



STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPING ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN IT VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS AL-IZHAR PEKANBARU: SOLUTIONS FOR OVERCOMING PROBLEMS AND FINDING DEVELOPMENT MODELS ISLAMIC EDUCATION

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Abstract

This study examines the challenges and solutions in the development of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at Al-Izhar IT Vocational School Pekanbaru, which is driven by the urgent need to improve the quality and relevance of Islamic education in the modern educational environment. Previous research has highlighted limitations in teaching methods and resources in Islamic Religious Education, which are often lacking in practical application and Character building aspects. However, this research has mostly focused on theoretical discussions, with little emphasis on practical and context-specific solutions. Therefore, this study aims to bridge this gap by presenting a practical model for PAI that answers cognitive and affective needs, which is in line with the contextual demands of Al-Izhar IT Vocational School Pekanbaru. This research uses a qualitative case study approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the unique challenges facing schools. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with teachers, students, and school administrators, supported by classroom observation and document analysis. These triangulation data sources are analyzed thematically to identify core issues in PAI delivery and to develop relevant solutions. The findings of the study revealed that the main challenges include limited classroom time allocation, traditional lecture-based teaching approaches, and inadequate educational resources. These factors collectively inhibit student engagement and limit the effectiveness of internalizing Islamic values. In response to these challenges, this study proposes the implementation of better project-based learning and teacher training programs. Project-based learning provides students with active learning opportunities that connect Islamic teachings with real-life applications, thus fostering a stronger understanding and practice of Islamic values. In addition, targeted professional development for teachers equips them with innovative pedagogical skills and technology integration strategies. The novelty of this research lies in its context-specific approach, which offers a practical model that can be a reference for other educational institutions that want to optimize Islamic Education.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji tantangan dan solusi dalam pengembangan Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) di SMK IT Al-Izhar Pekanbaru, yang didorong oleh kebutuhan mendesak untuk meningkatkan kualitas dan relevansi pendidikan Islam dalam lingkungan pendidikan modern. Penelitian sebelumnya telah menyoroti keterbatasan dalam metode dan sumber daya pengajaran dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam, yang seringkali kurang mendalam dalam penerapan praktis dan aspek pembentukan karakter. Akan tetapi, penelitian ini sebagian besar berfokus pada pembahasan teoritis, dengan sedikit penekanan pada solusi praktis dan spesifik konteks. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjembatani kesenjangan ini dengan menghadirkan model praktis untuk PAI yang menjawab kebutuhan kognitif dan afektif, yang selaras dengan tuntutan kontekstual SMK IT Al-Izhar Pekanbaru. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif untuk

memperoleh pemahaman mendalam tentang tantangan unik yang dihadapi sekolah. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan guru, siswa, dan administrator sekolah, didukung oleh observasi kelas dan analisis dokumen. Sumber data triangulasi ini dianalisis secara tematis untuk mengidentifikasi isu-isu inti dalam penyampaian PAI dan untuk mengembangkan solusi yang relevan. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa tantangan utama meliputi alokasi waktu kelas yang terbatas, pendekatan pengajaran berbasis ceramah tradisional, dan sumber daya pendidikan yang tidak memadai. Faktor-faktor ini secara kolektif menghambat keterlibatan siswa dan membatasi efektivitas internalisasi nilai-nilai Islam. Sebagai respons terhadap tantangan ini, penelitian ini mengusulkan penerapan pembelajaran berbasis proyek dan program pelatihan guru yang lebih baik. Pembelajaran berbasis proyek memberi siswa kesempatan belajar aktif yang menghubungkan ajaran Islam dengan aplikasi kehidupan nyata, sehingga menumbuhkan pemahaman dan praktik nilai-nilai Islam yang lebih kuat. Selain itu, pengembangan profesional yang terarah bagi guru membekali mereka dengan keterampilan pedagogis yang inovatif dan strategi integrasi teknologi. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada pendekatannya yang spesifik terhadap konteks, yang menawarkan model praktis yang dapat menjadi referensi bagi lembaga pendidikan lain yang ingin mengoptimalkan Pendidikan Islam.

INTRODUCTION (Tahoma 10, Bold, Line Spacing 1.15)

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays an important role in forming the character and morals of students in Indonesia, especially in the context of secondary education. As a compulsory subject, PAI is expected to be able to develop students' understanding of Islamic values and help them apply them in everyday life. However, in its implementation in the field, PAI often faces a number of challenges that affect the effectiveness of its learning (Mei et al., 2024; Rahmasari et al., 2024; Sri Indriyani, NerianiDzakirah Nur AssyifaMaya Wulan sari, 2023). At Al-Izhar IT Vocational School Pekanbaru, for example, these challenges include limited teaching time, lack of innovation in learning methods, and limited supporting resources that suit student characteristics (Arya et al., 2024; Isran Bidin, Muhammad Isnaini, Misharti, Wismanto, 2022; Rahmasari et al., 2024; Sri Indriyani, Neriani Dzakirah Nur AssyifaMaya Wulan sari, 2023; Wismanto, Yupidus, Efni Ramli, Ridwan, 2023). Therefore, this research aims to explore the problems that exist in PAI teaching at Al-Izhar IT Vocational School and identify effective development solutions.

Previous research regarding PAI teaching in secondary schools has shown that there are several main challenges, such as an overly theoretical approach and a lack of student involvement in the learning process. A study by Ahmad (2021) highlights that PAI teaching in secondary schools often does not actively involve students, so that students have difficulty understanding the material in depth. Another study by Sulaiman and Yasin (2022) found that most PAI teachers tend to use lecture methods which are less effective in stimulating student involvement. This has an impact on limiting the development of Islamic values in students which should be the main goal of PAI.

However, previous research has several weaknesses, especially in its approach which tends to be general and less focused on specific case studies. These studies often only investigate general problems in PAI teaching without offering concrete and applicable solutions. For example, Ahmad's (2021) research only describes the problems without providing a specific curriculum development strategy to overcome these issues. In addition, several previous studies have not considered specific factors from certain educational institutions, so the resulting findings and recommendations are general and less applicable.

This research offers the advantage of using a case study approach that focuses on Al-Izhar IT Vocational School Pekanbaru. By examining in depth the specific conditions and

challenges faced by this institution, it is hoped that this research can provide solutions that are more relevant and can be implemented. This case study approach also allows researchers to study the learning practices implemented at Al-Izhar IT Vocational School, including innovations that have been successful and problems that require improvement. Therefore, this research not only identifies problems, but also offers solutions designed to suit the needs of the institution.

In addition, this research provides a new contribution to the field of Islamic Education with an emphasis on a development approach that is participatory and oriented to student needs. This participatory approach, which involves students actively in the learning process, is an element that is often overlooked in previous research. Through in-depth observations and interviews, this research will develop teaching methods that encourage student participation and make them active subjects in learning. This is expected to increase the effectiveness of PAI learning at Al-Izhar IT Vocational School Pekanbaru and help students understand and practice Islamic values.

Furthermore, this research will examine institutional factors that influence the implementation of PAI at Al-Izhar IT Vocational School, such as administrative support, available resources, and teacher qualifications and training. These factors are often ignored in previous research, even though they have a significant influence on the success of PAI implementation. By exploring these aspects, it is hoped that this research can provide more comprehensive and applicable recommendations, including strategies that focus not only on teaching methods but also on increasing institutional support.

Another advantage of this research is the ability to bridge the gap between theory and practice in PAI teaching. With an approach based on empirical data from Al-Izhar IT Vocational School, it is hoped that this research will be able to present a new perspective that can inspire other schools with similar conditions to implement more effective changes in PAI teaching. It is also hoped that the findings from this case study will provide new insights for the development of Islamic education policies at the high school level.

By considering the challenges and weaknesses in previous research, this research aims to provide concrete recommendations for the development of Islamic religious education at Al-Izhar IT Vocational School Pekanbaru. These recommendations will be designed to address specific institutional needs and provide clear guidance for PAI educators, school administrators, and other stakeholders. Through the development of relevant learning approaches and adequate support from the school, it is hoped that Islamic religious education can achieve the goal of forming students' character based on Islamic values (Jakrinur et al., 2024; Mardianto et al., 2024; Muslim et al., 2023a, 2023b; Wismanto, Alhairi, Lasmiadi, A Mualif, 2023)

Thus, this research not only functions as a problem analysis but also as a solution guide that can help improve the quality of Islamic religious education at Al-Izhar IT Vocational School Pekanbaru. It is hoped that this research can make a significant contribution to the development of PAI that is more effective and applicable in the high school environment, as well as inspiring similar efforts in other educational institutions.

METHODS

This research method uses a qualitative approach with a case study design which aims to understand in depth the challenges and solutions in the development of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at Al-Izhar IT Vocational School Pekanbaru. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows in-depth exploration of complex phenomena in a specific context, namely the PAI teaching process in the school environment. This case study at an educational institution allows researchers to identify unique factors that influence the success

and obstacles in implementing PAI, providing deeper insight compared to quantitative methods which tend to be generalist in nature.

Data was collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with PAI teachers, students and school management to get a comprehensive perspective regarding PAI teaching at Al-Izhar IT Vocational School. Participatory observation in the classroom allows researchers to see directly the dynamics of teaching and the methods used by teachers. In addition, document analysis, including the PAI curriculum, learning plans, and learning evaluation reports, was carried out to identify alignment between curriculum objectives and teaching practices. Triangulation techniques are used to ensure data validity through comparison of various sources of information obtained.

The data collected was analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. The analysis process was carried out through coding stages, identification of main themes, and interpretation of results in line with the research objectives. Through this method, it is hoped that a comprehensive understanding can be produced regarding the challenges in teaching PAI as well as innovative solutions that are relevant and applicable for Al-Izhar IT Vocational School Pekanbaru. It is hoped that this research will contribute to the development of PAI teaching methods in high schools, both in the local context and as a reference for other educational institutions facing similar challenges.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research reveals several main challenges in teaching Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at Al-Izhar IT Vocational School Pekanbaru, as well as proposed solutions to overcome these problems. From the results of in-depth interviews with teachers, students and school management, it was identified that one of the main obstacles was the limited time allocated for PAI subjects (Muslim *et al.*, 2023a, 2023b). As part of the national curriculum, PAI has limited lesson hours, so the material cannot be presented in depth. Teachers revealed that they often had to speed up the delivery of material to match curriculum targets, which resulted in students' low understanding of the concepts being taught (Wismanto *et al.*, 2021).

Apart from that, classroom observations show that the teaching methods used still tend to be conventional, such as lectures and simple questions and answers. This approach has proven to be less effective in actively engaging students and in building deep understanding. This teacher-centered method makes students passive recipients, so they are less able to develop basic thinking or apply Islamic values in everyday life (Fadhila *et al.*, 2023; Fardilah *et al.*, 2023; Mulia *et al.*, 2023). Teachers are aware of these limitations, but find it difficult to implement more interactive methods due to limited training in modern pedagogy.

Apart from teaching methods, another challenge identified is limited access to supporting learning resources (Junaidi, Zalisman, Yusnimar Yusri, Khairul Amin, 2021; Khairul Amin, Imam subaweh, Taupik Prihatin, Yusnimar Yusri, 2022). Al-Izhar IT Vocational School has several sources of textbooks and digital open materials, but the number is still limited and the variety is insufficient to meet student needs. This causes PAI learning to be less contextual and unable to touch various aspects of life that students face. Some students stated that they often find it difficult to understand the relevance of the material taught to the real life situations they face every day.

Further analysis of the curriculum documents shows that the PAI material used at Al-Izhar IT Vocational School is in accordance with the standards set by the government. However, this curriculum tends to focus on cognitive aspects and provides less space for the development of students' affective and psychomotor aspects. This overly theoretical curriculum is considered to be less supportive of the objectives of PAI education, which

should include character development and a deep understanding of Islamic teachings (Asror et al., 2021; Naila Hafizah, Wardah Yuni Artika, Sri Mei Ulfani, Ratih Kumala Sari, 2024; Rusli Ibrahim, Asmarika, Agus Salim, Wismanto, n.d.; Syukri, Abdul Rouf, Wismanto, 2023; Wismanto, W., Marni, S., Azhari, MW, & Sukmawati, 2024)

The proposed solutions based on these findings include a project-based learning approach and active collaboration between teachers and students. The project-based approach allows students to be more actively involved in learning through activities that are relevant to real life, such as social projects that reflect Islamic values. In this way, students not only learn theory but also teach Islamic teachings in real action, which can help strengthen understanding and internalization of these values.

From the teacher's side, this research suggests further training regarding innovative and technology-based teaching methods. Teachers at Al-Izhar IT Vocational School need to be equipped with new skills in using technology and student-focused learning approaches. For example, the integration of digital technology in teaching can provide a variety of learning resources for students and facilitate their access to relevant information. This training is also expected to increase teacher confidence in trying new, more participatory methods.

In addition, increasing educational resources, especially in terms of relevant textbooks and access to digital open materials, is an important factor that school management needs to pay attention to (Husin et al., 2023; Syukri, Abdul Rouf, Wismanto, 2023). Al-Izhar IT Vocational School can collaborate with educational institutions or local governments to obtain assistance in providing adequate learning resources. Support from school management in this case will have a significant positive impact on PAI learning, especially in providing variations that can support contextual learning.

To ensure that these changes have a real impact, this research recommends regular learning evaluations. This evaluation can be done by measuring student understanding before and after the new method is implemented, as well as through a survey of student satisfaction with the new PAI teaching method. The use of formative evaluation allows teachers to make necessary adjustments during the learning process, so that learning effectiveness can continue to be improved.

The discussion of this research also reveals that character development through PAI cannot be done only through formal classes. Al-Izhar IT Vocational School should consider integrating Islamic values in extracurricular activities, such as social activities and community service (Mei et al., 2024; Muslim et al., 2023b). This activity can be an effective medium for instilling Islamic values directly in students, providing practical experience in applying Islamic teachings, and helping students see the relevance of PAI material in real life.

This research shows that a holistic approach in teaching PAI can be a long-term solution to overcome existing problems. A holistic approach that includes cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects will enable overall student development, not only in terms of theoretical understanding but also in character and social skills. This research recommends that other schools with similar challenges consider similar implementation approaches.

As a unique contribution, this research succeeds in presenting a PAI learning model that focuses on practical relevance for students. The novelty of this research lies in the integration of project-based learning which is specifically adapted to local needs at Al-Izhar IT Vocational School Pekanbaru. With this approach, students gain in-depth and relevant learning experiences, which are expected to be able to form a strong understanding of Islamic values and apply them in real life.

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CONCLUSION

This research highlights that teaching Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at Al-Izhar IT Vocational School Pekanbaru faces significant challenges, including limited time allocation, conventional teaching methods, and limited learning resources. This challenge hinders the achievement of the main goal of PAI education, namely not only providing theoretical understanding, but also forming students' Islamic character and being able to apply religious teachings in everyday life. Teacher-centered teaching approaches and curricula that focus on cognitive aspects are proven to be less supportive of active student involvement and the development of their affective and psychomotor skills.

This research provides practical solutions through the application of project-based learning methods and the development of teacher training programs to improve their pedagogical skills. By implementing project-based learning, students can be more involved in the learning process through relevant and contextual activities, so they are able to apply Islamic values directly in life. Teacher training on innovative methods is also proposed as a strategic step to enrich learning approaches, increase teacher confidence, and facilitate the integration of technology in teaching.

The main novelty of this research is the development of a project-based PAI learning model that is relevant to the local context at Al-Izhar IT Vocational School Pekanbaru. This

model not only increases student involvement in learning, but also provides a meaningful learning experience in line with the needs of the modern era. By offering this innovative solution, it is hoped that this research can become a reference for other educational institutions that want to optimize PAI teaching more effectively and sustainably.