible in the increasingly harmonious student relationships, with mutual respect and collaboration in various activities.

Religious character education teaches students about the values of worship and shapes their social character. Students show increased awareness of their surroundings and are more active in social activities. Activities such as social service, environmental greening, and cooperation allow students to apply the values of helping others and caring for their peers. Observations show that students feel more connected to the community and are more caring toward others, both within the school and outside its environment.

The impact of religious character education is also reflected in the student's academic achievements. According to teacher interviews, many students have shown increased motivation to learn after internalizing religious values. Students have become more organized in their studies, more focused on academic goals, and more disciplined in preparing for exams. With values such as honesty and responsibility embedded within them, many students have demonstrated better learning outcomes and excelled academically.Siswa yang terpapar pada pendidikan karakter religius cenderung lebih mampu mengendalikan emosi mereka, baik dalam menghadapi tekanan akademik maupun dalam interaksi sosial. Mereka lebih sabar dalam menghadapi perbedaan pendapat atau perselisihan dengan teman-teman sekelas. Pendidikan agama yang mengajarkan kesabaran, ketenangan, dan pengendalian diri telah memberikan dampak positif dalam cara siswa menyelesaikan konflik. Hal ini tercermin dalam observasi di mana banyak siswa yang lebih mampu menyelesaikan masalah secara damai dan saling memahami tanpa kekerasan atau kata-kata kasar.

Students who participate in religious activities at school, such as congregational prayers, Quran recitation, and morning and evening dhikr, have improved their spiritual lives. They are not merely engaging in these activities as routines but have started to understand and internalize the meaning behind each act of worship. This can be seen in the students' calmer demeanor, greater patience, and focus on achieving a better life in this world and hereafter.

The impact of this study on future research is very significant, especially in the context of developing religious character education in schools. This study provides an in-depth understanding of how implementing religious character education, both in the Divine dimension (relationship with God) and the Insaniyah dimension (relationship with fellow human beings), can influence students' attitudes and behavior. These findings can be a reference for similar research in the future by highlighting the importance of worship habits such as congregational prayer, tadarus, and morning and evening dhikr, which have been shown to increase students' closeness to God and their inner peace. In addition, this study also indicates that social values such as tolerance, cooperation, and social concern applied in schools positively impact the development of students' social character, helping them understand the importance of empathy and solidarity in everyday life. This study can also provide insight into the challenges and inhibiting factors in implementing religious character

education, such as differences in students' socio-economic backgrounds and the influence of social media, which need to be addressed to ensure the success of character education. Thus, this study can be a strong basis for further research exploring innovative ways of integrating religious character education into the educational curriculum and extracurricular activities in schools and identifying strategies to overcome the challenges faced in its implementation.

Conclusion

Implementing religious character education at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Swasta Miftahul Huda Tugu Agung Lempuing effectively integrates religious values and character education within the learning process. This school has successfully integrated the Ilahiyah (spiritual) and Insaniyah (social) dimensions into both academic and extracurricular activities, such as daily worship routines, congregational prayers, Quran recitation, and morning and evening dhikr, which strengthen students' discipline and spiritual awareness, as well as social activities that foster a sense of responsibility and solidarity. Integrating religious character education values is also applied in subjects like Civics (PKn) and Indonesian Language, where tolerance, honesty, and commitment are taught. The support from all school stakeholders, including teachers, the head of the madrasah, and parents, as well as the strong cooperation among all elements of the madrasah, has been a key factor in this success, despite external challenges such as varying family backgrounds and the influence of social media. The positive impacts of integrating religious character education are reflected in the students' improved discipline, responsibility, emotional control, and increased academic performance and relationships among students. Overall, Madrasah Tsanawiyah Swasta Miftahul Huda Tugu Agung Lempuing has successfully integrated religious character education into its learning system, producing academically smart students who possess strong character and noble morals and are ready to make positive contributions to society.

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