

## **Islamic Religious Education Learning Strategy in Building Student Character**

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### ***Abstract***

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays an important role in the formation of student character, because the character built based on religious values will form a noble person. This article aims to examine various PAI learning strategies that can support students' character building, focusing on contextual learning strategy approach, value-based learning, constructivism, exemplary approach (uswah hasanah), and integration with Merdeka Curriculum. Through literature studies, this research analyzes the application of each strategy in the context of Islamic education and its impact on strengthening student character. The results of the study show that these approaches are effective in strengthening students' understanding of religious values, as well as developing students' moral, social, and spiritual character. The article also provides recommendations for the improvement of teachers' competencies, the utilization of technology in learning, as well as the importance of collaboration with parents and the community to create an environment that supports students' overall character development.

**Keywords:** Learning Strategy, Islamic Religious Education, Character Building

### **INTRODUCTION**

Education is a fundamental means in the process of developing a complete human being, both in terms of intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual. In the context of Indonesian national education, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) occupies a strategic position because it is not only tasked with transferring religious knowledge, but also forming the character and morals of students so that they become people who are faithful, pious, and have noble morals according to Islamic values. This is in line with the objectives of national education as stated in Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, namely developing the potential of students to become people who believe and are pious to God Almighty and have noble morals. (Ristanti et al., 2020).

However, reality shows that the challenges of character education today are increasingly complex. The development of information technology, the influence of global culture, and the crisis of role models in various sectors of life have caused the erosion of moral and ethical values among the younger generation. This

phenomenon is a serious challenge for the world of education, especially in the context of Islamic Religious Education teaching which should be able to provide real contributions to the formation of students' personalities as a whole.

In order to answer these challenges, learning strategies are needed that are not only cognitive and informative, but also transformative and internalization. Learning strategies used in Islamic Religious Education must be able to form moral awareness, spiritual values, and attitudes and behaviors that reflect Islamic teachings in everyday life. Various approaches and learning models such as contextual teaching and learning, value-based learning, constructivist approaches, and character-based education have been widely studied as potential strategies in Islamic religious education.

However, many Islamic Religious Education teachers still rely on traditional lecture methods and dogmatic approaches, which do not encourage active participation from students. As a result, religious learning becomes emotionally dry and does not leave an impression on student behavior. This is evidence that the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education in shaping character is highly dependent on the learning strategies used by educators in the classroom.

Based on this background, this article aims to conduct a theoretical study of various Islamic Religious Education learning strategies that can contribute to the formation of student character. The approach used is a literature study (library research), namely by reviewing and analyzing various relevant library sources, both in the form of books, scientific journals, research reports, and education policy documents. This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the right learning strategy in Islamic Religious Education can be a means of forming effective and contextual character in the modern era.

Through this study, it is hoped that critical thinking and theoretical solutions will emerge that can be used as a reference by teachers, curriculum developers, and education policy makers in designing Islamic Religious Education learning that is not only academically meaningful, but also has a moral and spiritual impact on students.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study uses a literature study method (library research), which is a research approach carried out through tracing, collecting, and critical analysis of various written sources that are relevant to the topic of study. The literature study aims to explore and synthesize theories, concepts, and previous research findings in order to build a strong and systematic foundation of thought in understanding the learning strategy of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in forming student character.

The data sources in this study consist of secondary literature including: national and international scientific journals, academic articles, reference books, research reports, and online sources from official and trusted sites such as ministry portals, academic databases (Google Scholar, ResearchGate, DOAJ, etc.), and educational institution publications. The literature reviewed was selected based on relevance to the focus of the study, recency (published within the last ten years), and academic credibility.

The data collection procedure is carried out with the following steps: (1) determining search keywords such as PAI learning strategies, character building, and Islamic religious education; (2) searching literature through scientific search engines and digital libraries; (3) selecting sources based on inclusion criteria; and (4) organizing data into thematic categories.

Data analysis was conducted using a content analysis approach, which is a qualitative analysis technique that aims to identify, clarify, and interpret the content of texts in the literature being studied. Researchers grouped data based on main themes, such as types of learning strategies, teaching principles in Islamic Religious Education, and their implications for the formation of student character. The data was then synthesized to find patterns and relationships between concepts that support theoretical arguments in the discussion.

By using this literature study method, the research results are expected to be able to provide conceptual and practical contributions in developing PAI learning strategies that are more contextual, participatory, and relevant to the needs of student character formation in the modern era.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A study of various literature shows that learning strategies in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) have a very strategic position in forming the character of students as a whole. Character education is an integral part of Islamic education that not only focuses on cognitive aspects, but also on the formation of attitudes, behaviors, and personalities that reflect the values of Islamic teachings.(Elmontadzery et al., 2024). This is in line with the concept of ta'dib in Islamic education, which emphasizes the ethical and moral dimensions in the educational process.

Learning strategies in this context are understood as systematic approaches designed by teachers to achieve learning objectives that are not only academic, but also spiritually and socially transformative. From the results of the literature search, five main approaches were found that are often put forward by experts and researchers in relation to Islamic Religious Education learning that is oriented towards the formation of student character, namely: contextual learning strategies, value-based learning, constructivist learning, exemplary approaches, and integration of learning strategies with the Merdeka Curriculum policy.

### 1. Contextual Learning Strategy

Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) strategy places real experiences as a means to understand religious values. In Islamic Religious Education learning, this strategy encourages students to relate the subject matter to the reality of everyday life, whether at home, school, or in the social environment. As stated by Johnson, CTL allows students to learn through direct involvement in relevant life contexts, so that religious values are not only understood theoretically, but also experienced and practiced.(Febriana, 2021).

Contextual learning can be implemented through case studies, social projects based on religious values, role-playing, and reflection on religious experiences. In the context of character building, this approach has been proven to be able to instill values such as responsibility, empathy, and solidarity more effectively because students experience and experience these values in real situations.(Qowim et al., 2024).

## 2. Value-Based Learning

Value-based learning is a strategy that explicitly makes values the core of the learning process. In Islamic Religious Education, this means that each subject matter is not only delivered as knowledge, but is also linked to core values such as honesty, justice, compassion, tolerance, and responsibility. This strategy can be integrated through value discussion methods, ethical reflection, and social service projects.(Nurjunaedah, 2014).

Lickona states that effective character education involves three main components: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Thus, value-based learning must be able to touch the cognitive (knowledge of values), affective (appreciation of values), and psychomotor (practice of values in daily life) aspects. This strategy encourages students to not only know the teachings of Islam, but also to feel its meaning and realize it in real behavior.(Saiful et al., 2022).

## 3. Constructivist Learning Strategies

Constructivist strategies place learners as active subjects in constructing their own knowledge through experience, social interaction, and reflection. In the context of Islamic Religious Education, this approach leads to the creation of a dialogical space where students can ask, discuss, and explore religious values in the context of their own lives. The theory of social constructivism developed by Vygotsky provides the basis for this strategy, where social and cultural interactions become important means in the formation of religious understanding and attitudes.(Sayfullooh et al., tt).

In this strategy, the teacher acts as a facilitator who guides students in a reflective and participatory learning process.(Ramansyah, 2013). With this approach, religious learning becomes more contextual, critical, and meaningful, so that character formation does not occur in an indoctrinating manner, but rather through a natural and profound internalization process.

For example, in the study of worship or manners in Islam, students can be involved in projects to plan and implement social activities based on Islamic teachings, such as providing assistance to those in need. This kind

of learning encourages students to connect religious values with concrete actions in their daily lives, so that character formation based on direct understanding and experience becomes more effective.(Anida et al., 2024).

#### 4. Exemplary Approach (Uswah Hasanah)

One of the most classic and essential methods in Islamic education is the exemplary approach. In many literatures, it is explained that the process of character formation in Islamic education is closely related to the presence of exemplary figures who are real examples for students. The Prophet Muhammad SAW is the main model of character education, as mentioned in QS. Al-Ahzab: 21, "Indeed in the Messenger of Allah you have a good example to follow."(Sanusi et al., 2024).

In the context of formal education, Islamic Religious Education teachers are expected to be role models in speech, behavior, moral integrity, and social responsibility. The teacher's exemplary behavior is not only in the context of classroom learning, but also in everyday life in the school environment. Therefore, the exemplary approach becomes an implicit but very powerful strategy in character formation through Islamic Religious Education.(Zulwiddi et al., 2024).

Islamic Religious Education teachers who are consistent in providing exemplary examples will create a profound educational atmosphere and have a long-term impact on students' characters. Exemplary behavior is not only about oral teachings, but more about behavior that is seen in everyday life. This is what makes the uswah hasanah approach very relevant and effective in character building through Islamic Religious Education.

#### 5. Integration of Learning Strategies with Independent Curriculum

The Independent Curriculum implemented in the Indonesian education system since 2022 provides ample space for teachers to design flexible, contextual learning that focuses on strengthening character. In this curriculum, the dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile, which include

religiosity, mutual cooperation, independence, and integrity, are very much in line with the objectives of PAI learning.(Amalia, 2022).

Through project-based learning strategies and inquiry activities, Islamic Religious Education teachers can design learning activities that not only emphasize cognitive understanding, but also provide direct experience in the application of Islamic values. This strategy allows students to develop character actively through involvement in activities that are meaningful and relevant to their lives.(Lutfiyani et al., 2024).

For example, Islamic Religious Education teachers can design projects where students work together to plan and implement social activities such as providing assistance to orphans or underprivileged communities, which also teaches the value of sharing (zakah) in Islam. Projects like this not only increase students' understanding of religious teachings, but also develop social skills and the ability to work in a team.

The results of the literature review show that an effective PAI learning strategy in character building is a strategy that is able to combine cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects in a dialogic, contextual, and applicative learning atmosphere. There is no single most ideal strategy, but a combination of approaches, especially those based on values, contextual, and based on role models, is an effective formula and in accordance with the values of Islamic education.

In addition to the methodological approach, non-strategic factors such as teacher professionalism, school culture, and family involvement also play an important role in the success of character education through Islamic Religious Education learning. Therefore, the ideal learning strategy is a strategy that is adjusted to the context, the needs of students, and supported by a conducive and Islamic learning environment.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion that has been done, it can be concluded that learning strategies in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) have a very important role in shaping students' character. The formation of character based on Islamic religious values cannot be separated from the application of appropriate learning strategies. In this context, contextual learning strategies, value-based learning, constructivist learning strategies, exemplary approaches (*uswah hasanah*), and integration with the Merdeka Curriculum all provide very significant contributions in shaping students who are not only academically intelligent, but also have strong character, noble character, and have spiritual depth.

Contextual learning strategies are highly effective in linking instructional content with students' real-life experiences, enabling them to better understand and apply Islamic values in their everyday lives. Value-based learning emphasizes the inculcation and internalization of Islamic moral and ethical principles, transforming these values from mere theoretical concepts into practical guides for behavior. In addition, constructivist strategies highlight the active participation of students in constructing their own knowledge through experiential learning and reflective thinking, thereby deepening their comprehension and application of religious values in both personal and social contexts. Another essential method is the Exemplary Approach (*Uswah Hasanah*), which is a cornerstone of Islamic education. This approach underlines the critical role of teachers as moral exemplars whose behavior and attitudes embody noble character, inspiring students to emulate these virtues in their own lives. Furthermore, the integration of Islamic Religious Education with the Independent Curriculum offers greater flexibility in designing contextual and project-based learning experiences. These innovations support the holistic development of students' character in alignment with the *Pancasila* learner profile. Collectively, the implementation of these diverse strategies fosters a comprehensive educational environment that not only prioritizes cognitive achievement but also reinforces the spiritual, moral, and character dimensions of students in accordance with Islamic teachings.

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