

THE IMPORTANCE OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN BUILDING GENERATION Z CHARACTER IN THE ERA OF THE INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM

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Abstract

Islamic Religious Education has a crucial role in building Generation Z's character, especially in the Independent Curriculum era. The problems of this research include challenges in applying religious values, the influence of technology on learning, and the need for role models from educators and parents. The purpose of the research is to find out the importance of Islamic religious education in building the character of Generation Z in the era of the independent curriculum. This type of research is a literature review, which examines and analyzes various relevant literature sources to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of Islamic religious education in building the character of generation Z in the era of the Independent Curriculum. The literature sources used include books, scientific articles, journals, and official documents related to the Independent Curriculum and Islamic religious education. The results showed that Islamic religious education plays a very important role in shaping the character of generation Z, especially in the digital and globalization era which is full of challenges. The Independent Curriculum provides wider opportunities to develop Islamic religious education with a more relevant and contextual approach. By instilling strong Islamic moral and ethical values, Generation Z can be equipped with good character traits such as responsibility, empathy and a sense of community. In addition, Islamic religious education is also very important in dealing with social problems such as radicalization and intolerance. Therefore, it is important for all education stakeholders to continue to innovate and integrate Islamic values in every aspect of learning, in order to create a generation with quality and noble character.

Abstrak

Pendidikan Agama Islam memiliki peran krusial dalam membangun karakter Generasi Z, terutama di era Kurikulum Merdeka. Permasalahan penelitian ini mencakup tantangan dalam penerapan nilai-nilai agama, pengaruh teknologi terhadap pembelajaran, dan perlunya teladan dari pendidik dan orang tua. Tujuan penelitian yaitu untuk mengetahui pentingnya pendidikan agama Islam dalam membangun karakter generasi Z di era kurikulum merdeka. Jenis penelitian ini adalah literature review, yaitu mengkaji dan menganalisis berbagai sumber literatur yang relevan untuk memperoleh pemahaman mendalam tentang peran pendidikan agama Islam dalam membangun karakter generasi Z di era Kurikulum Merdeka. Sumber literatur yang digunakan meliputi buku, artikel ilmiah, jurnal, serta dokumen resmi terkait Kurikulum Merdeka dan pendidikan agama Islam. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Pendidikan agama Islam memainkan peran yang sangat penting dalam membentuk karakter generasi Z, terutama dalam era digital dan globalisasi yang penuh dengan tantangan. Kurikulum Merdeka memberikan kesempatan yang lebih luas untuk mengembangkan pendidikan agama Islam dengan pendekatan yang lebih relevan dan kontekstual. Dengan menanamkan nilai-nilai moral dan etika Islam yang kuat, generasi Z dapat dibekali dengan karakter yang baik, seperti tanggung jawab, empati, dan rasa kebersamaan. Selain itu, pendidikan agama Islam juga sangat penting dalam menghadapi masalah-masalah sosial

seperti radikalisasi dan intoleransi. Oleh karena itu, penting bagi seluruh pemangku kepentingan pendidikan untuk terus berinovasi dan mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai agama Islam dalam setiap aspek pembelajaran, guna menciptakan generasi yang berkualitas dan memiliki akhlak yang mulia.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic religious education has an important role in shaping the character of the younger generation, especially in facing the increasingly complex challenges of the times. In Indonesia, the currently developing generation is referred to as Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012) who live in the digital era and globalization (Fia, 2023). On the other hand, Indonesia has implemented an education system known as the Independent Curriculum, which gives greater freedom to educators and students in carrying out the teaching and learning process. This Independent Curriculum aims to produce individuals who are more independent, creative, and have skills that are relevant to the needs of the times (Miladiah et al., 2023).

Independent Curriculum is a curriculum concept introduced by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, which aims to create an education system that is more flexible, relevant and provides freedom for schools and educators to design learning according to the needs and potential of students. This curriculum was introduced in 2021 and began to be implemented in the 2022 academic year with the aim of forming a generation that is more independent, creative, critical, and has a strong character. The Independent Curriculum was born in response to the dynamics and challenges of rapidly developing education in the world, including technological advances, globalization, and rapid social change. Previously, Indonesia used the 2013 Curriculum (K13) which was relatively structured and emphasized the basic competencies that students must achieve. However, the 2013 Curriculum was considered too rigid and focused on academic achievement that sometimes ignored the development of character, creativity and freedom of thought of students.

Generation Z is a group of generations who are currently entering the world of higher education and the workforce. They were born between 1997 and 2012, so they are currently in the age range of around 12 to 27 years old. Generation Z grew up in the midst of rapid technological advances, and is different from previous generations who are still in the transition period from the analog to the digital era. As digital natives, they are more familiar with technological devices and the internet from an early age, thus forming unique characteristics that distinguish them from previous generations, such as Generation Y (Millennials).

Islamic Religious Education is one of the important components in the education system in Indonesia. It focuses on teaching and understanding the teachings of Islam, including creed, worship, morals, and Islamic history. The main objective of Islamic religious education is to form a person who has strong faith, noble character, and skills in accordance with the guidance of Islamic teachings. Islamic religious education is not only limited to knowledge of religious teachings, but also aims to build individual character and morality in society.

There are previous studies on the role of Islamic religious education in building the character of generation Z (Mulyadi et al, 2023), Development of Islamic religious education models in shaping empathy character in generation Z (Miftakhuddin, 2020), Social Media-Based Islamic Religious Learning Media in Generation-Z (Zazin & Zaim, 2019).

However, in this digital and modern era, the challenges in building the character of generation Z are increasingly complex. Cultural changes, social values, and technological influences affect their character development. Therefore, Islamic religious education, with the moral and ethical values contained in it, is one of the most important aspects in shaping the character of generation Z, especially in the era of an independent curriculum. This article aims to review the literature related to the importance of Islamic religious education in building the character of generation Z in the context of the Independent Curriculum.

METHODS

This type of research is a literature review, which examines and analyzes various relevant literature sources to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of Islamic religious education in building the character of generation Z in the era of the Independent Curriculum. The literature sources used include books, scientific articles, journals, and official documents related to the Independent Curriculum and Islamic religious education.

The literature selection process is carried out by selecting works that discuss:

1. The concept of Islamic religious education and character in the context of education.
2. The role of religion in the character education of the younger generation.
3. Independent curriculum and its application in religious education.
4. Recent studies on the influence of Islamic religious education on generation Z.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Islamic Religious Education and Character Building

Islamic religious education not only teaches about religious knowledge but also shapes the character of students through moral values contained in the Qur'an and Hadith. According to Abu Bakar (2020), Islamic religious education is very important to form individuals who have good character, such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, and empathy. These values are important to face increasingly complex global challenges, especially among generation Z who are more open to information coming from various sources.

1. Objectives of Islamic Religious Education in Character Building

Islamic Religious Education has various objectives that focus on student character building, including:

a. Instilling Strong Faith

Islamic religious education aims to instill a strong belief in Allah SWT and teach the true teachings of Islam. A strong faith will form a person who is not easily shaken and continues to carry out religious teachings in everyday life.

b. Building a Noble Character

Islam teaches the importance of good morals or manners. One of the main objectives of PAI is to shape students' characters with noble morals, such as honesty, patience, sincerity, and humility. Good character will have a positive impact on personal and social life.

c. Teaching Responsibility

Islamic religious education also aims to instill a sense of responsibility. This is not only related to religious obligations, but also towards oneself, family and society. With a sense of responsibility, individuals will be more aware of living life with full commitment and trustworthiness.

d. Teaching Empathy and Compassion

In Islam, caring for fellow humans is highly emphasized. Islamic religious education teaches the value of empathy, such as helping, respecting and caring for others. This is important in creating a harmonious and peaceful social life.

2. Islamic Religious Education Materials in Character Building

The material taught in Islamic Religious Education is very influential in the formation of student character. Some of the main materials that can support character building are:

a. Aqidah (Faith)

Learning about faith in God, angels, His books, His messengers, and the last day is very important to form a strong character. Belief in life after death and the concept of destiny in Islam can provide peace of mind and motivation to do good.

b. Worship

Worship is not only a ritual obligation, but it is also a means to form a disciplined and responsible personal character. Prayers, fasting, zakat, and hajj teach perseverance, patience, sincerity, and social care.

c. Morals (Ethics)

Morals or ethics in Islam teach students about good behavior, such as respecting parents, keeping their words, being humble, and respecting differences. Learning about morals is very important to create individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also mature in behavior.

d. Islamic History

Studying the life history of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions can provide examples in everyday life. The leadership of the Prophet Muhammad in preaching, as well as the struggle of the Companions in upholding truth and justice, inspires students to emulate the traits of leadership that are full of wisdom and courage.

3. Effective Learning Methods in Character Building

To achieve optimal character building goals, PAI learning methods must be implemented in an interesting and effective way. Some methods that can be used are:

a. Exemplary Method

Teachers as role models are very influential in student character building. By providing good examples in attitude and behavior, teachers can motivate students to follow Islamic values in their daily lives.

b. Discussion and Lecture Method

Discussions and lectures can be used to explore students' understanding of Islamic values. By discussing, students can develop critical thinking and understand the importance of noble morals in life.

c. Practical Method

Hands-on practice, such as social activities (sharing with others, zakat, infaq), is also an effective way to teach Islamic values in real life. It helps students understand the importance of caring for others.

d. Reinforcement Method with Prayer and Dhikr

Inviting students to pray and dhikr can also help them develop better character, by making worship a means to get closer to Allah and ask for His guidance.

4. Challenges in Character Building Through Islamic Education

Islamic Religious Education in character building does not always run smoothly. Some of the challenges faced include:

a. Influence of Technology and Social Media

Today's young generation is greatly affected by the development of technology and social media. Information that circulates quickly, both positive and negative, can affect students' behavior and mindset. Therefore, Islamic religious education needs to provide clear guidance so that students are not trapped in the wrong information.

b. Social and Cultural Changes

Rapid changes in social values can also affect students' character formation. For this reason, Islamic religious education must be able to adapt to the times without leaving the core values of Islamic teachings.

c. Lack of Exemplary in Social Environment

Poor role models from adults or the surrounding community can affect the process of student character building. Therefore, the role of family, school, and society in providing good examples is very important.

B. Generation Z Character and the Challenges of the Times

Generation Z is a generation that is highly exposed to digital technology and social media, which has the potential to affect their character formation. According to Alwi (2021), the character of generation Z tends to be more individualistic and lacks a strong sense of community. Therefore, it is important for Islamic religious education to provide a solid moral foundation so that generation Z can develop into individuals who are responsible, have empathy, and can maintain harmonious social relationships.

1. Characteristics of Generation Z

Some of the main characteristics that stand out in Generation Z include:

a. Digital Natives

Generation Z grew up in a world connected to the internet and digital devices from an early age. They are more familiar with technology such as smartphones, tablets, and social media than previous generations. Technology is an integral part of their lives, from finding information to interacting with their friends.

b. Multitasking and Fast Adapting

Gen Z is used to working on several things at once. They are often able to multitask, for example while watching videos, playing games and communicating through social media. This ability makes them highly adaptive to change and quick to learn new things, especially in terms of technology and information.

c. Independence and Entrepreneurship

Most of Gen Z has a high entrepreneurial spirit. They tend to be more independent and not afraid to try new things, including doing business online. Many of them have started businesses since they were young, such as becoming content creators on social media, selling goods online, or investing.

d. Social and Concerned about Global Issues

Gen Z is very sensitive to social and global issues such as climate change, social justice, and gender equality. They are often involved in various social movements, use social media to voice their opinions, and support positive change initiatives in the world.

e. Mental Health and Life Balance

One important focus for Gen Z is mental well-being. While they are more open to talking about mental health issues, they also often feel pressured by the high expectations of social media and the real world. Therefore, work-life balance is a priority for many Gen Zs.

f. Diversity and Inclusivity

Gen Z highly values diversity and inclusivity. They are more open to differences in terms of race, religion, culture and sexual orientation. For them, a world that is inclusive and respects differences is a very important value.

C. Islamic Religious Education in the Independent Curriculum

The Independent Curriculum gives teachers the freedom to design learning that is more flexible and adaptive to the times. This provides a great opportunity to integrate Islamic religious education in various subjects and activities, not just limited to religious subjects. According to Sutrisno (2023), in the context of the Independent Curriculum, Islamic religious education can prioritize a more contextual, relevant, and character-based approach, which helps students understand Islamic values in a more practical and applicable manner in everyday life.

1. Objectives of Islamic Religious Education in the Independent Curriculum

Islamic Religious Education in the Independent Curriculum aims to:

- Shaping the Character and Personality of Learners: By instilling religious values contained in the Qur'an, Hadith, and other Islamic teachings, students are expected to become pious, noble, and virtuous individuals.
- Improving Contextualized Understanding of Religion: PAI does not only focus on ritual and normative aspects, but also invites students to understand Islamic teachings in the context of daily life and the challenges of the times.
- Encouraging Independence and Creativity in Religion: The Independent Curriculum gives teachers and students the freedom to explore Islamic teachings more independently and creatively, with a more applicable approach.

2. Islamic Religious Education Materials in the Independent Curriculum

Islamic Religious Education materials in the Independent Curriculum are more directed at creating a balance between teaching religious knowledge and building applicable character. Some of the main materials that are still taught in this context are:

a. Aqidah (Faith)

The material on aqidah teaches students about basic beliefs in Islam, such as faith in Allah, angels, His books, His messengers, and destiny. This learning aims to build a strong spiritual foundation for students.

b. Worship

PAI teaches worship procedures such as prayer, zakat, fasting, and hajj. However, in the Independent Curriculum, this material is taught not only in theory, but also by providing space for practice and reflection so that students can feel the depth of the meaning of worship.

c. Morals (Ethics)

Moral learning aims to shape students' characters so that they have good manners. Values such as honesty, compassion, tolerance, discipline, and a sense of responsibility are taught concretely through examples and direct experience.

d. Fiqh (Islamic Law)

Fiqh material teaches students about Islamic laws that regulate life, both in worship, muamalah (social interaction), and jinayah (criminal law). In the Independent Curriculum, fiqh is taught with a more applicable approach, for example through simulations of worship activities and social interactions in accordance with Islamic principles.

e. Islamic History

Islamic history is an important material to help students understand the journey of Islam and the role of Muslims in world history. The Independent Curriculum encourages learning Islamic history that is not only factual, but also relevant to the context of modern life.

D. Challenges and Opportunities for PAI in the Independent Curriculum

1. Challenges

- a. Limited Trained Teachers: Teachers who are not familiar with flexible and project-based approaches may face difficulties in implementing the Independent Curriculum.
- b. Limited Resources: In some areas, facilities to support more interactive and creative approaches in PAI are limited.
- c. Technological Challenges: While technology provides wider learning opportunities, the digital divide in many areas can be a barrier to accessing more modern learning resources.

2. The Role of Islamic Religious Education in Facing Radicalization and Intolerance

In an increasingly plural society, radicalization and intolerance are serious problems. Islamic religious education has an important role in building awareness about tolerance, religious moderation, and respect for differences. According to Rasyid (2022), good Islamic religious education can equip generation Z with a moderate understanding of religion, and teach the importance of coexisting with people of other religions.

a. How Can Islamic Religious Education Prevent Radicalization?

Radicalization often stems from a narrow, misguided or even misused understanding of religion. Proper Islamic Religious Education can play an important role in preventing radicalization in several ways:

1) Teaching Moderate and Balanced Islam (Wasathiyah)

Islamic Religious Education can emphasize the moderate, balanced, and non-extreme teachings of Islam. Wasathiyah Islam teaches that religion is a way of life that brings peace, unity and goodness to mankind, not violence or coercion. Instilling balanced Islamic values helps students understand that Islam does not support violence or intolerance.

2) Emphasizing the Importance of Respecting Differences

Islamic Religious Education should teach that differences are part of God's will that must be accepted with respect. Verses of the Qur'an and hadith that emphasize the importance of tolerance and respect for differences in religion, race and culture need to be taught from an early age. Thus, students can cultivate mutual respect and avoid intolerant actions.

3) Equipping Students with a Comprehensive Understanding of Islam

A comprehensive understanding of religion, which includes aqidah, worship, morals, and fiqh, will prevent students from partial or misguided understanding that is often misused by radical groups. Learning based on correct knowledge of religious teachings, rather than narrow and erroneous interpretations, can protect students from potential radicalization.

4) Teaching an Understanding of Interfaith Tolerance

In Islam, respect for other religions and coexistence in peace are very important values. Islamic religious education must convey that Islam teaches tolerance not only

towards fellow Muslims, but also towards people of other religions, with mutual respect and peaceful coexistence.

b. What is the Role of Islamic Religious Education in Fostering Tolerance?

Tolerance is one of the main values in building a harmonious and peaceful society. Islamic Religious Education can play a big role in fostering tolerance among students. Some ways that can be done include:

a) Fostering an Understanding of Islamic Teachings that Uphold Humanity

Islamic Religious Education teaches that every human being, regardless of religious background, race, and ethnicity, has the same dignity before God. Islam teaches to treat others with fairness, compassion, and without discrimination. Teaching students about the importance of respecting human rights and upholding human values is the basis for building tolerance.

b) Teaching the Principle of Justice in Islam

Islam strongly emphasizes the principle of justice (al-'adl) that applies to all human beings. In a social context, justice means respecting differences and giving equal rights to all people without discrimination. Islamic Religious Education can teach that in Islam, justice includes the rights of others, including those with different religions or views.

c) Learning that Encourages Intergenerational and Interfaith Cooperation

Through extracurricular activities and social projects based on religious values, students can interact with friends from different backgrounds, both in terms of religion and culture. Learning that involves this cooperation encourages students to be more open and accepting of differences, and builds an understanding that differences are wealth that enriches life together.

d) Using the Example of the Prophet Muhammad in Da'wah

The Prophet Muhammad SAW is the best example in interacting with other people, both those of the same religion and those of different religions. Islamic Religious Education can teach the stories of the Prophet's life that emphasize the values of tolerance, peace, and mutual respect. Prophet Muhammad SAW always prioritized dialogue and peace in dealing with differences.

c. How does Islamic Religious Education Shape Character to Overcome Radicalization and Intolerance?

Islamic Religious Education plays an important role in shaping the character of students who not only master religious knowledge but also have a good attitude in social life. The character built through Islamic religious education can prevent students from acts of extremism and intolerant attitudes.

a) Character Building Based on Islamic Morals

Morals are the core of Islamic teachings. Through Islamic education, students are taught to emulate the character of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, such as compassion, honesty, patience, humility, and avoiding acts of violence. These characters become a strong fortress in the face of radicalism and intolerance.

b) Education on the Importance of Unity and Unity

Islam teaches that Muslims are a unity (ummatah wahidah), which has a common goal to achieve goodness and happiness in the world and the hereafter. Islamic Religious Education can instill this understanding so that students are not easily provoked by ideologies that divide and destroy national unity.

c) Teaching the Nature of Tawadhu (Humble)

One of the important characters in Islam is tawadhu or humble. Islamic Religious Education teaches the importance of respecting others, not feeling superior to others, and not demeaning others. This trait prevents the emergence of fanatical attitudes that can lead to intolerance and radicalization.

d) Teaching Social Responsibility

Islam also emphasizes the importance of caring for others. Islamic Religious Education can teach students to feel responsible for their social circumstances, help those in need, and cooperate in creating peace in society. It encourages an attitude of empathy and concern for the welfare of others, which reduces the likelihood of exclusive and radical attitudes forming.

CONCLUSION

Islamic religious education plays a very important role in shaping the character of generation Z, especially in the digital era and globalization which is full of challenges. The Independent Curriculum provides wider opportunities to develop Islamic religious education with a more relevant and contextual approach. By instilling strong Islamic moral and ethical values, generation Z can be equipped with good characters, such as responsibility, empathy, and a sense of community. In addition, Islamic religious education is also very important in dealing with social problems such as radicalization and intolerance. Therefore, it is important for all education stakeholders to continue to innovate and integrate Islamic values in every aspect of learning, in order to create a generation with quality and noble character. Cultural changes, social values and technological influences affect their character development. Therefore, Islamic religious education, with its moral and ethical values, is one of the most important aspects in shaping the character of Generation Z, especially in the era of the independent curriculum.

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