

TRANSFORMATION OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHER'S EXEMPLARY ROLE IN SHAPING STUDENTS' RELIGIOUS ATTITUDES (A CASE STUDY AT MADRASAH TSANAWIYAH AL-HIDAYAH WAJAK 2025)

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Abstract

This study explores the role of the exemplary behavior of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at MTs Al-Hidayah Wajak in shaping student religiosity. The findings indicate that teacher exemplary behavior functions as a tangible model for applying Islamic values in daily life, creating a religious environment that supports the internalization of religious values. Although challenges such as social media influence and time constraints exist, institutional support and digital technology can enhance the effectiveness of role modeling. This study concludes that the exemplary behavior of PAI teachers is a crucial strategy in sustainable character education, shaping students who are both academically excellent and morally mature.

Keywords: Exemplary Behavior, Islamic Religious Education, Student Religiosity

1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education holds a strategic position in shaping a generation that is not only intellectually superior but also possesses noble character, good morals, and a religious disposition (Karimahet et al., 2024). Within the school environment, the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher plays a vital role as an educator, a spiritual guide, and simultaneously a role model who embodies Islamic values in their daily conduct (Islamia et al., 2024). The exemplary behavior demonstrated through attitudes, speech, and tangible actions is believed to be the most effective means of instilling religious values in students (Putra & Ginting, 2023).

Social learning theory, as proposed by Albert Bandura, asserts that individuals learn through observation and imitation of social models in their environment (Amiruddin, 2020). In the educational context, the teacher serves as a primary model who can significantly influence students' attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, the exemplary role of the PAI teacher is not merely a supplementary aspect but a central element in the process of shaping students' religious character.

MTs Al-Hidayah Wajak, as an Islamic secondary educational institution, possesses a deeply rooted religious culture (Karimah et al, 2024). This is reflected in various religious activities that form part of the school's routine, such as congregational prayers, regular Qur'anic recitation, and the observance of Islamic holidays. The PAI teachers at this school are also known for their high dedication to fostering students' morals and spirituality (Umar, 2018).

Nevertheless, amidst this significant potential, a constructive concern emerged that served as the impetus for this research. This concern did not arise from glaring deficiencies but from the awareness that the existing potential has yet to be optimally harnessed. While the exemplary behavior demonstrated by PAI teachers has had an influence, the process by which this role modeling occurs and its impact on student religiosity have not yet been systematically documented (Wibowo & Hanum, 2023). There remains considerable room to develop more adaptive, contextual, and sustainable approaches.

Several aspects considered to be not yet fully optimized and which motivated this research include:

1. How is the transformation of the PAI teacher's exemplary strategy in shaping students' religious attitudes at MTs Al-Hidayah Wajak?
2. Is the transformation of the PAI teacher's exemplary role in shaping students' religious attitudes at MTs Al-Hidayah Wajak proceeding effectively? (Zahro et al, 2023)

The drive to create a more meaningful and impactful educational system gave rise to the reflective question: how can the exemplary role of PAI teachers be strategically developed, maximized, and transformed to shape students who not only perform religious rituals but also substantively internalize Islamic values in their daily lives?

In line with this concern, various previous studies reinforce the urgency of teacher exemplary behavior in shaping student religious character. For instance, research (Harmita et al, 2022) indicates that teacher exemplary behavior plays a significant role in internalizing the values of noble character (*akhlakul karimah*) through tangible examples that students can emulate. Other studies have found (Adolph, 2022) a significant relationship between teacher exemplary behavior and students' religious behavior, suggesting that teachers are not only instructors but also central figures in the formation of student spirituality. Similar findings (Rahmawati, 2019) emphasize that the role-modeling approach is far more effective than the lecture method in building student religiosity. Furthermore (Zahro et al.), research underscores the importance of consistency in PAI teachers' exemplary behavior to create a religious and conducive school atmosphere. This is reinforced by (Pamungkas, 2022) studies stating that Islamic values are more easily internalized and form students' disciplined character when conveyed through continuous and tangible exemplary practices. These findings strengthen both the theoretical and empirical basis for further research to explore and develop PAI teachers' exemplary strategies as a means of fostering deep and sustainable student religiosity.

Based on these studies and the existing realities, this research is deemed significant. The researcher is motivated to explore in depth how the exemplary role of PAI teachers can be transformed into an effective strategy for shaping student religiosity—not merely as a symbolic routine but as a meaningful habit genuinely embedded in their daily lives. The results of this research are expected to contribute to the development of character education strategies based on exemplary behavior, particularly at MTs Al-Hidayah and other Islamic educational institutions.

2. METHOD

This research employs a qualitative method with a field study approach, considered most appropriate for understanding in depth a social phenomenon that occurs naturally within an educational context. The aim of this approach is not to test statistical relationships between variables but to interpret the meanings behind actions, behaviors, and human interactions within their social environment. The primary focus of this research is to explore the role of PAI teachers' exemplary behavior in shaping students' religious attitudes at school (Ponorogo, 2024).

The type of research chosen is a case study, which allows for a comprehensive examination of a specific case considered representative of the phenomenon under investigation. The case study provides space to explore in detail the exemplary role of PAI teachers at MTs Al-Hidayah, viewed as a concrete example of the application of Islamic values in educational practice. Through this approach, the researcher can holistically and contextually understand the dynamics of the PAI teacher's role in shaping students' religious character (Qomari & Fauzi, 2021).

In this research, data collection was conducted through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were made to directly observe the interactions between teachers and students within the school environment. Interviews were conducted with

PAI teachers, students, and other relevant parties to obtain subjective information rich in meaning. Documentation was carried out by collecting archives, activity notes, and documents relevant to the PAI learning process. This approach is naturalistic, meaning the entire data collection process is conducted in real conditions, without engineering or manipulation by the researcher.

The use of this approach also considers the need to perceive reality as it is, without external intervention or manipulation. The research is naturalistic, implying that the researcher strives to capture phenomena or events in their actual conditions within the school environment. Thus, the religious values shaped through teacher exemplary behavior can be understood through the daily social interactions between teachers and students in real life.

Through this qualitative case study approach, the researcher hopes to provide an in-depth and comprehensive description of how the PAI teacher's exemplary role contributes to instilling religious attitudes in students. This research is expected not only to contribute to the development of Islamic education theory but also to serve as a practical reference for educators in implementing religious values through exemplary behavior within the school learning context.

The results of this study indicate that the exemplary behavior of PAI teachers at MTs Al-Hidayah has a tangible influence on shaping student religiosity. This exemplary role is manifested in three main aspects: spiritual (ritual worship), moral (personal character), and social (social awareness and responsibility). PAI teachers not only teach Islamic theory verbally but also demonstrate practical application through their daily attitudes and behaviors, such as discipline in worship, courtesy, and fostering harmonious relationships with students and fellow teachers.

Observation data revealed that students are more motivated to perform worship when they see their teachers actively participating in religious practices, such as congregational prayers and Qur'anic recitation at school. Through in-depth interviews, students acknowledged that the PAI teacher serves as an inspiration for honesty, politeness, and respect for others. Teachers who are consistent in their speech and actions more easily build emotional closeness with students, which in turn strengthens the process of internalizing religious values.

Documentation results also show that religious activities facilitated by PAI teachers, such as daily short sermons (kultum), spiritual guidance, and Qur'an memorization (tahfiz) programs, contribute to a conducive religious atmosphere in the school environment. Students are not only formally involved but also demonstrate active participation that indicates genuine engagement with these activities. This confirms that teacher exemplary behavior has been able to encourage students to lead a more religious life consciously and sustainably.\

Furthermore, the transformation of teacher exemplary behavior is also evident in their efforts to utilize technology and social media as platforms for religious outreach (dakwah) and character development. PAI teachers routinely upload Islamic content, provide advice through online learning groups, and respond to student issues with a humanistic approach that reflects Islamic values. Thus, the exemplary behavior of PAI teachers is not confined to the classroom but extends into the digital realm, keeping pace with contemporary developments without losing its core values.

Overall, the results of this study confirm that the exemplary behavior of PAI teachers at MTs Al-Hidayah plays a central role in comprehensively shaping student religiosity. This exemplary role is not static but continuously evolves according to the needs and characteristics of students and the challenges of the times. This transformation serves as a model for applicable, effective, and inspiring Islamic educational practices.

3. RESULTS

Based on the results of observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation at MTs Al-Hidayah, the researcher found that the exemplary behavior of Islamic Religious Education (PAI)

teachers plays a central role in shaping student religiosity (Zahro et al.). The transformation of this exemplary role is not static but develops dynamically.

The findings of this study confirm that PAI teachers' exemplary behavior has a significant role in shaping student religiosity. The transformation of this exemplary role encompasses not only changes in teaching methods but also concerns how teachers build moral and spiritual relationships with students contextually, in accordance with student needs, contemporary developments, and advancements in information technology.

Transformation of PAI Teacher Exemplary Strategies in Shaping Students' Religious Attitudes at MTs Al-Hidayah Wajak

The exemplary strategies employed by PAI teachers at MTs Al-Hidayah Wajak have been adapted in response to the learning needs of students in the digital era. Teachers no longer rely solely on conventional approaches but have begun to implement more interactive, visual, and affectively engaging methods. This aligns with the nature of the digital-native generation, which responds more rapidly to audiovisual stimuli and experience-based learning. Consequently, PAI teachers strive to make exemplary behavior a practice relevant to students' daily lives, including through the digital devices they are familiar with.

The structured exemplary behavior reflects careful planning by the teachers. Teachers are not merely good figures spontaneously but have prepared various forms of exemplary behavior through routine activities, class programs, and even digital interactions. Examples include instilling discipline through monitored congregational prayer schedules or implementing class projects themed "Daily Good Deeds" reported via the school's online platform. This strategy instills religious attitudes through the reinforcement of sustainable habits.

In terms of creativity, PAI teachers also innovate in conveying Islamic values through thematic approaches. For instance, when discussing honesty, teachers not only deliver material through scriptural evidence and explanations but also connect it to contemporary phenomena familiar to students, such as viral news or real-life cases. This fosters a sense of relevance and student engagement with the values being taught. They feel that religious lessons are not merely theories of the past but solutions to current life issues.

The use of digital media also constitutes a significant strategy for conveying exemplary behavior indirectly. PAI teachers at MTs Al-Hidayah actively share Islamic motivational content through class WhatsApp groups, the school's Instagram account, or learning platforms. Some teachers even create short videos containing moral messages shared every Friday morning. This strategy has proven effective as it reaches students outside the classroom and presents Islamic values in an engaging and easily digestible format.

Furthermore, PAI teachers apply open dialogue methods in the classroom, where students are given space to express opinions and reflections on religious material. This strategy makes students feel valued and emotionally involved while simultaneously developing their critical thinking skills regarding Islamic values. When students are invited to voice their perspectives, they not only learn about Islam but also build their own beliefs and commitment to those values.

Teachers' exemplary behavior is also demonstrated through their consistent conduct in the classroom and throughout the school environment. Teachers strive to display attitudes that reflect Islamic values, such as humility, patience, and honesty in daily interactions. When dealing with students facing problems, they respond with a persuasive and educational approach rather than harsh punishment. This consistency leaves a profound impression on students that Islam is not just something taught but is a tangible reality in daily life.

Within a broader strategy, PAI teachers also collaborate with homeroom teachers and other subject teachers to build a religious school culture. Exemplary behavior does not originate from a single figure but is constructed as a cohesive social system. This demonstrates coordination and

integration among teachers in conveying religious values, both through the curriculum and non-formal activities. The culture of greeting with Islamic salutations, maintaining school cleanliness, and respecting prayer times becomes part of the lifestyle modeled by all educators.

Ultimately, the structured, creative, and student-characteristic-adjusted exemplary strategies at MTs Al-Hidayah have positively contributed to naturally shaping students' religious attitudes. Students experience religious education not merely as an academic obligation but as a meaningful process of self-development. Thus, teacher exemplary behavior is not just a teaching method but has evolved into a lifestyle pattern that is imitated, internalized, and continued by students both inside and outside the school.

This adaptive exemplary strategy also successfully builds a bridge between students' digital world and Islamic spiritual values. When teachers insert religious messages through media already familiar to students, such as short videos, Islamic infographics, or even moral-themed memes, students not only feel emotionally close but also intellectually connected. By integrating religious content as part of students' digital routines, teachers subtly instill Islamic values into students' personal spaces. This reinforces the natural internalization of values, as students receive them in a relaxed yet meaningful atmosphere.

On the other hand, the research results indicate that the exemplary strategies of PAI teachers at MTs Al-Hidayah successfully create an inclusive and transformative learning environment. Exemplary behavior is conveyed not only in the form of instruction but also through tangible actions that students comprehend. Teachers become concrete examples of what they teach, and students respond by gradually imitating these attitudes. Behavioral changes in students, such as increased participation in religious activities, heightened awareness of worship, and initiative to discuss Islamic values, are evidence that creatively and contextually designed exemplary strategies significantly impact religious character formation.

Transformation of PAI Teacher Exemplary Behavior Effectively Shapes Student Religiosity at MTs Al-Hidayah Wajak

The transformation of PAI teachers' exemplary behavior at MTs Al-Hidayah Wajak has proven to play a major role in shaping students' religious attitudes. Exemplary behavior is no longer limited to speech or theory but is manifested through tangible actions reflecting Islamic values. Teachers appear as role models in worship, speak courteously, act honestly, and treat students fairly and patiently. These attitudes are observed, imitated, and gradually become part of the students' character.

As an Islamic-based institution with a strong religious culture, MTs Al-Hidayah Wajak provides a conducive environment for this role-modeling process. Most students come from religious families, making the consistent figure of the teacher who practices Islamic values highly influential. An eighth-grade student stated, "I became diligent in prayer because the teacher is always on time and reprimands gently." This shows that exemplary behavior is more effective than verbal advice.

In learning activities, PAI teachers emphasize direct role-modeling over lectures. Religious teachings are not only delivered but also exemplified. For example, when teaching honesty, the teacher demonstrates honesty through actions, such as admitting mistakes or resolving problems fairly. This approach facilitates students' understanding and application of Islamic values practically.

The principal of MTs Al-Hidayah Wajak emphasized that teachers not only teach but also educate through tangible examples. Students understand values more quickly if they see them directly in everyday life. Therefore, transforming exemplary behavior into a strategy is relevant for character education, especially amidst current moral challenges.

This transformation also includes a more empathetic and contextual teacher approach. Teachers do not maintain distance but build warm relationships, listen, and provide personal advice. Their friendly, patient, and helpful attitude in solving student problems demonstrates

inspiring Islamic morals. The learning environment consequently becomes a place that supports the natural growth of religious attitudes.

Teachers' commitment to actively participating in religious activities also strengthens their exemplary role. They join congregational prayers, morning Qur'anic recitation (tadarus), and other religious events, demonstrating that Islamic teachings are not just theory but must be practiced. This motivates students to be active in worship without coercion.

The close relationship between PAI teachers and students at MTs Al-Hidayah Wajak, including outside class hours, reinforces the impact of exemplary behavior. Intensive interaction allows students to witness directly the teacher's life aligned with Islamic teachings. From dress, speech, to problem-solving approaches, everything becomes an unwritten yet impactful lesson. Teacher exemplary behavior also contributes to shaping a religious and harmonious school culture. Values such as mutual respect, discipline in worship, and Islamic brotherhood (ukhuwah Islamiyah) grow as shared cultural norms. Students remind each other to pray and maintain good conduct. Religiosity is no longer merely an individual matter but becomes part of a positive collective habit.

Based on observations and interviews, the transformation of PAI teachers' exemplary behavior at MTs Al-Hidayah Wajak makes a tangible contribution to shaping student religiosity. Through consistent role-modeling attitudes, humanistic approaches, and close relationships, teachers become inspiring figures who naturally instill religious values. Religious education in this school is not merely theoretical but is grounded in students' daily lives.

Furthermore, the transformation of PAI teachers' exemplary behavior at MTs Al-Hidayah is evident from the alignment between teachings and practice. Teachers not only convey the importance of congregational prayer but also directly participate in religious activities such as morning tadarus, collective dhikr, and guiding students in daily worship. This involvement demonstrates that Islamic teachings are not merely subject matter but a life guide lived authentically. Consequently, students are encouraged to participate in religious activities with awareness, not coercion.

In the madrasah environment like MTs Al-Hidayah Wajak, the closeness between teachers and students is intense, both inside and outside the classroom. Some teachers reside near the madrasah, allowing students to directly observe how they lead an Islamic lifestyle—from dress, speech, to worship. This kind of exemplary behavior provides holistic learning that touches cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects through continuous interaction.

Teacher exemplary behavior also contributes to shaping a religious and harmonious school culture. Attitudes of mutual respect, cooperation, and ukhuwah Islamiyah grow through real examples. Students remind each other to pray and guard their speech, making religiosity a shared culture rather than a personal matter. Thus, PAI teacher exemplary behavior not only shapes individuals but also creates a social environment that supports the collective growth of religious attitudes.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings at MTs Al-Hidayah Wajak, it can be concluded that the transformation of PAI teachers' exemplary behavior plays a crucial role in shaping students' religious attitudes. This exemplary role is demonstrated not only through speech but is embodied in the teachers' consistent behavior, such as diligence in worship, honesty, patience, and care for students. Through an empathetic, contextual, and relevant approach for students, PAI teachers succeed in making Islamic values a part of their lives, not just theory.

The exemplary strategies applied by teachers at MTs Al-Hidayah Wajak reinforce the internalization of religious values in students. Furthermore, the direct involvement of students alongside teachers in various religious activities contributes to creating a religious school culture, making role-modeling a holistic character-building process. Thus, the transformation of PAI teachers' exemplary behavior not only shapes students' personal religiosity but also creates a learning environment that supports the comprehensive growth of Islamic character.

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