

Islamic Religious Education Teachers' Strategies in Increasing Religious Awareness

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ABSTRACT

Religious awareness is very important for students to give direction to a righteous life physically and spiritually. The strategy of Islamic Religious Education teachers plays a role in fostering religious awareness in students so as to form a person with noble character. The research uses a type of qualitative research with a descriptive approach through interviews, observations and documentation and the source of research data is Islamic Religious Education teachers and students of SMK Muhammadiyah 3 Karanganyar. The results of the study show that Islamic Religious Education teachers in increasing religious awareness at SMK Muhammadiyah 3 Karanganyar use several strategies including through the habit of congregational prayer, giving advice through general studies, motivation, and theoretical knowledge applied since 2015 for all students from grades 10, 11 and 12. With the implementation of this strategy, it is hoped that all students will be accustomed to doing worship such as prayer so as to form a person with noble and disciplined character and responsibility. In addition to building character, this strategy aims to give students an understanding that every kindness has a positive impact on themselves and others.

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INTRODUCTION

Religious awareness has an important role in providing a straight direction for students' lives, both physically and spiritually. Religious awareness is able to shape students into individuals with noble character, because it directs students in controlling their desires and guides them to face various problems through relationships with Allah SWT. (Budiman & Frimayanti, 2015). The advancement of the times makes it easier for students to access various technologies freely, especially social media which has a negative impact on students' future, for example promiscuity. So education is needed to reduce negative behavior committed by students. (Muqtadir & Rahim, 2024).

Every school, especially Muhammadiyah, provides a balanced education between general knowledge and religion so that it is responsible for fostering students' religious awareness. (Alfian, Mujiburrahman, & Sukari, 2022) In schools, PAI teachers are tasked with educating and guiding students in living the teachings of Islam. In this case, PAI teachers have strategies or plans to increase students' religious awareness in schools such as through habituation, example and so on. (Wijayanti, 2015).

The PAI teacher strategy also has roles and functions, including: *As a Manager*, teachers play a role in creating an interesting and planned learning environment in encouraging students' awareness to understand Islamic values such as worship practices. *As an Administrator*, the teacher

prepares a learning plan that aims to form students' religious awareness both covering cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects as well as recording and evaluating the development of students' religious attitudes such as the presence of congregational prayers. (Mulyasa, 2018) *As a Supervisor*, teachers provide assistance related to students' shortcomings in worship and morals and evaluate their mistakes in order to build responsibility and manners. *As a Leader*, teachers lead or set a good example for students in school. *As an Innovator*, teachers channel ideas or develop something to be more useful such as animated videos that contain Islamic values to be shown to students with the aim of touching their emotions. *As a Motivator*, teachers encourage and awaken students' awareness through exemplary stories such as the history of the prophets to be used as inspiration. (Wardhayanti & Adolph, 2016).

PAI teachers in carrying out their strategies are often influenced by several factors, namely supporting factors that accelerate the achievement of desired goals such as PAI lessons, cooperation of all schools, and the participation of parents and the community. There are inhibiting factors that slow down the achievement of goals such as limited time, technological advancements, and so on. (Miasyanah, Syafa'ah, Fatmawati, & Nurul.I, 2021). In increasing religious awareness, students are also influenced by internal and external factors. Internal factors come from within the student, while external factors are influenced by the surrounding environment such as family, school or community. (Alfita, 2011) There are aspects that must be fulfilled to form students' awareness in understanding religious teachings, including: affective (feeling of Godliness), conative (experience), and cognitive (belief). By fulfilling these 3 aspects, it can increase religious awareness in students. (Hardjo, 2004)

Several previous studies have shown that there are various strategies used by PAI teachers to increase students' religious awareness. Dahniar's research shows that increasing students' religious awareness can be done with strategies such as value education, counseling, and collaboration between parents and communities. (Dahniar, Pokhrel, & Sakinah, 2024) The research is by Annisa Al Maghirah. He et al, added that through learning Aqidah Akhlak with a direct approach, it can increase religious awareness by means of interactive discussions with students to set a moral example in daily life. (Maghirah, Rahmah, Salsabilla, & Br, 2025) This is strengthened by Novita Hariana Anggraini's research which explains the efforts of PAI teachers through example, motivating, habituating and mentioning supporting and inhibiting factors in fostering religious awareness in grade 11 students at SMAN 1 Kesamben, Blitar. (Anggraini, 2022). Based on the above research, this study aims to describe the strategies of PAI teachers in increasing the religious awareness of students in grades 10, 11, and 12 at SMK Muhammadiyah 3 Karanganyar along with their supporting and inhibiting factors.

The final part of this introduction emphasizes the urgency of research departing from the increasingly complex moral and religious challenges faced by students in the digital era, especially at the vocational high school level. (Sahin, 2013) This condition demands the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers not only as material teachers, but also as guides and role models in fostering students' religious awareness through planned and sustainable strategies. This research is important to study because students' religious awareness cannot grow instantly, but through a consistent process of habituation, experience, and mentoring in the school environment.

The novelty of this research lies in the comprehensive disclosure of the strategies of Islamic Religious Education teachers that not only emphasize the cognitive aspect, but also integrate the habituation of worship, motivation, and spiritual experience of students in a sustainable manner in the context of Muhammadiyah vocational schools. (Nasir, 2020) In addition, this study highlights the implementation of strategies that have taken place over a long period of time and involve all grade levels, thus providing a more in-depth empirical picture of the effectiveness of PAI teachers' strategies in increasing students' religious awareness. Thus, this research is expected to make a theoretical and practical contribution to the development of Islamic religious education in vocational high schools.

METHODS

This research is a field research with a qualitative descriptive type that aims to describe a phenomenon that is currently occurring. (Tampubolon, 2023) The research uses a phenomenological approach to study the strategies of PAI teachers in increasing religious awareness directly through their perspectives and ideas. (Fitriana, Prakasa, Averina, & Widagda, 2021) The researcher used a Triangulation Technique with 3 data collection techniques, including interviews with resource persons, observation through direct observation, and documentation in the form of photos or images. (Scott, 2020) The data sources used were primary data sourced from interviews with PAI teachers and students of SMK Muhammadiyah 3 Karanganyar, while secondary data was sourced from relevant journals and scientific articles. (Guampe, Tentena, & Akbar, 2023) This data analysis uses the Miles and Huberman method with three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. (Safrudin, Zulfamanna, Kustati, & Sepriyanti, 2023)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. PAI Teacher Strategy at SMK Muhammadiyah 3 Karanganyar

Based on the results of the research, there are several findings related to strategies in increasing religious awareness, including: **First**, the strategy of increasing religious awareness at SMK Muhammadiyah 3 Karanganyar is based on the development of spiritual aspects related to students' experiences so that they are able to feel and understand and practice the values of Islamic teachings in daily life. (Zainuddin, 2023) In Piaget's theory, the age of 15 years until late adolescence is at the stage where the child is able to think abstractly with religious considerations. (Suyanto, 2012) At this age, children not only imitate the behavior of others in religion but are able to judge for themselves what is right and wrong in their religious teachings and can apply the values of teachings with reason or logic. (Muhibburrohman1 & Hanafi2, 2023) In fact, students under the age of 20 are still less aware of religion than their age, because children's attitudes tend to follow from the surrounding environment. (Rahman, 2019) This shows that students more imitate or adapt their behavior to their peers, family and surrounding culture, such as when at school students pray in congregation and on time but at home students pray at the end of the time. This strategy has been implemented since 2015 and is aimed at all students from grades 10, 11, and 12. Second, through interviews with Islamic Religious Education teachers, there are several strategies applied to increase religious awareness, including:

1. Habituation

At SMK Muhammadiyah 3, it is customary to pray in congregation, both mandatory prayers such as dhuhur and ashar and sunnah prayers such as dhuha in the morning. Congregational prayers are carried out by all students from grades 10, 11, 12 and teachers and employees together to instill the character of students so that they are used to praying on time. (Huda, 2017) Every time we enter prayer time, the school will ring a bell as a form of notification so that all learning activities are temporarily stopped in preparation for the implementation of congregational prayers for all school residents. (Interview, n.d.) With the habit of praying in congregation every day, students do not have the opportunity to stop worship so that they form the character of students to be disciplined in time and accustomed to carrying out their obligations as Muslims and increasing their faith. (Kusuma, Aprilia, & Sajari, 2022)

2. Giving advice

In giving advice, it is usually applied through Friday sermon activities carried out by teachers to provide understanding and knowledge to students about religion. (Son, 2021) There are also activities on Islamic holidays such as Isra' Mir'raj, Eid, Hijri New Year, and qurbani where the school holds a general study with speakers from outside the school to fill in the study which is attended by students and teachers (Azra, 2015). Usually, the themes raised in the study are always related to adolescents such as juvenile delinquency, the digital era, the use of social media, and other themes that are in accordance with adolescents' understanding of Islamic values. (Wahyuni, 2018) From the teacher's side, they will look for ustadz who are able to deliver lectures or advice in a pleasant atmosphere and can even joke with the students, considering that in this school there are more male students than girls. (Observation, n.d.-a) Through the study that

contains advice for students, it is hoped that students will get used to participating in studies at school and in the environment around their homes. By giving advice such as general studies and Friday sermons, they are able to build awareness in students that positive things can bring good to themselves and others. (Triana Rosalina Noor & Cholil, 2024)

3. Motivation

The strategy carried out in schools is to motivate students through the division of tasks to prepare a place of prayer worship. (Ismail, 2016) So the school formed a schedule for all classes with the same task, namely preparing the carpet before the congregational prayer and folding it again after the prayer was finished and each representative class became a muadzin when entering the prayer time to sound the adhan. (Astin, 2011) At the beginning of this activity, the students were helped by the teachers to immediately prepare the carpet and asked the class to send a representative of 1 male student for the adhan, because the students still did not understand the task that had to be done. After running for approximately one year, the students were able to move on their own without any help anymore so that they were able to motivate to work together and give awareness when they entered prayer time. (Observation, n.d.-b) Sharing schedules like this, congregational prayer activities are more regular and foster a sense of responsibility in students to do their duties and form disciplined individuals. (Hasibuan, Indra, Mawaddah, Drs.H.Ahmad Sanusi Luqman, Lc, & Nurmisda Ramayani, 2024)

4. Theoretical Knowledge

In learning, there are targets determined by Islamic Religious Education teachers based on the curriculum of the Muhammadiyah Central Executive that must be followed or developed in the learning process. Islamic Religious Education teachers give targets that must be met or mastered by students according to grade level through practical exams, including: For grade 10, have a target of reading prayer and completing iqra' (can read the Qur'an even though it is still stammering). (Yusuf, 2022) Then for grade 11, meet the target for cults. And finally for grade 12, it has a target of sermons and inheritance. (Interview, n.d.) Theoretical knowledge is able to prevent misinformation, especially related to various ways of worship so that it becomes a student experience and is expected to be applied in daily life. (Hasbullah, Juhji, & Maksum, 2019). Third, there are many factors that affect students' religious awareness, including: 1). Family, 2). Association, and 3). School. While at school, implementing many religious programs will increase the awareness of students even though it still happens when students return home their religious awareness decreases again. Students' religious experiences are not only from teachers, parents, and peers but also obtained from the surrounding environment so that religious awareness can rise and fall. (Lailatul Izzah, 2022).

B. Supporting Factors

Supporting factors are able to encourage strategies in increasing religious awareness in students so that they run optimally, including the following:

1. Cooperation between teachers and principals

All teachers, especially Islamic Religious Education teachers and school principals, have the duty to work together in carrying out religious programs and always remind each other. Such as congregational prayer activities that involve all teachers, including school principals, to be an example for students at school. (Interview, n.d.)

2. Financial administration

Usually funds are needed when running religious programs. Like general study activities carried out on Islamic holidays, it is always routine to ask outsiders to fill in the study so that funds are needed. The school provides transportation costs for the speaker or ustadz in the amount of around 300-500 thousand rupiah per filling out the study. (Documentation, n.d.)

3. Program LazisMu

The school collaborates with Lazismu in holding infaq that students are expected to be aware of to help people who cannot afford it, such as the procurement of infaq on Friday every week. (Hassan, 2018) Friday infaq is carried out with representatives of each class leader in charge of collecting infaq in their respective classes, then handed over to Islamic Religious

Education teachers and given to LazisMu officers to record the infaq that has been collected.(Observation, n.d.-a).

C. Inhibiting Factors

1. Running the program

In carrying out religious programs, schools often experience difficulties because the calculation of the government's hijri calendar with Muhammadiyah is quite different. So it is not uncommon for calendar differences to have an impact on the difference in days, such as Muhammadiyah schools often wait for a decision from the government regarding the red date to hold religious programs.(Interview, n.d.)

2. Teacher awareness

Teacher awareness is considered an obstacle because not all teachers have the same religious background as Islamic Religious Education teachers. Basically, Islamic Religious Education teachers have a higher concern for religious teachings so that they often remind students and set a good example. This is inversely proportional to teachers of other subjects and is actually not their job, but this can hinder because of religious activities in schools so that all parties are expected to be able to support and help to run well to accustom students to be able to apply them in their lives, especially outside the school environment.(Observation, n.d.-a)

3. School facilities

Lack of facilities can hinder the implementation of strategies in increasing students' religious awareness, such as providing prayer places so that students are more comfortable in carrying out congregational prayers. Facilities such as microphones are important and used for congregational prayer activities so that all students and teachers can hear the voice of the imam so that the prayer together can run smoothly and the lack of clarity of the imam's voice can confuse the congregation and the prayer becomes insolemn.(Observation, n.d.-b)

The emergence of obstacles in implementing strategies requires solutions to overcome these problems. So that Islamic Religious Education teachers can carry out various ways or efforts for the smooth running of strategies in increasing students' religious awareness applied in schools.(Miasyanah et al., 2021)

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that the strategy of Islamic Religious Education teachers in increasing students' religious awareness at SMK Muhammadiyah 3 Karanganyar is carried out through an approach of habituation of worship, providing religious advice, motivation, and strengthening theoretical knowledge that is adjusted to the level of education of students. The findings of the study show that the habit of congregational prayer that is carried out consistently and involves all school residents is able to form discipline, responsibility, and increase student awareness in carrying out religious teachings. The role of teachers as role models and support of school institutions is an important factor in the success of the strategy, although students' religious awareness is still influenced by the environment outside the school.

This study also found that students' religious awareness is dynamic and can decrease when outside the school environment, especially due to the influence of family, association, and social environment. Therefore, stronger synergy is needed between schools, parents, and the community in supporting the formation of students' religious awareness in a sustainable manner. Further research is expected to develop a more varied approach, such as quantitative methods or mixed methods, as well as expand the research object in different school contexts in order to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education teachers' strategies

LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations. First, the research was conducted only at SMK Muhammadiyah 3 Karanganyar with a limited number of participants, so the findings cannot be generalized to other schools with different conditions. Second, the data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, which rely on participants' perceptions and may

contain subjective bias. Third, this study mainly focuses on strategies implemented within the school environment, while students' religious awareness is also influenced by external factors such as family, peers, and the wider community that were not explored in depth. In addition, the results reflect the situation during the time of the study, which may change along with developments in education and social conditions. Future research is recommended to involve a larger sample and use different methods or comparative studies in other schools to obtain more comprehensive results.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

IR conducted the research, collected and analyzed the data, and prepared the original draft of the manuscript. C contributed to the research design, supervised the research process, reviewed and edited the manuscript, and provided critical revisions to improve the quality of the study. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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