

The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Shaping the Inclusive Character of Students

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in shaping the inclusive character of students in secondary school environments. An inclusive character is considered important in fostering attitudes of mutual respect, tolerance, and the ability to coexist in the midst of diversity. This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with PAI teachers, observations of the learning process, and analysis of related documents, such as syllabi and lesson plans. The results show that PAI teachers play a strategic role in shaping the inclusive character of students through three main aspects: (1) the use of discussion-based learning methods that encourage students to understand others' perspectives; (2) the role model demonstrated by teachers in exhibiting inclusive attitudes both inside and outside the classroom; (3) the integration of values of tolerance and respect for differences in the teaching materials and learning activities; (4) the use of a holistic approach, teaching religious, social, and moral values simultaneously, successfully instilling a deeper understanding of the concept of inclusivity. In addition, the study found that the success of shaping students' inclusive character highly depends on the competence of the teacher, the support of the school environment, and the relevance of the learning approach to students' social context. By optimizing the role of PAI teachers, students can better understand the importance of peaceful coexistence in the midst of diversity. The study concludes that PAI teachers are key agents in building students' inclusive character, and continuous training and development of teacher competencies are needed to support this role.

Keywords: *Role of PAI Teachers; Inclusive Character; Teacher Role Model; Student Character*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as a country with religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity, faces significant challenges in creating a harmonious and inclusive society. The diversity of religion and culture in Indonesia presents both challenges and opportunities to build an inclusive and harmonious society. One key to achieving this is through education. Education plays a vital role in preparing the younger generation to appreciate differences, live together peacefully, and contribute to creating social harmony

(Satiadharmanto et al., 2024). Islamic Religious Education not only serves to teach the teachings of Islam but also acts as a means to shape the character of students who are capable of living harmoniously with differences (Sisworo, 2017). An inclusive character, which includes attitudes of tolerance, respect for differences, and the ability to adapt in a multicultural society, becomes very important amidst the existing pluralism (Jannah, 2023).

One of the education sectors that can play an important role in this is Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Islamic Religious Education not only teaches knowledge about Islam but also provides lessons on universal values that can shape students' character, including an inclusive character, which is essential in maintaining peace in a diverse society (Hidayati, 2023). PAI teachers play a key role in shaping students' character (Amir Daus, 2022). Through effective teaching and the application of Islamic values that prioritize justice, compassion, and mutual respect, PAI teachers can foster an inclusive attitude among students. (PD & ARIFIN, 2022). However, in practice, many challenges are faced by PAI teachers in achieving these objectives. Some of the issues include limitations in teaching methods that support the understanding of inclusivity, a lack of specialized training for PAI teachers on teaching religious tolerance, and the influence of a social environment that does not fully support mutual respect. Although the role of PAI teachers is crucial, there is a gap in research regarding how teachers contribute to shaping the inclusive character of students. Therefore, in-depth studies are needed to further understand how PAI teachers can play a role in creating a generation with an inclusive character. This research aims to identify factors influencing the role of PAI teachers and how appropriate teaching methods can support the development of inclusive character in students.

Inclusive character, which includes attitudes of tolerance, mutual respect, and acceptance of differences, is essential to instill from an early age. As educators who have direct opportunities to interact with students, PAI teachers play a significant role in shaping this character. Through teaching that emphasizes values of justice, compassion, and brotherhood, PAI teachers can instill awareness that diversity is an inevitability that must be valued and celebrated (Dr. Munifah & Dr. Limas Dodi, 2020). However, despite the important role of PAI teachers in shaping the inclusive character of students, there are still various challenges that need to be addressed. Some of these include the lack of specialized training for PAI teachers in managing multicultural classrooms, the limited teaching methods that can support the understanding of tolerance and inclusivity, and the influence of a social environment that may not support inclusive attitudes.

This study aims to explore in more depth the role of PAI teachers in shaping the inclusive character of students. Through this research, it is hoped that more effective methods and approaches for teaching inclusive values to students will be discovered, as well as ways to improve the competence of PAI teachers in facing these challenges.

Thus, PAI can optimally function in shaping a younger generation that not only has deep religious knowledge but also has tolerant and inclusive attitudes towards differences

METHOD

This study uses a literature study method that relies on bibliographic sources from articles in journals and recent books related to the main issues, and analyzes data with the thoughts of experts through a constructive approach and interpretation of the main discussion. (Danandjaja, 2014). This writing uses a library research method, which involves investigating a problem by applying a solution. The data sources for this research come from primary scholarly works written by the figures being studied, as well as secondary scholarly works such as books, articles, or other relevant academic sources related to the research theme. Data analysis is conducted according to the analysis method developed by (Sugiyono, 2019) That is through the stages of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

The data obtained will be collected and then analyzed using a descriptive analysis method, which involves outlining the facts followed by analysis and providing understanding and explanation. This research uses instruments in the form of a literature review from several journals that discuss the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in shaping the inclusive character of students. It is important to bring back the role of Islamic Religious Education in this modern context. Islamic religious education is expected to optimally function in shaping a younger generation that not only possesses deep religious knowledge but also has tolerant and inclusive attitudes toward differences.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers play a very important role in shaping the inclusive character of students, which includes attitudes of tolerance, respect for differences, and the ability to coexist in diversity (Awal, 2020). This role is highly relevant considering Indonesia as a country with religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity, which requires a young generation with open-mindedness and mutual respect. PAI teachers play a crucial role in shaping the inclusive character of students through dialogical teaching methods, role modeling, the integration of inclusive values into the curriculum, and the implementation of a holistic approach (Alfiani & Ismaraidha, 2024). To optimize this role, continuous training for PAI teachers, the development of a more inclusive curriculum, and support from the school are necessary to create a learning environment that fosters tolerance and diversity. Below is an explanation of the role of PAI teachers in shaping the inclusive character of students:

1. Use of Dialogical and Interactive Teaching Methods

PAI teachers who use discussion-based, question-and-answer, and case study methods are more effective in instilling inclusive values. Students are given

the opportunity to speak and express their views on religious and cultural differences, which are then processed through group discussions. This allows students to expand their understanding of diversity and enhances their ability to appreciate differences. Teachers who integrate inspirational stories or real-life experiences about tolerance into lessons also create a conducive space for deeper understanding.

The use of interactive and dialogical teaching methods has proven to be highly effective in instilling inclusive character among students. This method enables students to actively participate in learning and provides space for them to listen to and understand the views of others. In the context of Islamic Religious Education, values of tolerance and mutual respect can be more easily accepted by students when they are given the chance to actively engage in discussions on diversity. However, the challenge in implementing this method is the limited time in each lesson. Some teachers find it difficult to balance teaching the material and allowing time for in-depth discussions about diversity. Therefore, adjustments in the lesson time structure are needed to provide more space for this discussion.

2. Role of the Teacher as a Role Model

Research findings show that PAI teachers have a significant influence on shaping the inclusive character of students through role modeling. Teachers who demonstrate fairness, openness, and respect for religious differences inside and outside the classroom successfully create a learning climate that supports diversity. Students tend to imitate the behaviors and attitudes they observe in their teachers. Therefore, the role model presented by PAI teachers is very influential in shaping students' inclusive character.

PAI teachers as role models play an important role in shaping the inclusive character of students. The role modeling shown by teachers in daily life, such as being open-minded, respecting differences, and applying the principles of Islam that teach peace, significantly impacts students' attitudes. Students are more likely to imitate their teachers' behavior, making the teacher's role in shaping an inclusive character crucial. However, the challenge faced is that not all PAI teachers have the awareness or adequate training regarding the importance of role modeling in teaching inclusive attitudes. Therefore, training and professional development for teachers are necessary to enhance their understanding of how to serve as role models in terms of tolerance and diversity.

3. Integration of Inclusive Values in the PAI Curriculum

This study found that schools that integrate inclusive values into the PAI curriculum successfully raise students' awareness of the importance of tolerance and respect for differences. A curriculum that emphasizes Islamic teachings on justice, compassion, and brotherhood among humans helps students understand that religious differences are part of God's divine plan that must be respected.

Learning that encourages students to think critically about diversity, both in religious and social contexts, greatly influences the development of an inclusive character.

Schools that successfully integrate inclusive values into the PAI curriculum show positive results in shaping students' character. Learning that includes Islamic teachings about justice, compassion, and brotherhood can encourage students to accept differences more easily. However, not all schools have a curriculum that explicitly addresses issues of diversity, which can hinder the development of an inclusive character. Therefore, the development of a curriculum that places greater emphasis on the importance of tolerance and diversity is urgently needed.

4. Use of a Holistic Approach

PAI teachers who use a holistic approach teaching religious, social, and moral values simultaneously successfully instill a deeper understanding of the concept of inclusivity. Students not only understand religious values theoretically but also practice inclusive attitudes in their daily lives. This approach also enables students to better understand their role in creating a harmonious and peaceful society, regardless of religious and cultural differences. A holistic approach in Islamic education, which combines religious, moral, and social values, has been proven effective in shaping an inclusive character. Learning that teaches about the relationship between humans and God, themselves, and others provides students with a comprehensive understanding of how to live harmoniously with others, despite differences. This approach also helps students understand that tolerance is not just about respecting differences, but also about understanding their social responsibility to create peace.

Below are some relevant previous studies on the role of PAI teachers in shaping the inclusive character of students: A study on the Role of Islamic Religious Education in Building Tolerance, titled: "The Role of Islamic Religious Education in Enhancing Religious Tolerance in Schools," conducted by (Dunan, 2020) This study reveals that PAI teachers play a crucial role in shaping students' religious tolerance attitudes by teaching Islamic values that emphasize respect for differences. Additionally, teachers also teach the principle of human brotherhood (*ukhuwah*), which is able to embrace various religious groups within the school environment. Learning based on discussion and reflection has also proven effective in broadening students' perspectives on diversity and the importance of tolerance. A study on the Challenges and Solutions of Islamic Religious Education in Inclusive Schools conducted by (Mirrota, 2024). This study evaluates the application of inclusive teaching methods in Islamic Religious Education, focusing on a discussion-based approach, case studies, and real-life student experiences. The results show that this method is effective in shaping inclusive character because it allows students to talk about their experiences related to diversity and learn to appreciate differences.

Teachers who provide space for students to exchange views on diversity-related topics also play a role in developing students' understanding of inclusive values. A study on the Exemplary Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Shaping the Religious Character of Junior High School Students conducted by (Zahro et al., 2023) This study shows that the exemplary role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in adhering to religious teachings that emphasize values of mutual respect and coexistence significantly influences students' attitudes. Teachers who are fair, respect differences, and treat all students equally will create an inclusive climate in the school. Students tend to imitate the behavior of their teachers in daily life, both inside and outside the classroom. A study on the Implementation of the Islamic Religious Education Curriculum in Building Inclusive Character in Secondary Schools conducted by (Al Hikam et al., 2022) This study found that integrating inclusive values into the PAI curriculum plays a significant role in shaping students' attitudes toward diversity. Schools that design curricula with materials emphasizing principles of justice, mutual respect, and treating each individual with compassion show positive results in developing students' inclusive character. Teachers who understand the importance of teaching religious and cultural diversity and linking it with Islamic teachings on brotherhood are very helpful in assisting students to accept differences.

A study on the Integration of Multicultural Values in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Teaching conducted by (Mustafida, 2020). This study reveals that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, based on respect for diversity, focuses on an approach that emphasizes values of mutual respect among different religious communities. Learning that teaches students to view religious differences as part of God's will and to treat each individual with respect can strengthen inclusive character. Teachers who can bridge communication between students of different religions and cultural backgrounds play a key role in creating an inclusive school environment. A study on the Utilization of Technology in Enhancing Inclusive Islamic Religious Education Learning conducted by (Rahmadani, 2024) This study evaluates the use of technology as a learning tool in Islamic Religious Education (PAI), which can enhance student interaction and understanding of diversity issues. Technologies such as educational videos, social media, and online learning platforms can be used to spread inclusive values and introduce broader perspectives on how Islam teaches tolerance toward differences. Technology can also facilitate communication and discussion among students from diverse backgrounds.

Previous studies show that the role of PAI teachers is crucial in shaping the inclusive character of students. The use of discussion-based learning methods, teacher role models, the integration of inclusive values in the curriculum, and the utilization of technology are key factors that support the development of inclusive character. PAI teachers who can demonstrate fairness, teach respect for differences, and open spaces for dialogue and reflection will be more effective in creating students who have an inclusive and tolerant attitude toward diversity.

Discussion

Religious diversity in Indonesia is a blessing that must be preserved and nurtured. As a nation known for its multicultural society, interfaith tolerance serves as a crucial pillar in maintaining the unity and cohesion of the country. However, the reality reveals that intolerance still frequently occurs, manifesting in forms such as religion-based conflicts, negative stereotypes, and discrimination against certain groups. This situation demands serious attention, particularly from the education sector, which serves as a strategic medium for instilling values of togetherness and respect for diversity.

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a significant role in shaping students' character, especially regarding attitudes of religious tolerance. Islam itself emphasizes the importance of universal human values, such as justice, compassion, and mutual respect, which form the foundation of communal life. Through PAI, students are not only taught about the teachings of Islam but are also encouraged to understand the importance of living peacefully alongside individuals or groups with different beliefs. The role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in shaping the inclusive character of students is essential, as the role of religion in daily life can provide a strong foundation for cultivating mutual respect and tolerance for differences. In the school context, the diversity of ethnicity, religion, and culture often poses challenges, but it can also serve as an opportunity to create an inclusive environment that supports one another. The following are several aspects that discuss how PAI teachers can play a key role in shaping the inclusive character of students.:

1. Learning That Prioritizes Dialogue and Discussion

One highly effective method in PAI learning is creating space for dialogue and discussion. During discussions, students are given the opportunity to express their opinions on topics related to religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity. The PAI teacher can facilitate these discussions in an open, respectful manner, treating differing opinions as learning material to enrich their understanding. Teachers can organize group discussions on social issues, such as pluralism, tolerance, or interfaith conflict, linking them to Islamic teachings about peace and respect for others. Using problem-based discussion methods allows students to think critically and listen to one another, rather than simply dictating knowledge.

2. Role Model as an Inclusive Figure

PAI teachers play a crucial role as role models in shaping the inclusive character of students. Students tend to emulate their teachers' behavior, especially if the teacher shows an inclusive, fair, and respectful attitude toward differences. Teachers who display inclusiveness in their interactions with others, both teachers and students from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, directly demonstrate to students how to live in diversity.

3. Integration of Inclusive Values into the PAI Curriculum

Islam teaches many values relevant to fostering inclusive attitudes among its followers. Teachings such as *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) and *tasamuh* (tolerance) provide a strong foundation for creating mutual respect, even for those of different faiths. For example, the Qur'an in Surah Al-Hujurat, verse 13, states that human beings are created different to recognize one another, not to belittle one another. Therefore, PAI teachers are tasked with teaching these values and applying them in students' daily lives, both in and outside of the classroom. Teachers encourage students to respect differences in religious views in a polite and understanding manner, teaching the principle of coexistence without discrimination based on religion, ethnicity, or race. PAI teachers who show empathy for students from diverse religious or ethnic backgrounds help create a more inclusive environment by providing equal attention to all students, regardless of their backgrounds.

To build an inclusive character in students, the PAI curriculum must include material that addresses the values of diversity and respect for differences. PAI teachers must be able to link religious values that teach peace, brotherhood, and tolerance to students' daily lives. Teaching pluralism and mutual respect for other religions can also be integrated into the curriculum. Discussing the concept of pluralism in Islam and how Islam teaches its followers to live harmoniously with people of other faiths can be included in relevant curriculum material. Introducing historical Islamic figures who exemplify tolerance and coexistence with differences can further promote these values.

4. Building Empathy and Understanding through Social Activities

PAI teachers can also use social activities as a tool to teach students about inclusive character. Social activities involving various ethnic, religious, or background groups can help students understand and appreciate the importance of living together in diversity. These activities also enhance students' empathy for others who have different faiths and cultures. Organizing social service activities, for example, helping underprivileged children from different backgrounds regardless of religion or ethnicity, or holding events that involve various religious groups to celebrate religious holidays together as a form of solidarity and respect for differences, can foster inclusiveness.

CONCLUSION

The research findings show that PAI teachers play a strategic role in shaping the inclusive character of students through three main aspects: (1) the use of discussion-based learning methods that encourage students to understand others' perspectives; (2) role modeling by teachers who demonstrate inclusive behavior both inside and outside the classroom; (3) integrating tolerance and respect for differences into teaching material and learning activities; and (4) using a holistic approach by teaching religious, social, and moral values together, which instills a deeper understanding of inclusivity.

Moreover, the study finds that the success of developing an inclusive character in students is highly dependent on the teachers' competence, school support, and learning approaches that are relevant to the students' social context. By optimizing the role of PAI teachers, students can better understand the importance of peaceful coexistence in the midst of diversity. This study concludes that PAI teachers are crucial agents in building students' inclusive character, and continuous training and development of teachers' competencies are necessary to support this role..

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