



The Role of Aqidah Akhlaq Teachers in Improving The Moral Character of Seventh-Grade Students at MTs Al-Khairiyah Rawaarum, Cilegon City

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Abstract:

The objectives of this study are to examine the role of Akidah Akhlaq teachers at MTs Al-Khairiyah Rawaarum, to identify the moral character of seventh-grade students at MTs Al-Khairiyah Rawaarum, and to analyze the role of Akidah Akhlaq teachers in improving the moral character of seventh-grade students at MTs Al-Khairiyah Rawaarum. This study employed a qualitative research approach. Data collection procedures included observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The interview findings were supported and strengthened by observations and documentation to ensure the validity of the data obtained from the informants. The informants in this study consisted of the vice principal for curriculum affairs, homeroom teachers, Akidah Akhlaq teachers, and seventh-grade students. They were interviewed in depth to obtain the information required for the study, which was subsequently analyzed to draw the research findings. The results of the study indicate that Akidah Akhlaq teachers play an active role in improving students' moral character and have a significant influence on positive changes in students' behavior. The approaches implemented in fostering students' moral character include providing exemplary behavior, promoting discipline, and habituating students to practice good behavior at MTs Al-Khairiyah Rawaarum. The implication of this study is that Akidah Akhlaq teachers, as well as all other teachers, should continuously provide guidance and moral development for students by setting good examples, maintaining discipline in the teaching process, providing encouragement and motivation, teaching positive moral values, and consistently fostering good habits in students' daily lives..

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Introduction (مقدمة)

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is a conscious and systematic effort to prepare students to know, understand, believe in, internalize, and practice Islamic teachings. The educational process is based primarily on the Qur'an and Hadith and is implemented through guidance, teaching, training, habituation, and experience. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education is not limited to the transfer of religious knowledge but also aims to develop students' faith, piety, personality, and noble character. Islamic values should become the foundation of the entire educational process so that students are able to apply religious teachings in their daily lives (Gunawan, 2014). Islamic education has a broader meaning than Islamic Religious Education as a subject. Islamic education refers to an educational system that is based on Islamic values and seeks to develop human beings comprehensively, including their intellectual, spiritual, physical, emotional, and social dimensions. In this regard, education is a continuous process of guiding and developing students so that they become knowledgeable individuals with good behavior and are able to maintain positive values within society. Consequently, the implementation of Islamic education should integrate knowledge and moral development as inseparable components of the educational process (Gunawan, 2014).

The importance of education and knowledge is emphasized in the Qur'an, particularly in QS. Al-Mujadalah verse 11, which explains that Allah raises the degrees of those who believe and those who are given knowledge. This verse demonstrates that knowledge occupies an important position in Islam and should be accompanied by appropriate attitudes and behavior. Similarly, the Prophet Muhammad emphasized the importance of good manners and education in shaping children's character. Thus, religious education should not only produce students who understand religious concepts but also students who are able to demonstrate Islamic values through their attitudes and behavior. Akhlak is an important component of Islamic education because it represents the manifestation of a person's faith and understanding of religious teachings. Etymologically, the term akhlak originates from the Arabic word khuluq, which means character, disposition, conduct, or manners. Al-Ghazali explains that akhlak is a quality embedded in the soul from which actions emerge naturally without requiring extensive thought or deliberation. Based on this understanding, moral character is not merely an external behavior but an internal disposition that influences a person's actions and interactions with others.

In general, akhlak can be classified into akhlak mahmudah (commendable character) and akhlak mazmumah (blameworthy character). Commendable character includes honesty, trustworthiness, patience, gratitude, sincerity, fairness, compassion, responsibility, and humility, whereas blameworthy character includes behaviors that contradict Islamic moral principles. Moral education therefore aims to develop positive character while preventing students from developing negative behaviors. The development of noble character requires continuous guidance, motivation, exemplary behavior, and habituation so that good behavior becomes part of students' daily lives (Nata, 2012). The moral character of students is influenced by various internal and external factors. Internal factors include innate tendencies, instincts, habits, heredity, personal desires, and individual will. External factors include the family environment, school, peer relationships, and the wider community. The convergence perspective argues that moral development is shaped by the interaction between internal potential and external environmental influences. This perspective is consistent with Islamic teachings, particularly QS. An-Nahl verse 78, which explains that humans are born without knowledge but are provided with hearing, sight, and hearts that can be developed through education and experience.

The school environment has an important role in developing students' moral character because schools provide systematic educational experiences outside the family. Through classroom instruction, school rules, social interaction, and various forms of habituation, students

learn to practice discipline, responsibility, respect, cooperation, and other positive values. Teachers therefore have a strategic position in guiding students' behavior. The teacher is not merely responsible for delivering subject matter but also for creating an educational environment that supports students' moral and personal development. A teacher is a professional educator whose primary responsibilities include educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students (Republic of Indonesia, 2005). In the context of Islamic education, teachers are also expected to become role models whose behavior can be observed and imitated by students. The role of teachers includes being educators, instructors, mentors, motivators, facilitators, advisors, innovators, and evaluators. Through these roles, teachers can influence students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral development. The teacher's personality, communication, discipline, and daily conduct are particularly important because students may imitate what they observe in their teachers (Hawi, 2013).

The Aqidah Akhlaq teacher has a specific and strategic role in developing students' faith and moral character. In addition to teaching concepts related to Islamic beliefs and morality, the teacher is responsible for helping students understand, appreciate, and practice Islamic values. The teacher can develop students' akhlak through exemplary behavior (*uswah*), advice, motivation, discipline, correction of inappropriate behavior, and continuous habituation. The teacher should also treat students fairly, respectfully, and compassionately while providing guidance according to their individual needs. In this process, the teacher becomes both an educator and a moral model for students. Based on the above discussion, the role of the Aqidah Akhlaq teacher in improving students' moral character is carried out through an integrated process of teaching, guidance, modeling, motivation, discipline, and habituation. The success of Aqidah Akhlaq education should therefore be measured not only by students' academic understanding but also by their ability to demonstrate noble behavior in everyday life. Teachers are expected to consistently provide positive examples and create opportunities for students to practice Islamic values in school and social environments. Ultimately, the Aqidah Akhlaq teacher serves as an important agent in developing students who possess religious knowledge, strong faith, responsible attitudes, and noble character (Saondi, 2012).



Method (منهج)

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to examine the role of Aqidah Akhlaq teachers in improving the moral character of seventh-grade students at MTs Al-Khairiyah Rawaarum, Grogol, Cilegon City, Banten. The qualitative approach was selected because the study aimed to understand and describe phenomena in their natural setting, particularly the roles, strategies, and practices of teachers in fostering students' moral development. Qualitative research emphasizes the meaning of phenomena based on information obtained directly from research participants and field conditions rather than numerical measurement or statistical analysis (Sugiyono, 2018; Ibrahim, 2015). The study was conducted from February to April 2026, following the completion of the research proposal and the issuance of research permission.

The research focused on three main aspects: (1) the role of Aqidah Akhlaq teachers at MTs Al-Khairiyah Rawaarum; (2) the moral character of seventh-grade students; and (3) the role of Aqidah Akhlaq teachers in improving students' moral character. The research site was selected because the school has considerable potential for developing students' competence and moral character, particularly through discipline, politeness, motivation, responsibility, and positive behavioral habits. The research questions addressed teachers' teaching practices, instructional methods, strategies for fostering students' morals, and approaches to assessing students' behavior. The study also examined students' participation in Islamic Religious Education lessons,

attendance, seriousness in learning, and respectful behavior toward teachers.

Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted directly at MTs Al-Khairiyah Rawaarum to examine classroom activities, teacher-student interactions, teaching practices, and students' moral behavior. Interviews were conducted with six participants, consisting of three educators and three seventh-grade students. The interviews initially followed a structured set of questions but allowed additional questions to emerge during the process, making the interview approach semi-structured. Documentation was used to complement the observation and interview data and included relevant written records, photographs, and other documents related to the implementation of Aqidah Akhlaq education. The combination of these techniques was intended to provide comprehensive information about the phenomenon under investigation (Sugiyono, 2018).

Data analysis was conducted qualitatively through several stages, including data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During data collection, information obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation was organized systematically. Data reduction involved selecting, categorizing, and summarizing information relevant to the research focus. The reduced data were then presented descriptively to identify patterns concerning the role of teachers and the development of students' moral character. Finally, conclusions were drawn by interpreting the displayed data and continuously comparing them with the research objectives and relevant theoretical perspectives (Bungin, 2017).

The credibility of the research findings was ensured through source triangulation. Triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different participants and different data collection techniques. Specifically, the researcher compared observation results with interview findings and examined statements provided by informants in different contexts. Interview data were also compared with relevant documentation to determine the consistency of the information obtained. This process was intended to strengthen the credibility and validity of the findings and ensure that the conclusions accurately reflected the role of Aqidah Akhlaq teachers in improving the moral character of seventh-grade students at MTs Al-Khairiyah Rawaarum (Sugiyono, 2018).

Result (نتائج)

The findings indicate that Aqidah Akhlaq teachers at MTs Al-Khairiyah Rawaarum, Grogol, Cilegon City, play an important role in developing and improving students' moral character. Based on observations and interviews with teachers and seventh-grade students, teachers are not only responsible for delivering learning materials but also actively guide students in applying Islamic moral values in their daily behavior. The teachers consistently emphasize religious values, politeness, discipline, responsibility, respect, and good interpersonal relationships. The findings show that the role of teachers extends beyond classroom instruction to include moral guidance and the formation of students' character through everyday interactions.

The study also found that the teaching process of Aqidah Akhlaq involves several approaches to encourage students' understanding and practice of moral values. Teachers use explanations, discussions, question-and-answer activities, examples from daily life, and direct guidance during the learning process. Learning activities are designed to help students understand the relationship between Islamic teachings and their behavior. Teachers also provide advice and motivation when students demonstrate inappropriate behavior. Through these approaches, students are encouraged not only to understand the concepts of akhlak but also to apply them in their interactions with teachers, classmates, and the wider school environment.

Regarding students' moral character, the findings show that most seventh-grade students demonstrate positive behavioral tendencies, particularly in terms of respect for teachers, participation in learning, politeness, and compliance with school rules. Students generally show respectful attitudes when interacting with teachers and participate in Aqidah Akhlaq lessons. However, several students still require continuous guidance, particularly in maintaining discipline, seriousness in learning, consistency in following school rules, and controlling inappropriate behavior. These findings indicate that students' moral development is a gradual process that requires continuous supervision, habituation, and reinforcement from teachers and the school environment.

The findings further demonstrate that Aqidah Akhlaq teachers improve students' moral character primarily through exemplary behavior, discipline, advice, motivation, and habituation. Teachers attempt to become role models by demonstrating polite communication, punctuality, responsibility, and respectful behavior. Students are also accustomed to practicing positive behaviors through daily school activities, such as greeting teachers, maintaining cleanliness, respecting others, participating in religious activities, and following classroom and school regulations. When students violate established norms, teachers provide appropriate warnings and guidance rather than relying solely on punishment. This approach enables students to understand the reasons behind expected behaviors and gradually develop positive habits.

Overall, the results demonstrate that the role of Aqidah Akhlaq teachers is significant in improving the moral character of seventh-grade students at MTs Al-Khairiyah Rawaarum. The combination of religious instruction, teacher modeling, motivation, discipline, guidance, and behavioral habituation contributes to the development of students' positive attitudes and conduct. Nevertheless, moral development cannot depend solely on Aqidah Akhlaq teachers and requires consistent cooperation among teachers, school administrators, families, and the surrounding community. Continuous reinforcement of moral values is therefore necessary to ensure that positive behaviors developed at school become stable habits that students can apply in their everyday lives.



Discussion (مناقشة)

This study examined the role of Aqidah Akhlaq teachers in improving the moral character of seventh-grade students at MTs Al-Khairiyah Rawaarum, Grogol, Cilegon City. The findings indicate that Aqidah Akhlaq teachers have a strategic role in shaping students' moral development through classroom instruction, guidance, exemplary behavior, discipline, motivation, and religious habituation. These findings reinforce the view that teachers are not merely transmitters of knowledge but also educators who contribute significantly to students' character formation. In Islamic education, this role is particularly important because learning outcomes include not only cognitive achievement but also the development of faith, attitudes, and noble character (Saondi, 2012).

The research setting also supports the implementation of moral education. MTs Al-Khairiyah Rawaarum has a vision of developing a superior, independent madrasah based on science and technology as well as faith and piety. Its mission explicitly emphasizes the development of students with akhlakul karimah. This institutional orientation provides a supportive environment for integrating moral education into both classroom learning and daily school activities. Thus, the development of students' moral character is not limited to the Aqidah Akhlaq subject but is supported by the broader educational culture of the madrasah.

The findings show that Aqidah Akhlaq teachers perform several roles, including educator, instructor, mentor, motivator, advisor, evaluator, and role model. Teachers provide religious knowledge while simultaneously guiding students in applying moral values in their daily behavior. This finding is consistent with the concept that teachers have professional

responsibilities to educate, teach, guide, direct, train, assess, and evaluate students (Republic of Indonesia, 2005). The teacher's role is therefore multidimensional because effective moral education requires the integration of knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral practices.

One of the most prominent findings is the importance of teacher modeling or *uswah*. Teachers demonstrate appropriate speech, politeness, discipline, responsibility, and respectful interaction so that students can observe and imitate these behaviors. This is particularly relevant in moral education because students may learn values not only through explicit instruction but also through observing the behavior of significant adults around them. The teacher therefore becomes a practical representation of the moral values being taught. The findings support the argument that teachers function as models and examples who can influence students' attitudes and character through their everyday conduct (Hawi, 2013).

The study also demonstrates that teachers use various instructional methods, including lectures, question-and-answer sessions, discussions, presentations, inquiry activities, blended learning, and learning media. The variation in teaching methods allows teachers to adapt instruction to students' needs and classroom conditions. However, the findings indicate that lectures remain an important method in Aqidah Akhlaq learning because religious concepts often require systematic explanation. At the same time, the integration of discussion, inquiry, and contextual activities can provide students with opportunities to connect religious principles with real-life moral situations.

Another important strategy is habituation. The teachers and school implement daily religious activities such as morning *tadarus*, *tahsin*, *muroja'ah*, spiritual guidance, *kitab kuning* studies, and congregational prayer. These activities provide repeated opportunities for students to practice religious and moral values. Habituation is important because moral character is not formed instantly through theoretical instruction but develops through repeated practice until positive behavior becomes part of students' daily routines. This finding is consistent with the view that commendable character can be developed through continuous practice, motivation, and habituation (Nata, 2012).

The findings regarding seventh-grade students indicate generally positive moral behavior. The three student respondents reported that they attended Aqidah Akhlaq lessons regularly, participated seriously in learning, and demonstrated respect toward teachers through greetings and appropriate manners. The teachers also observed that students generally followed lessons well and displayed polite behavior in the school environment. These findings suggest that students have developed several indicators of positive moral character, particularly respect, discipline, responsibility, and seriousness in learning.

Nevertheless, the findings should not be interpreted as indicating that all students have completely achieved ideal moral development. Moral formation is a continuous process influenced by various internal and external factors. Students differ in their personal characteristics, habits, family backgrounds, social environments, and levels of motivation. Therefore, even when students generally display positive behavior, teachers still need to provide continuous guidance and reinforcement. The convergence perspective suggests that moral development results from the interaction between individual potential and environmental influences, including education and social relationships.

The role of the school and family is also important in sustaining the moral development initiated by teachers. The research findings suggest that limited attention to moral education within the family or community can create challenges for schools in developing students' character. Consequently, the responsibility for moral education should not be placed exclusively on Aqidah Akhlaq teachers. Cooperation among teachers, school administrators, parents, and the community is necessary to create consistency between the values taught at school and students'

experiences outside school.

Teacher assessment of students' akhlak is conducted through holistic observation of students' attitudes and behavior. Teachers pay attention to students' speech, gestures, interactions with teachers and peers, responses to instructions, completion of assignments, and participation in religious activities. This approach is appropriate because moral character cannot be adequately assessed through written tests alone. Assessment should consider observable behavioral patterns and students' consistency in practicing moral values. The use of observation, attitude assessment, performance-based tasks, and continuous feedback can therefore provide a more comprehensive picture of students' moral development.

The findings further indicate that the effectiveness of Aqidah Akhlaq teachers in improving students' moral character is closely related to the consistency between teaching and practice. Teachers who provide knowledge, demonstrate exemplary conduct, establish discipline, give advice, and create opportunities for habituation can reinforce the internalization of moral values. This finding supports the broader understanding of the teacher as an educator who is responsible not only for academic learning but also for developing students' personality and social behavior (Saondi, 2012). Thus, moral education becomes more effective when students encounter consistent messages and examples in their daily educational environment.

Overall, this study demonstrates that Aqidah Akhlaq teachers play a significant role in improving the moral character of seventh-grade students at MTs Al-Khairiyah Rawaarum. The combination of exemplary behavior, religious instruction, varied teaching methods, discipline, motivation, guidance, and habituation contributes to the development of positive student behavior. The findings also show that the institutional culture of the madrasah strengthens this process through structured religious activities. Therefore, the improvement of students' akhlak requires a continuous and integrated approach in which teachers function as educators, role models, mentors, and moral guides. Sustainable cooperation between the school, family, and community is also essential to ensure that the positive character developed at school is consistently practiced in students' everyday lives.



Conclusion (خاتمة)

The findings of this study indicate that the Akidah Akhlaq teacher plays an important role in improving the moral character of seventh-grade students at MTs Al-Khairiyah Rawaarum, Grogol, Cilegon. The teacher's role is not limited to delivering subject matter but also includes educating, guiding, motivating, advising, correcting, and providing exemplary behavior. Teacher presence and consistency in demonstrating positive attitudes serve as important components in students' moral development. The study also shows that the moral condition of seventh-grade students is generally good. This is reflected in students' participation in Akidah Akhlaq lessons, attendance, seriousness in learning, and respectful behavior toward teachers. Students demonstrated positive attitudes such as greeting teachers, offering respectful gestures, following classroom instructions, and showing interest in learning religious and moral values. These behaviors indicate that moral education has been integrated into students' daily activities at school.

The improvement of students' morality is supported by the use of various instructional methods, including lectures, discussions, question-and-answer sessions, inquiry, presentations, blended learning, and learning media. These methods allow teachers to adjust instruction to students' needs and learning contexts. In addition, the teacher emphasizes moral education through direct guidance, constructive feedback, and continuous interaction with students. Such approaches support the development of students' cognitive, emotional, spiritual, and behavioral

dimensions. A significant finding is that exemplary behavior and habituation are the main strategies used by teachers to strengthen students' morals. Daily religious activities, including Qur'anic recitation, tahsin, muroja'ah, spiritual guidance, Islamic book study, and congregational prayer, provide students with repeated opportunities to practice religious and moral values. Consistent habituation, combined with teachers' personal examples, contributes to the formation of disciplined, respectful, responsible, and religious behavior among students.

Overall, this study concludes that the role of the Akidah Akhlaq teacher is highly significant in supporting the improvement of students' moral character at MTs Al-Khairiyah Rawaarum. Moral development becomes more effective when teachers combine knowledge transmission with exemplary behavior, continuous guidance, religious habituation, and appropriate assessment. Therefore, schools should strengthen collaboration among teachers, parents, and the school community to create a consistent environment that supports the sustainable development of students' akhlak.

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