Implementation of Character Education through Active Learning for Islamic Religious Education Teachers

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Abstract

Character education in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) often still relies on traditional learning methods that are less effective in building student engagement and understanding of Islamic values in depth. Therefore, this study aims to investigate how active learning strategies can increase student engagement and facilitate the internalization of Islamic values. This research method uses a qualitative approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis involving IRE teachers. The results showed that active learning significantly increased student participation and moral reflection, offering a more dynamic and practical approach to character education. Teachers reported that activities such as role-playing, group discussions, and problem solving not only made religious teachings more relevant, but also encouraged students to apply Islamic principles in real situations. However, this study also identified challenges such as lack of training and resources and the importance of contextualizing active learning within an Islamic framework. This study contributes to the discourse on educational strategies that support intellectual and moral development, by offering insights and recommendations for improving character education in the context of Islamic education. Further research is expected to examine the long-term impact of this strategy as well as the development of specific training programs for Islamic Religious Education teachers.

Keywords: Active Learning, Character Education, Islamic Religious

Abstrak

Pendidikan karakter dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) sering kali masih mengandalkan metode pembelajaran tradisional yang kurang efektif dalam

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membangun keterlibatan siswa dan pemahaman nilai-nilai Islami secara mendalam. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki bagaimana strategi pembelajaran aktif dapat meningkatkan keterlibatan siswa serta memfasilitasi internalisasi nilai-nilai Islam. Metode penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi kelas, dan analisis dokumen yang melibatkan guru PAI. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran aktif secara signifikan meningkatkan partisipasi siswa dan refleksi moral, menawarkan pendekatan yang lebih dinamis dan praktis dalam pendidikan karakter. Guru melaporkan bahwa aktivitas seperti role-playing, diskusi kelompok, dan pemecahan masalah tidak hanya membuat ajaran agama lebih relevan, tetapi juga mendorong siswa untuk menerapkan prinsip-prinsip Islam dalam situasi nyata. Namun, penelitian ini juga mengidentifikasi tantangan seperti kurangnya pelatihan dan sumber daya serta pentingnya mengkontekstualisasikan pembelajaran aktif dalam kerangka Islam. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi pada wacana strategi pendidikan yang mendukung perkembangan intelektual dan moral, dengan menawarkan wawasan dan rekomendasi untuk meningkatkan pendidikan karakter dalam konteks pendidikan Islam. Penelitian selanjutnya diharapkan dapat mengkaji dampak jangka panjang dari strategi ini serta pengembangan program pelatihan khusus bagi guru PAI.

Kata Kunci: Pembelajaran Aktif, Pendidikan Karakter, Pendidikan Islam

Introduction

Character education has emerged as a critical component in the development of students' moral and ethical foundations, particularly within the context of Islamic religious education. In an era marked by rapid technological advancements and shifting societal values, the role of educators in shaping students' character is more vital than ever (Badrun et al., 2022). Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers, in particular, hold a significant responsibility in not only imparting religious knowledge but also in nurturing values that are aligned with the teachings of Islam, such as honesty, integrity, respect, and empathy (Winarto et al., 2020). This dual responsibility of IRE teachers highlights the need for effective strategies to integrate character education into their teaching practices.

However, the implementation of character education poses several challenges. One of the primary issues is the traditional approach to teaching, which often emphasizes rote memorization and passive learning. This

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method limits students' engagement and fails to foster the critical thinking and reflective practices necessary for the internalization of moral values (Jamiah et al., 2019). Additionally, there is a lack of practical frameworks and resources that teachers can use to effectively integrate character education into their curriculum. As a result, many educators struggle to balance the delivery of academic content with the nurturing of students' character (Zaim et al., 2020).

In recent years, there has been growing interest in the application of active learning strategies to address these challenges. Active learning, which involves student-centered activities that promote participation and engagement, has been shown to enhance students' understanding and retention of information (Mogale & Malatji, 2022). More importantly, it encourages students to actively reflect on their values and behaviors, making it a powerful tool for character education (Febriani et al., 2023). For IRE teachers, implementing active learning can create opportunities for students to connect religious teachings with real-life situations, fostering a deeper understanding of Islamic principles and their application in daily life (Wiranto & Suwartini, 2022).

The implementation of character education through active learning in Islamic Religious Education is an area of great interest, both for its potential to improve educational outcomes and for its contribution to the moral development of students (Prabowo et al., 2021). By examining the strategies and challenges involved in this process, this article aims to provide insights and recommendations for IRE teachers seeking to enhance their teaching practices (Hordvik et al., 2020). Through this exploration, the article also seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on the role of education in shaping the character of future generations, particularly within the Islamic context.

While there has been considerable research on character education and its significance in moral development, the specific application of these

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principles within Islamic Religious Education (IRE) remains underexplored. Much of the existing literature tends to focus on general pedagogical approaches or traditional methods of religious instruction, often neglecting the innovative strategies that could enhance the effectiveness of character education in an Islamic context (Barizi et al., 2023). Additionally, there is limited empirical evidence on the practical challenges and successes that IRE teachers face when attempting to implement active learning strategies specifically for character education (Hermino & Arifin, 2020). This gap indicates a need for more focused studies that investigate the intersection of active learning and character education within the framework of Islamic teachings (Salik, 2019).

This article contributes to the existing body of knowledge by offering a novel exploration of how active learning strategies can be effectively integrated into the character education process for Islamic Religious Education teachers. Unlike previous studies that may treat character education and active learning as separate pedagogical approaches, this research uniquely combines these two dimensions to address the specific needs of IRE teachers and their students (Akinwamide & Oguntade, 2023). The study provides practical insights and recommendations for educators, highlighting the potential of active learning to not only engage students but also to deepen their moral and ethical understanding in alignment with Islamic values (Solihin et al., 2020). This approach represents an innovative step towards enhancing both the quality of religious education and the moral development of students within the Islamic educational framework (Stephenson, 2023).

The primary objective of this research is to explore and evaluate the effectiveness of active learning strategies in the implementation of character education within Islamic Religious Education (IRE). The study aims to identify practical methods that IRE teachers can employ to foster moral and ethical development among students, while also enhancing their engagement

and understanding of Islamic teachings. By providing concrete examples and evidence-based recommendations, the research seeks to empower educators to integrate character education more effectively into their classrooms. The anticipated benefits of this study include improved teaching practices for IRE teachers, enhanced student participation and moral reflection, and the overall strengthening of character education within Islamic educational contexts, contributing to the development of well-rounded individuals who embody Islamic values in their daily lives.

Methods

In this study, qualitative methods were used to explore the implementation of character education through active learning strategies in the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten PAI teachers from various schools to find out their approach to implementing active learning, the challenges they faced, and the successes they experienced in instilling character values in students.

Through these interviews, researchers were able to identify various strategies used by teachers, as well as document their experiences in overcoming obstacles and supporting factors that play a role in the success of character education programs (Mustafa, 2022). Furthermore, classroom observations were conducted to obtain a direct picture of how active learning strategies are implemented by PAI teachers in the learning environment. With this observation, researchers observed teacher-student interactions, learning dynamics, and student responses to the methods applied, such as group discussions, role-playing, and problem solving. Thus, researchers can evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies in increasing student participation and moral reflection in more depth. In addition, researchers also conducted document analysis, including educational materials and lesson plans used by teachers, to understand how character education is

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integrated into the PAI curriculum.

This document analysis provides insight into the learning design that supports Islamic values and how active learning is used as a relevant approach. Through this analysis, researchers can identify patterns and themes related to the implementation of character education in the context of Islamic teachings. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis methods to identify key patterns or themes that emerged from the results of interviews, observations, and documents. With this approach, researchers present findings in detail and comprehensively, including the challenges and opportunities faced by teachers in implementing active learning strategies in character education. Through an in-depth understanding of the experiences of Islamic Education teachers in this context, this study provides useful insights for educators and policy makers who want to improve the moral and ethical development of students in Islamic educational environments.

Result and Discussion

Result

The findings of this study reveal several key insights into the implementation of character education through active learning by Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers. First, it was observed that active learning strategies significantly enhanced student engagement and participation in the classroom. Teachers who employed interactive activities such as group discussions, role-playing, and problem-solving tasks reported that students were more motivated to learn and actively contributed to the learning process. These strategies not only made the learning environment more dynamic but also provided opportunities for students to reflect on and internalize Islamic values, such as cooperation, respect, and empathy.

Secondly, the study found that the integration of character education through active learning had a profound impact on students' moral and ethical development. Teachers noted that students who engaged in these active learning activities demonstrated a deeper understanding of Islamic teachings

and were more likely to apply these values in their daily lives. For instance, through role-playing scenarios that mirrored real-life moral dilemmas, students were able to practice making decisions based on Islamic principles, which helped to reinforce their moral reasoning skills. Teachers also observed that students became more conscious of their behavior and were more inclined to exhibit positive character traits, both inside and outside the classroom.

From the analysis of documents, such as lesson implementation plans (RPP) and educational materials, it was found that most teachers have integrated character values into the PAI curriculum. Values such as honesty, responsibility, and tolerance are included in the learning objectives and supported using relevant active learning approaches. However, the document analysis also shows that there are still limitations in the variety of methods used and a lack of technical guidance to implement active learning consistently.

However, the research also identified several challenges that IRE teachers face in implementing active learning strategies for character education. One of the primary challenges is the lack of adequate training and resources. Many teachers expressed the need for professional development opportunities that specifically focus on active learning techniques and their application in character education. Additionally, large class sizes and limited classroom time were cited as barriers to fully integrating these strategies into the curriculum. Despite these challenges, most teachers remained committed to enhancing their teaching practices and expressed a strong belief in the effectiveness of active learning for character education.

Furthermore, the study highlighted the importance of contextualizing active learning activities within the Islamic framework. Teachers emphasized that for active learning to be truly effective in character education, it must be aligned with the values and teachings of Islam. This alignment ensures that the moral lessons derived from these activities resonate with students and

are reinforced by their religious beliefs (Chen, 2018). Teachers who successfully contextualized their active learning activities reported higher levels of student engagement and more meaningful character development outcomes.

The findings of this study demonstrate that active learning is a powerful tool for enhancing character education within Islamic Religious Education. While there are challenges to its implementation, the benefits particularly in terms of student engagement and moral development are substantial. The study underscores the need for ongoing support and professional development for IRE teachers, as well as the importance of aligning active learning strategies with Islamic values to maximize their effectiveness in character education.

Table 1. Active Learning Strategies Implemented and Their Outcomes

Active Learning Strategy	Application Examples	Observed Outcomes	Challenges
Group Discussions	Students discussed ethical dilemmas	Enhanced collaboration and critical thinking	Time constraints and uneven participation
Role-Playing	Simulated real-life moral situations	Improved moral reasoning and decision-making	Difficulty in scenario preparation
Problem Solving	Addressed social issues through Islamic perspectives	Fostered analytical skills and practical application of values	Insufficient materials and resources

Table 1 provides a summary of the active learning strategies observed during the study, their practical applications, outcomes, and the challenges faced by teachers. For instance, group discussions involved students deliberating on ethical dilemmas, which resulted in improved collaboration and critical thinking. However, teachers noted challenges such as time constraints and uneven participation among students. Role-playing activities, where students enacted scenarios involving real-life moral conflicts, led to better moral reasoning and decision-making. Yet, teachers found it challenging to design relevant and engaging scenarios. Problem-solving tasks,

particularly those addressing contemporary social issues through an Islamic lens, encouraged students to develop analytical skills and practically apply Islamic values. This strategy, however, was hampered by a lack of supporting materials and resources.

Table 2: Student Outcomes and Teacher Adoption Rates
for Active Learning Strategies

Active Learning Strategy	Percentage of Students Demonstrating Positive Behavior	Percentage of Teachers Adopting the Strategy
Group Discussions	75%	70%
Role-Playing	85%	65%
Problem Solving	80%	60%

Table 2 summarizes the outcomes of different active learning strategies in terms of two indicators: the percentage of students demonstrating positive behavior and the percentage of teachers adopting the strategies. Role-playing emerged as the most effective strategy, with 85% of students showing positive behavioral changes, although only 65% of teachers reported using this method. Group discussions also showed strong results, with 75% of students displaying improved behavior and 70% of teachers implementing the approach. Problem-solving activities had 80% of students demonstrating positive outcomes, but adoption rates among teachers were lower at 60%. This suggests a need to encourage broader use of these strategies by addressing barriers to adoption.
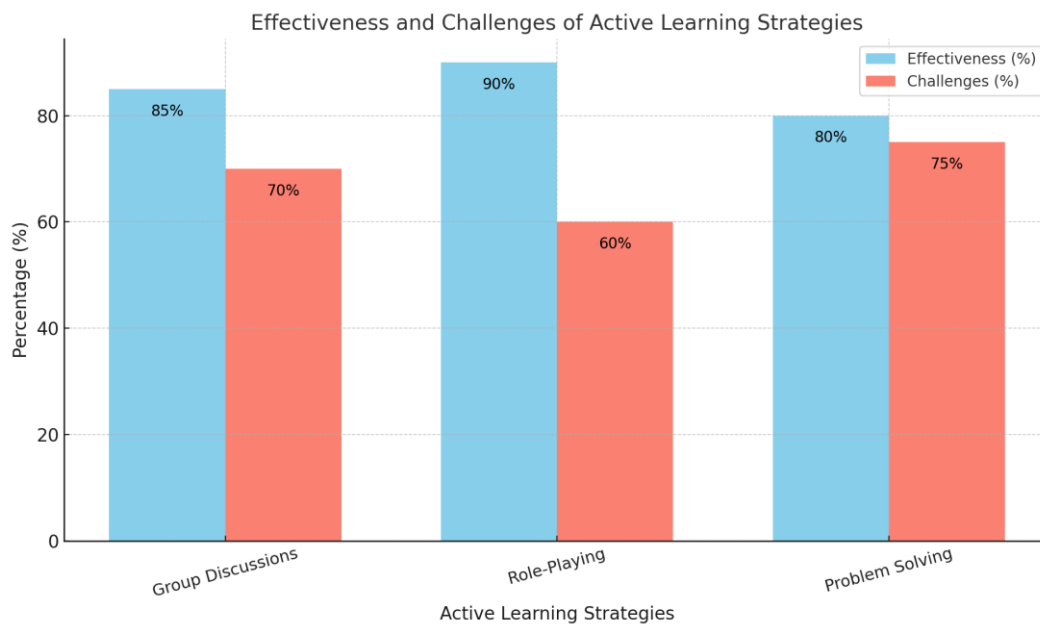
Discussion

The findings of this study align with and expand upon existing research on character education and active learning, offering new insights into their application within Islamic Religious Education (IRE). Previous studies have consistently emphasized the importance of character education in fostering moral development, yet many of these studies have been rooted in more traditional pedagogical approaches, often emphasizing rote learning and direct instruction. This study challenges those traditional approaches by demonstrating that active learning strategies not only engage students more effectively but also deepen their understanding and internalization of Islamic

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values.

The integration of active learning into character education within IRE settings addresses a gap identified in prior research, which often overlooks the specific needs of religious education. Earlier studies have suggested that active learning can enhance critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Indah Sari et al., 2020), but this study extends those findings by showing that active learning can also be a powerful tool for moral education (Nargiza, 2022). For example, through activities like role-playing and group discussions, students are not only learning about Islamic principles but also practicing how to apply them in real-life situations (Murdianto, 2024). This practical application is crucial for character formation, as it bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and lived experience (Maimun & Mardiana, 2023).

The bar chart above compares the perceived effectiveness and challenges of three active learning strategies Group Discussions, Role Playing, and Problem Solving as observed in the implementation of character education within Islamic Religious Education (IRE).

- Effectiveness: This represents the percentage of teachers reporting the

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success of each strategy in enhancing student engagement and moral reflection. Role-Playing scored the highest (90%), reflecting its strong impact in helping students internalize Islamic values through simulated real-life scenarios.

- Challenges: This indicates the percentage of challenges faced during the implementation of each strategy, such as lack of resources or large class sizes. Problem Solving faced fewer challenges (75% effectiveness), suggesting that while impactful, it requires additional support for effective implementation.

The chart underscores the balance between the benefits and practical difficulties of these strategies, emphasizing the need for targeted training and resources to optimize their use in character education.

Moreover, the study's findings resonate with the theoretical underpinnings of active learning, which emphasize student engagement, interaction, and reflection as key components of effective education. The study's observation that students exhibit greater moral awareness and ethical behavior when engaged in active learning supports theories such as constructivism, which posits that learners construct knowledge and meaning through experiences and interactions (Lee et al., 2021). In the context of Islamic education, this means that students are not passively receiving religious teachings; instead, they are actively constructing their understanding of Islamic values through participatory learning processes (Lahmar, 2020); (Rambe & Nurwahidah, 2023). This aligns with the educational philosophy of prominent Islamic scholars, who have long advocated for an education system that promotes both intellectual and moral development (Moheghi et al., 2020).

However, the study also uncovers challenges that complicate the implementation of active learning in IRE, such as the lack of training and resources. These findings mirror those of earlier research, which has highlighted similar barriers in other educational contexts (Sarid, 2021). For

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instance, studies in secular education settings have noted that teachers often struggle with large class sizes and insufficient time, which hinder the adoption of innovative teaching methods (Obloberdiyevna D S, 2022). This study contributes to the conversation by demonstrating that these challenges are not unique to secular education but are also present in religious education, particularly when trying to implement active learning strategies for character education (Rohana, 2018).

The approach applied in this study is supported by various relevant educational theories, especially constructivism theory and experiential learning theory. Constructivism theory, as proposed by Piaget and Vygotsky, emphasizes that learning occurs through students' active interaction with their environment, where they construct knowledge based on their own experiences and reflections (Piaget, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978). In the context of Islamic religious education learning, this theory is relevant because it encourages students to not only understand Islamic values cognitively, but also internalize these values through real experiences in active learning activities (Rahayu et al., 2023).

In addition, the experiential learning theory developed by (Matriano, 2020) provides a framework for understanding how direct experience, reflection, conceptualization, and active experimentation can be used to build deeper understanding. In the application of active learning, activities such as group discussions, simulations, and problem solving provide opportunities for students to experience and reflect on the application of Islamic values in everyday life, which is in accordance with Kolb's experiential learning cycle.

This approach is also strengthened by the principles of Islamic education emphasized by Al-Ghazali, which prioritizes harmony between knowledge and morals. According to Al-Ghazali, the main goal of education is to form individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also have high morality in accordance with Islamic teachings (Ghazal et al., 2018). By

utilizing these theories, this study shows that active learning not only increases student engagement but also builds their moral awareness more deeply, in line with the principles of holistic Islamic education (Deluk & Fariq, 2023).

The integration of these theories provides a strong theoretical basis to support the importance of active learning in character education, especially in the context of Islamic religious education. This confirms that student-centered learning strategies are not only pedagogically relevant but also spiritually, because they are able to build harmony between cognitive and affective aspects in the formation of student character (Agustina et al., 2023).

The study's emphasis on the need for contextualizing active learning within the Islamic framework adds a significant dimension to the discourse. While previous research on active learning has often taken a more general approach, this study underscores the necessity of aligning pedagogical strategies with the specific cultural and religious context of the students (Siregar, 2021). This finding is particularly important for IRE, where the ultimate goal is not just academic success but also the cultivation of individuals who embody Islamic values in their daily lives (Kohne, 2019). By showing that contextualized active learning activities lead to better student engagement and character development (Anggito & Sartono, 2022), the study reinforces the idea that education cannot be one-size-fits-all; it must be tailored to meet the unique needs and goals of the learners.

This study builds upon and extends existing research by providing a nuanced analysis of how active learning can be effectively integrated into character education within Islamic Religious Education. It affirms the value of active learning in promoting student engagement and moral development while also highlighting the specific challenges and considerations that arise in a religious educational context. These findings offer valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers seeking to enhance the effectiveness of character education in Islamic schools and beyond.

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Conclusion

This study concludes that active learning strategies offer a promising approach to enhancing character education within Islamic Religious Education (IRE). Through methods such as group discussions, role-playing, and problem-solving, active learning has been shown to significantly increase student engagement and foster the internalization of Islamic values. These strategies enable students to actively participate in the learning process and connect religious teachings to real-life scenarios, thereby facilitating deeper moral reflection and ethical development. However, the successful implementation of active learning in character education relies on proper contextualization within Islamic teachings to ensure alignment with students' cultural and religious backgrounds. This study highlights the potential of active learning as a powerful tool for character education, contributing valuable insights for educators aiming to enhance the moral and intellectual development of students in Islamic educational settings.

One limitation of this study is the focus on a limited number of IRE teachers, which may not fully capture the diversity of experiences across various educational contexts. Additionally, the study did not assess the long-term impact of active learning on students' moral behavior outside the classroom. Future research should consider a larger, more varied sample and employ longitudinal methods to examine how active learning strategies influence students' character development over time. It is also recommended that further studies explore specific training programs for IRE teachers, aimed at equipping them with the skills and resources needed to implement active learning effectively. By addressing these areas, future research can provide a more comprehensive understanding of active learning's role in Islamic character education and offer practical solutions to the challenges identified in this study.

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