Challenges and Strategies of Moral Faith Teachers in Instilling Character in the Era Digital at Mtsn Parepare

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Abstract

This thesis aims to describe the challenges and strategies applied by moral faith teachers in instilling character in the digital era in students at MTsN Parepare. This study uses a type of qualitative approach with an ex post facto type of research that is descriptive in the form of field research and direct data collection through observation and interviews with PAI MTsN Parepare teachers. The research paradigm used is a qualitative descriptive paradigm that seeks to understand in depth the social and educational reality that is taking place in schools. The results of this study explain that teachers of Moral Faith at MTsN Parepare face various challenges in cultivating students' character in the digital era, such as the negative influence of social media, lack of awareness of digital ethics in students, and limited time in a dense curriculum. The challenge of teachers in implementing strategies is the use of digital media as a means of learning, problem-based learning methods, as well as discussions and simulations related to moral issues in cyberspace, while guiding students through self-reflection and example. The strategy has shown positive results although not fully optimal, but with consistent and continuous implementation students are beginning to be able to understand and practice character values in their digital lives.

Keywords *: Challenges, Teacher Strategies, Character Moral Beliefs, Digital*

1.   INTRODUCTION

Education is a systematic process that aims to transfer knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to the younger generation or other individuals so that they can

function optimally in society. More than just delivering information, education also involves character building, creativity development, and the ability to think critically. (Ali, 2000) In the scope of formal education, one of the subjects that is very important in the process of moral building is the subject of Islamic Religious Education.

Islamic religious education has a very important role in shaping the character, morals, and spirituality of Muslim individuals. This is due to several key factors that underlie the existence of Islamic religious education.(Rochmatin, 2013) First, Islam is not just a religion, but also a system of life that includes social, political, economic, and cultural aspects. Therefore, Islamic religious education plays a crucial role in teaching moral values, ethics, and principles that must be used as a basis in daily life. Islamic religious education plays a very significant role in the process of fostering noble character or morals in students. This is because Islamic religious education not only provides an understanding of religious teachings, but also encourages individuals to internalize the moral and ethical values taught in Islam into their daily behavior and attitudes.(Yusri, N., Ananta, M. A., Handayani, W., & Haura, 2024)

One of the main aspects of Islamic religious education is the learning of high character values such as honesty, patience, compassion, justice, helpfulness, and forgiveness. Through the teaching of Islamic teachings, students are invited to understand the importance of applying these values in every aspect of their lives.4 Students are taught to be honest in all things, both in word and deed, and to be patient and forgiving in the face of trials or conflicts.

Islamic religious education also helps in strengthening the moral awareness of students. By understanding that Allah is always watching and judging every human deed, students will be more likely to act in accordance with Islamic moral norms. Students will feel compelled to do good, avoid sinful deeds, and strive to improve the quality of their morals. The subject of Islamic religious education has a very great relevance to the process of cultivating students' character. Islamic

religious education membawa as well as rich moral and ethical teachings, which emphasize values such as honesty, justice, compassion, patience, and forgiveness. Learning about moral development and character formation for individuals is very important to develop good morals and character in daily life.(Arsyad, A., Sulfemi, W. B., & Fajartriani, 2020)

Character encompasses a variety of qualities that are seen as high moral values in Islam, such as honesty, justice, compassion, patience, generosity, and self-control. Individuals who have character are characterized by good behavior, polite attitude, and good attitude in interacting with fellow humans. They show kindness, integrity, and generosity in their actions. The concept of character in Islam includes not only the relationship between individuals and Allah, but also the relationship between humans and the relationship with the surrounding environment. The character development of students by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers does not always run smoothly. PAI teachers often face various challenges that affect the process of fostering students' character and morals. One of the main challenges faced is the diversity of learners in terms of backgrounds, interests, abilities, and experiences. Each student has their own uniqueness and challenges in the learning process, so PAI teachers must be able to adapt their learning approach according to the individual needs of students.(Sajadi, 2019)

PAI subject teachers also face obstacles in creating a conducive learning environment, such as limited time, resources, or support from schools and parents. This can hinder the effectiveness of student character development, because non-optimal learning can reduce the expected positive influence and impact. According to Syaiful Bahri said that learning challenges are learning challenges referring to various obstacles or difficulties faced by individuals in the learning process to achieve academic goals or personal development. Learning challenges can stem from a variety of factors, including individual characteristics, learning environment, or other external factors. The explanation describes the learning challenges faced

by every teacher dapat disebabkan dari berbagai faktor yang harus di perhatikan oleh guru.(Kartika, I., & Arifudin, 2024)

One of the other challenges is in the current Digital Era. The issue of this research is that the challenges in fostering students' character are increasingly complex. Rapidly developing information technology has a significant impact on the way students interact and learn. On the one hand, technology offers access to a wide range of learning resources and opportunities for broader self-development. The use of technology can also result in distractions, such as social media addiction, negative content, and a decrease in the quality of direct social interactions. Limited time and resources from schools and inadequate support from parents often exacerbate the situation. In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, challenges can hinder effectiveness in conveying character values. Suboptimal learning and lack of supervision can reduce the expected positive impact.

Based on the results of observations at MTsN Parepare conducted by the author, the observation process is carried out through observation in the learning process and the process of activities outside the classroom. Some initial findings concluded that students' behavior is still relatively low in terms of their character aspects, as shown from the results of observations where students do not show behavior of respecting friends, and there are still some students who do not show patience in class.(Makki, M., & Sarianto, 2020) On the other hand, observations are also carried out outside the classroom. Students show a lack of morals by issuing negative sentences and mocking their friends is the reason why the author concludes that students still have low moral character. The relationship with the current digital era is that there is a negative influence of digital, in this case the influence of mobile phones on the daily lives of students, both in terms of the way they speak words and in terms of interacting with their friends.

Based on the above problems, the author will conduct research to identify and describe the challenges and strategies faced by Islamic Religious Education

(PAI) teachers in instilling the character of students at MTsN Parepare, especially in the current digital era by conducting research entitled "Challenges and Strategi Moral Faith Teacher in Instilling Character in the Digital Era at MTsN Parepare".(Ardi, 2025)

2. METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with *an ex post facto type*, namely researching events that have occurred. This approach was chosen to understand social phenomena in depth through narrative data collected directly from the field. The focus is on exploring the meaning, perception, and experience of the subject holistically.(Syahrizal, H., & Jailani, 2023)

The *ex post facto type* is used because the researcher cannot influence the variables being studied. The goal is to trace the cause-and-effect relationship based on the symptoms that have taken place, so that it can uncover the dynamics behind an event. Data collection was carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation. Researchers go directly into the field to capture empirical facts and obtain information from relevant sources. The collected data was analyzed descriptively to find patterns, meanings, and relationships between findings. The results of this analysis are the basis for answering the problem formulation and understanding the phenomenon as a whole.(Arima, M., Amaliyah, 2021)

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Challenge of Moral Faith Teachers in Character Cultivation in the Digital Era

The challenges faced by moral faith teachers in cultivating character in the digital era are very complex considering the rapid development of technology that affects students' mindsets and behaviors. Easy access to information via the internet often causes students to watch content that is not always in line with the moral and

moral values taught in religious education.(Jamil, M., Setiawan, D., 2025) This explanation exacerbates the difficulty in forming a strong student character because students are more likely to follow outside influences who pay less attention to positive values. Based on this explanation, where tendency to over-indulge many interacting with digital devices rather than with social environments also reduces opportunities for students to learn directly about social values, such as honesty, empathy, and responsibility, which should be at the core of learning Akidah akhlak. Through the results of this study, the researcher asked several questions to describe the challenges faced by teachers.(Putri, A. S., Mansyur, 2022)

The first question is related to how teachers see the motivation of students to learn in the Moral Faith lesson in the current digital era, based on the description of the informant conducted with PAI teachers that: In general, I see that students' learning motivation has decreased in recent years, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic where the use of gadgets has become very dominant. They are used to learning online, but not all of them use the technology for positive things. In the Moral Faith lessons, which emphasize the values of faith and morality, I often see them lack enthusiasm. They are also more interested in opening social media or playing games than delving into values such as patience, honesty, or sincerity. For them, these lessons are not as interesting as exact lessons or even other lessons that use interactive learning apps. So, the biggest challenge is how to make them realize the importance of this lesson for themselves in the midst of the rapid influence of the digital world.(Majid, 2020)

Based on the results of interviews with teachers, it is explained that students' learning motivation in Moral Faith lessons in the digital era has shown a significant decline, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. The increasingly dominant use of gadgets in students' daily lives has led to online learning habits that are used more often. However, not all students use this technology for positive things, especially in lessons that contain the values of faith and morality such as moral beliefs.(Repi, P. A., Abdullah, 2024)

Many students are more interested in accessing social media or playing games than delving into important values such as patience, honesty, and sincerity. This shows that there is a big challenge in increasing students' interest and motivation for this lesson. For them, the lesson of moral beliefs is considered less interesting compared to other lessons, especially that makes use of the application more engaging interactive learning. Teachers identified the biggest challenge as how to make students aware of the importance of these lessons amid the powerful influence of the digital world.

If you are asked about motivation, I think it really depends on how the material is delivered. Today's children are very visual, bored and critical quickly. If it is only lectures or reading textbooks, they lack enthusiasm. But if we combine it with digital media, they can be more interested. However, in general, the study of moral beliefs is not a priority for them. They are more interested in subjects that have a direct connection to the future, such as Maths or English lessons

Students' learning motivation is highly dependent on the way the material is delivered. According to him, today's children have a tendency to quickly feel bored and tend to be critical, and prioritize visual and interactive learning. If you only rely on lectures or reading textbooks, students will lose enthusiasm and easily lose attention. Subject matter can be combined with digital media, such as videos or learning applications that are more interesting, students will be more interested and enthusiastic in following lessons. However, the lesson of moral beliefs in general remains not a top priority for students, because they tend to be more interested in lessons that are considered directly related to their future.(Wahyuni, H., Supriyatno, 2025)

The previous opinion by expressing the fact that many students are less interested in the lesson of moral beliefs. Students tend to be more active and enthusiastic in lessons that are project- or technology-based, which offer a more interactive learning experience and is relevant to their digital world. In the Moral Faith lessons, they feel like they are only receiving material that they have often

heard since childhood without seeing a direct connection with their daily lives, let alone with the moral challenges that exist in the fast-paced and complex digital world.(Suhaebi, S., & Nurdiansyah, 2022) The next question is related to what are the factors that cause the low motivation, based on the results of interviews conducted with PAI teachers that: I think there are several factors. First, the influence of consumptive digital environments, such as TikTok or Instagram, which is more conducive to entertainment than education. Second, the lack of parental role in supervision, especially in the use of gadgets at home. Many students are not limited by their screen *time*. Third, this moral creed lesson is not tested in the national exam or the selection to enter their favorite school, so they consider it unimportant so that they only learn before the exam, even that is limited to memorization, not understanding the meaning or practicing the values.

Several factors cause low motivation for students to learn in the Moral Creed lesson. First, the influence of a consumptive digital environment, such as social media TikTok or Instagram, which leads more to entertainment than education. This digital world full of entertainment content distracts students from more weighty lessons and teaches moral values. Second, the role of parents in supervision, especially in the use of gadgets at home, is very minimal. Many students are not limited by their screen time, so they spend more time on social media or playing games than learning or delving into the lessons of moral beliefs.

Apart from the influence of technology that makes children tend to look for things that are instant and fun, I also see that the role of parents is very large. Many parents emphasize academic values but do not strengthen character education at home. Then, the factor of the friendship environment is also very influential. If their environment does not support good behavior, then moral lessons will only become a theory in the classroom. There is also a tendency for students to trust YouTubers or celebrities more than ustadz or teachers.

The resource person added that in addition to the influence of technology that makes students tend to look for things that are instant and fun, the role of parents

is also very influential in the low motivation of students to learn. Many parents place more emphasis on academic grades and school achievements, but pay less attention to character education at home. Moral education and moral values that should be built at home are often neglected so that students feel that the moral beliefs in school lessons are not very important. In addition, the environmental factor of friendship also plays a big role.

Moral Faith Teacher Strategies in Character Cultivation in the Digital Era

The strategy of moral faith teachers in cultivating character in the digital era at MTsN Parepare involves a flexible approach that is relevant to the times. Teachers combine a variety of learning methods, such as lectures, group discussions, creative assignments (such as video and poster creation) and written reflection to accommodate a variety of student learning styles. In overcoming the limitations of the facilities, teachers use existing technology such as videos and images to explain the concept of morality in a more interesting way.(Aisyah, 2025) In one class, I can find students with very different backgrounds, abilities, and learning styles. Some quickly grasp the material just by listening to the explanation, but others need visuals or hands-on practice. So I can't rely on just one approach. For visual students, I prepare media such as illustration pictures of moral values or short videos about exemplary stories. While students who are more active learn through practice, I give them role-playing assignments or short plays. I also identify students who seem passive or lack confidence, and then approach them personally to understand their constraints.

PAI teachers at MTsN Parepare apply different approaches to accommodate the diverse learning needs of students in a very individualistic way. Realizing that students have varied backgrounds, abilities, and learning styles, teachers do not rely on just one teaching method. For students with visual learning styles, teachers provide learning media such as illustrations and short videos that illustrate moral values. For students who are more active and learn through practice, teachers give

role-playing assignments or short dramas to illustrate moral values in a more tangible context. In addition, teachers also pay attention to students who are more passive or less confident with a personal approach to understand their learning barriers and provide more specific support so that they feel more comfortable and confident in the learning process. I realized that every student has unique needs. So I apply an individualized approach within the time limit possible. Contohnya, When delivering material on manners to parents, I gave students the opportunity to choose the form of assignment according to their interests: it could be an essay reflektif, presentations, or poster works. For students who have difficulty understanding the text, I accompany them with additional explanations after class. In fact, for some students with concentration disorders, I often provide light motor activity to keep them engaged. In essence, I focus not only on the curriculum targets, but also on a humane approach so that all students can learn comfortably.

PAI teachers at MTsN Parepare apply a very individualized approach in addressing the diverse learning needs of students. By realizing that each student has a unique way of learning, the teacher gives students the flexibility to choose the form of assignment that suits their interests, such as reflective essays, presentations or the creation of poster works when discussing material on manners to parents for students who have difficulty understanding the text, the teacher provides additional explanations outside of class hours. For students with concentration disorders, teachers use a more interactive approach such as providing light motor activity to keep them engaged in learning. This approach reflects teachers' commitment to not only focus on curriculum achievement

Based on this explanation, what methods do teachers use to encourage active student participation in learning, based on the results of interviews conducted with PAI teachers: I often use the student-centered method. For example, I start the lesson with a lighter question that is relevant to their daily lives, such as 'How to respond to a friend who insults us on social media.

The results of the interview explained that PAI teachers at MTsN Parepare use a student-centered method to encourage students' active participation in learning. The contextual method starts with a triggering question that is relevant to the real-life situation the student is facing such as a question about how to respond to an insulting friend on social media. One effective method is the open discussion method and the case method. I usually bring up a light case study that is relevant, then ask students to provide solutions based on moral values. For example, I asked a case about a student who cheated and we discussed it from the moral side. They became enthusiastic about discussing because they felt emotionally involved. I also apply the 'peer teaching' method.

The results of the interview explained that PAI teachers at MTsN Parepare also apply open discussion methods and case studies as a way to encourage active student participation. In this method, the teacher provides relevant case studies, such as the case of students who cheat and then ask students to provide solutions based on moral values. The approach makes students feel more emotionally engaged and motivated to discuss because they can relate the material to real situations. In fact, I rely heavily on group work to form values such as responsibility, empathy, and tolerance. For example, when discussing the theme of ukhuwah islamiyah, I asked them to make a joint project such as a short video about the importance of maintaining brotherhood. From there, it can be seen how they behave in the team, who can be a leader, who is patient, who cannot respect the opinions of friends. I directed each group to reflect on their experiences after the group work.

The results of the interview explained that group work is highly relied on to form character values such as responsibility, empathy, and tolerance. One example of its application is in the discussion of the theme of ukhuwah Islamiyah, where students are asked to make joint projects, such as short videos that raise the importance of maintaining brotherhood. Through the activity, teachers can observe how students behave in a team, who can be a leader, who shows patience and who still needs to learn to respect the opinions of others.

Challenge Strategies for Character Cultivation in the Digital Era in MTsN Parepare Students

The success rate of the strategy implemented in overcoming the challenges of character cultivation in the digital era in MTsN Parepare students looks quite positive, although major challenges still exist. The use of various learning methods such as problem-based approaches, open discussions, and projects that connect religious values with daily life has succeeded in increasing students' awareness and understanding of the values of faith and morals. Digital media, such as exemplary story videos and infographics, provide Visual dimensions that enrich the learning process, making it easier for students to better understand and absorb these values. The first question is how do you as a teacher assess the success of the strategies applied in shaping the character of students, based on the results of interviews conducted with PAI teachers that

I judge the success of the strategies I implement based on real changes in students' attitudes and behaviors, both inside and outside the classroom. I also saw how many students were able to apply the values of the Moral Faith in their daily lives. For example, whether they help friends more often, speak politely, and avoid negative behaviors such as cheating. Those are all indicators that I observe to assess whether the strategy I implement is working. that the success of the strategies applied by teachers in shaping the character of students at MTsN Parepare is assessed based on real changes in students' attitudes and behaviors both inside and outside the classroom.

Teachers monitor the extent to which students can apply the values of moral beliefs in their daily lives, such as good manners, helping each other, friends, and avoiding negative actions such as cheating. These indicators are the main reference

for teachers in evaluating the effectiveness of the learning strategies that have been carried out and provide an overview of the overall development of students' character. I assess the success of the strategy based on the students' activeness in participating, both in classroom learning and in their daily lives. I also noticed if the values taught such as honesty, responsibility, and compassion began to show in their behavior. Success can be seen when students show awareness to improve themselves, such as being more disciplined in follow lessons and be more polite in talking and interacting with others.(Salirawati, 2021)

Explain that the success of the strategies implemented can be assessed based on students' activeness in participating, both in learning in the classroom and in daily life. Teachers also pay attention to whether values such as honesty, responsibility and compassion are beginning to be reflected in students' behavior. Success is seen when students show awareness to improve themselves such as being more disciplined in following lessons and being more polite in speaking and interacting with others. This reflects the application of the characters taught in students' real lives. The next question has to do with whether there are any specific indicators that you observe as a sign of success, of course. Some of the indicators that I noticed were changes in students' social attitudes, such as a sense of responsibility, honesty, and discipline. In addition, I also see the students' motivation in following the lessons, especially when they start to be actively involved in the discussion or when the assignments I give can be completed responsibly. I also observed if they began to show more interest in living routines related to religious values, such as praying before and after studying.

Specific indicators observed as a sign of success in cultivating students' character include changes in students' social attitudes such as a sense of

responsibility, honesty, and discipline.(Shiddiq, 2020) In addition, students' motivation in following lessons is also an important indicator, especially when they are actively involved in discussions or completing assignments responsibly. Teachers also observe whether students begin to show more interest in living routines related to religious values such as praying before and after studying. The indicator that I observed was the seriousness of students in carrying out tasks related to character formation, such as group tasks that required them to work together, as well as how they can maintain moral values in difficult situations, such as when exams or when outside of school. I also saw how they applied religious teachings in their daily lives, for example in terms of honesty during exams or when talking to friends.(Salim, 2015)

Another indicator of success observed was the seriousness of students in carrying out tasks related to character formation such as group tasks that required them to work together. In addition, teachers also pay attention to how students can maintain moral values in difficult situations such as during exams or when outside of school. For example, teachers observe how students apply religious teachings in daily life, such as in terms of honesty during exams or when talking to friends. These indicators show the extent to which the values taught can be applied in the real conditions faced by students(Hakim, F., & Dahri, 2025)

The next question is related to which strategy is the most effective in your opinion, and why, based on the results of interviews conducted with PAI teachers, the most effective strategy in my opinion is problem-based learning. I often provide case studies on moral values and morals, where students must find solutions to the problem based on Islamic teachings. With this approach, they not only understand

the theory, but can also directly relate it to their lives. This touches their feelings more because they feel that they can apply what they have learned directly.

So the most effective strategy, according to him, is problem-based learning. In this strategy, teachers often provide case studies on moral and moral values where students have to find solutions to the problem based on Islamic teachings. According to him, the approach not only helps students understand theory but also allows them to directly relate the material to their daily lives. This is considered more touching students' feelings because they feel they can apply what they learn directly in real situations.(Pertiwi, 2022)

4. CONCLUSION

Character cultivation by Akidah Akhlak teachers in the digital era faces complex challenges. The dominance of negative content on social media, the weak awareness of students' digital ethics, and the gap in technological understanding between teachers and students are the main obstacles. In addition, the limited time in the dense curriculum causes the cultivation of moral values to not get an optimal portion in the learning process.

Facing these conditions, Akidah Akhlak teachers at MTsN Parepare developed a number of adaptive strategies. Among them are utilizing digital media as a means of character education, implementing problem-based learning, and activating group discussions and moral case simulations in cyberspace. This approach not only encourages student engagement, but also instills a contextual understanding of digital ethics. Teachers also act as active mentors by setting real examples and directing students to reflect on their behavior in the digital space.

In general, the strategies implemented show a positive impact. It can be seen that there is an increase in students' awareness of character values such as honesty, responsibility, and politeness in digital interactions. However, these results have not been fully maximized because external influences, especially from social media, are still a significant challenge and difficult to control from within the school environment.

However, with the strengthening of a more structured, collaborative, and sustainable strategy, as well as support from the family and school environment, efforts to cultivate morality-based character in the digital era can be more effective. Teachers play an important role as character formation agents who are able to adapt their approach to the dynamics of the times without losing the essence of Islamic moral values.

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