

ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHER AND CHARACTER EDUCATION DURING A PANDEMIC: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

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Abstract

Islamic Religious Education has a vital role in strengthening character education. However, Islamic Religious Education teachers often need help carrying out their duties to enhance student character education. This study aims to identify and describe the difficulties Islamic Religious Education teachers face in strengthening character education during a pandemic. This study uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data analysis includes data reduction or data collection, data display, and verification. The results of the research show that: First, the problem of low mastery of science and media. The technology in distance learning. Second, the need for abilities and skills. Third, the need for more supervision and coaching of student behavior. Fourth, the need for assessment and motivation. Apart from the difficulties experienced by Islamic Religious Education teachers, there is a strengthening of character education during the pandemic. One is by a) Morning routine involving the entire academic community. b) The five main character values are integrated into the curriculum according to the school's vision and mission. c) Additional learning by visiting home. d) The role of parents in guiding children's education. During the pandemic, character education functions to overcome teacher problems in online learning, especially in Islamic Religious Education subjects. Thus, from the presentation of the difficulties of Islamic Religious Education teachers in strengthening character education during a pandemic, there needs to be involvement, collaboration, and responsibility of educators, families, communities, and social media in creating a conducive atmosphere such as exemplary supporting the achievement of strengthening character education in online learning.

Keywords: Problems of Islamic Religious Education Teachers, Strengthening Character Education

Abstrak

Pendidikan Agama Islam memiliki peran penting dalam penguatan pendidikan karakter. Namun, guru Pendidikan Agama Islam seringkali menghadapi beberapa masalah dan tantangan dalam menjalankan tugasnya untuk memperkuat pendidikan karakter siswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi dan mendeskripsikan kesulitan-kesulitan yang dihadapi oleh guru Pendidikan Agama Islam dalam penguatan pendidikan karakter di masa pandemi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus. Analisis data meliputi reduksi data atau pengumpulan data, display data, dan verifikasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa: Pertama, persoalan terhadap rendahnya penguasaan ilmu dan media. Kemudian teknologi dalam pembelajaran jarak jauh. Kedua, kurangnya kemampuan dan keterampilan. Ketiga, kurangnya pengawasan dan pembinaan perilaku siswa. Keempat, kurangnya melakukan penilaian dan motivasi. Selain kesulitan yang dialami oleh guru PAI, terdapat penguatan pendidikan karakter di masa pandemi. Salah satunya dengan cara: a) rutinitas pagi yang melibatkan seluruh civitas akademik; b) integrasi lima nilai karakter utama dalam kurikulum sesuai visi dan misi sekolah; c) pembelajaran tambahan secara visit home; d) peran orang tua dalam membimbing belajar anak. Adanya masa pandemi, pendidikan karakter berfungsi untuk mengatasi permasalahan guru dalam pembelajaran daring, khususnya mata pelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam. Dengan demikian dari pemaparan kesulitan-kesulitan guru Pendidikan Agama Islam dalam penguatan pendidikan karakter di masa pandemi perlu adanya keterlibatan, kerjasama, tanggung jawab pendidik, keluarga, masyarakat, media sosial dalam menciptakan suasana yang kondusif seperti keteladanan menunjang tercapainya penguatan pendidikan karakter dalam pembelajaran daring.

Kata Kunci: Problematika Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam, Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter

Introduction

In 2020, there was an unexpected situation, namely the outbreak of Covid-19 disease originally from the city of Wuhan, China, which has brought significant changes, including pressure on various sectors. Every day, the development of the Covid-19 virus is rapidly spreading worldwide. Indonesia is also in a state of national emergency. The death toll has continued to increase since it was first announced that someone had tested positive for the Covid-19 virus in early March 2020. This encourages the implementation of policy changes and updates.¹

In the education sector, many activities are carried out at home, especially the learning system that is carried out must go through an online process or online from home so that the online learning policy has an impact on students' character in the future even though education is the essential need in changing the nature of students for the better in the future.² Learning from Home is explained in the Circular Letter of the Ministry of Education and Culture No. 4 of 2020, and teachers should try to be creative in exploring information and characteristics of students in determining learning patterns with expected learning outcomes in online learning.

Previously, a study was described in a journal titled: "Analysis of Online Learning Problems versus Student Character Education".³ Explained that character education in the online learning period varies wildly, depending on how a teacher responds to these changes; where there are students whose changes are getting better because they live in a family environment that wants to guide them in the online learning period, but there

are also students who experience difficulties when learning is carried out online so that their character is not formed discipline. They procrastinate, and some don't even hand in tasks. Then another journal entitled: "Character Education in Online Learning" states that character education strategies (portfolio-based multiple intelligences) carried out in online learning are expected to follow the principles.⁴

In the era of globalization that is increasingly advanced and developing alongside the Covid-19 pandemic, humans face many problems. For example, religious life on the one hand and social behavior contrary to religious values on the other hand.⁵ As the era of globalization progresses, education plays a vital role in facing the progress of the times. One of them is to improve the quality of human resources to compete in the global era.

Student's quality of Islamic character determines the quality of Islamic education. Teachers are very influential in education when viewed from various educational contexts because they play an essential role without exception. Some societies recognize the importance of the role of teachers in a more concrete way, and there are still societies that alienate the magnitude of a teacher's responsibility. Teachers are present at school and outside to devote themselves to the community in educating children.⁶ Teachers of Agama Islam education must be able to provide enlightenment about various matters of life and religion at school and outside school.⁷

¹ Dian Ratu, Ayu Uswatun, and Hascaryo Pramudibyanto, 'Pendidikan Dalam Masa Pandemi Covid-19 Pendahuluan', *Jurnal Sinestesia*, 10.1 (2020), 41–48.

² Muhammad Bagus Nasrul Ilmi, 'Dampak Pandemi COVID-19 Bagi Karakter Siswa', December 2021.

³ Harri Jumarto Suriadi, Firman Firman, and Riska Ahmad, 'Analisis Problema Pembelajaran Daring Terhadap Pendidikan Karakter Peserta Didik', *Edukatif: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 3.1 (2021), 165–73 <<https://doi.org/10.31004/edukatif.v3i1.251>>.

⁴ Alessandro Yosafat Massie and Kristina Roseven Nababan, 'Dampak Pembelajaran Daring Terhadap Pendidikan Karakter Siswa', *Satya Widya*, 37.1 (2021), 54–61 <<https://doi.org/10.24246/j.sw.2021.v37.i1.p54-61>>.

⁵ Manajemen Mutu Terpadu and Kode Mata Kuliah, 'Program Pascasarjana Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta Manajemen Mutu Terpadu', 2010.

⁶ Sitti Satriani Is, 'Peranan Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam Dalam Membiasakan Siswa Shalat Berjama'Ah', *TARBAWI: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 2.01 (2017), 33–42 <<https://doi.org/10.26618/jtw.v2i01.1018>>.

⁷ M. Saekan Muchith, 'Guru PAI Yang Profesional', *Quality*, 4.2 (2016), 217–35.

Therefore, regarding process and purpose, the teacher must recognize that learning only sometimes goes well and only sometimes works well. So, in this case, a teacher must maximize his role as an "*agent of change*", such as overcoming student behavior.⁸ Likewise, the change in the curriculum from 2013 to an independent curriculum can have a positive impact and various problems for teachers. The curriculum can be a supporting factor in influencing the quality of student learning by providing adequate facilities and infrastructure. However, the curriculum is also an inhibiting factor in the quality of student learning, including; Inadequate facilities, psychological for children, and limited teaching staff.⁹

Many studies have shown that the quality of the teacher's relationship with students significantly affects academic achievement and the character or behavior of children, more importantly, when the connection is associated with more positive child responses both at school and outside.¹⁰

The daily detiknews reported a global phenomenon in 2023 about the viral song "Kill Bill". The lyrics in the song Kill Bill invite the listener to kill. Although cheerful and relaxed, poems like this can affect children's perceptions. The song also refers to the film of the same name, which contains scenes full of blood and violence in almost all of its scenes.¹¹

In addition, during Ramadhan in 2023, there was a brawl between teenagers, said a sociologist from Gajah Mada University (UGM). The fights between groups carried out by teenagers occurred

in several areas of Jakarta carrying sharp weapons. For example, a teenager's attempt at a brawl happened Friday night at Jalan Durian Raya RT 006 RW 04, Jagakarsa Village, Jagakarsa District, South Jakarta, Friday (24/3/2023) night.¹²

In 2013 there were 128 cases of brawls between students. This case has killed 82 students. In 2014 139 brawls killed 12 students.¹³ This is due to the influence of foreign values that enter Indonesian territory without going through the filtering process.

This phenomenon is caused by the character or behavior of dishonesty, suspicion, and injustice in the political, social, and educational fields.¹⁴ Efforts to form behavioral attitudes often referred to as student character through Islamic Religious Education, must be carried out intensely. Islamic Religious Education is not only held in the family environment but can fortify students in various environmental influences.¹⁵ One of the main problems that occurred during the pandemic was online learning. Because learning requires supporting media to follow the learning process in the form of smartphones (android) or laptops.¹⁶ This certainly requires additional supervision from parents on their children's activities at home. It is very concerning that if communication tools are misused, there will be a negative side to the increase in adolescent lousy behavior problems.

¹² Muhammad Isa Bustomi, 'Marak Tawuran Remaja Saat Ramadhan, Sosiolog: Matinya Pendidikan Karakter' (Jakarta, 2023).

¹³ Samsul Ridwan, 'Komnas PA: Tawuran Pelajar Naik 128 Kasus, 82 Siswa Tewas' (Jakarta, 2011).

¹⁴ Ali Ahmad Yenuri, 'Problematika Kompetensi Guru PAI Dalam Implementasi Kurikulum 2013 (Studi Kasus Di MA Arraudlah Tumapel Gresik)', *Kuttab*, 3.2 (2019) <<https://doi.org/10.30736/ktb.v3i2.227>>.

¹⁵ Achmad Zuhri, 'Upaya Guru Pai Dalam Mengatasi Problematika Pembelajaran Ranah Afektif Di Sman 1 Bae Kudus Tahun 2017', *Quality*, 5.2 (2017) <<https://doi.org/10.21043/quality.v5i2.3061>>.

¹⁶ Jamila, Ahdar, and Emmy Natsir, 'Problematika Guru Dan Siswa Dalam Proses Pembelajaran Daring Pada Masa Pandemi Covid-19 Di UPTD SMP Negeri 1 Parepare', *L Ma' Arief: Jurnal Pendidikan Sosial Dan Budaya*, 3.2 (2021), 101–10 <<https://ejurnal.iainpare.ac.id/index.php/ALMAARIEF/article/view/2346>>.

⁸ Fakultas Tarbiyah and others, 'Peran Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam Dalam Mengatasi', 22.1 (2017), 80–90.

⁹ Diki Awaluddin Ramdhani and others, 'Problematika Guru PAI Dalam Mengembangkan Akhlak Siswa', *Edukatif: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 4.3 (2022), 4601–10 <<https://doi.org/10.31004/edukatif.v4i3.2878>>.

¹⁰ A S Lubis, 'Pola Interaksi Guru Dengan Murid Dalam Pembelajaran PAI Di Kelas XI MA Muallimin Univa Medan', 2018.

¹¹ Saiful Maarif, 'Eufemisme Kekerasan Dan Tantangan Pendidikan Karakter', 2023.

The supporting factor for this is the emergence of boredom while at home and limited internet network access (quota) so that it does not use the function of the gadget properly. Today we know that "*social problems*" such as alcohol, narcotics, and illegal drugs are widely spread in various media that initially came from teenagers and even underage people. Not only that, acts of sexual harassment, brawls, theft, and other criminal acts often occur as a result of deviations from religious, legal, and social norms as it is known that in online learning, the values of education, especially in discipline, honesty, education in behavior, and speaking to educators are shallow. The existence of character education, especially in online learning, serves to overcome these problems, especially in Islamic Religious Education.

Teachers' teaching patterns in strengthening character education in students is by overcoming or strategies in maintaining character education problems. Using techniques to overcome character education problems in online learning will determine the results of implementing character education. So that when the method used in character education is not correct, it is certain that the process of obtaining character values will not produce the right product. Religious character is received from ingrained learning in the form of habituation. It is carried out regularly as an educational basis for achieving moral goals so that values are well embedded.¹⁷

From the explanation above, this study aims to identify and describe the difficulties Islamic Religious Education teachers face in strengthening character education. Feedback from this is that an Islamic Religious Education teacher is required to be able to create, enrich themselves, be a controller or guide, and adjust teaching methods that interest students so that students can easily understand them. Given the involvement of the

entire academic community; integration into the curriculum according to the school's vision and mission; additional teaching on a visit-home basis; The role of parents in accompanying children to learn. Thus, the involvement, cooperation, and responsibility of educators, families, communities, and social media in creating a conducive climate, such as, for example, strengthening character education in online learning.

Method

Researchers look at data sources and procedures taken from the location. This type of research uses qualitative methods with a case studies approach. The subject of research is drawn from an in-depth exploration of the events, processes, and activities of one or more than one person. The researcher studied intensively the background and interactions of the environment that was the subject. The purpose of case studies is more than just serving functions for obtaining research data. Based on the background in the introductory chapter, the researcher expresses it well and clearly. So observations and interviews are needed to get more and more accurate data.

This study aimed to identify and describe the difficulties faced by teachers in strengthening character education during the pandemic. This research was conducted at SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Tanggulangin on March 14, 2023. The participants who contributed to this study were guru subjects Education Agama Islam or BTQ (Read and Write the Qur'an) from grade 7 with the initials Maria Ulfa. Researchers observe and then conduct observational research, interviews, and documentation for research procedures. Researchers use 3 data analysis techniques:

¹⁷ Shanti Sudjarwati and Eni Fariyatul Fahyuni, 'Peran Literasi Moral Meningkatkan Karakter Religius Anak Usia Dini', *Al-Tadzkiyyah: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 10.2 (2020), 219–29
<<https://doi.org/10.24042/atjpi.v10i2.5182>>.

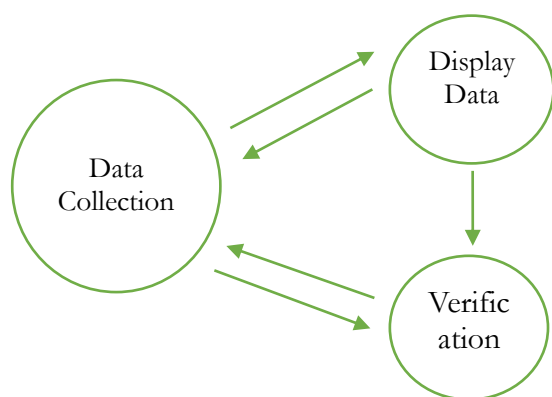


Figure 1. Data Analysis Components

Finding and Discussion

Finding

1) Problems of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Strengthening Character Education

Based on the results of research conducted at SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Tanggulangin, the following data are the results of observations and interviews conducted with informant Maria Ulfa, a teacher of Islamic Religious Education or BTQ, will be presented by researchers based on the focus of the research. In this case, researchers do not experience obstacles in digging up information. The interview conducted by the researcher is unstructured, so the interview process is relaxed and takes place in daily activities without disturbing school activities.

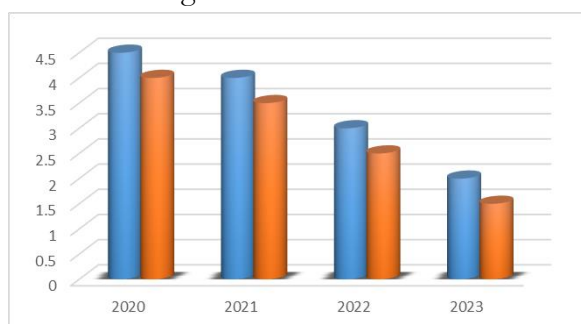


Diagram 1. The problem of teachers in education from 2020-2023 has experienced ups and downs.

Based on the previous diagram, we can see the data of the problems faced by teachers who are educated in the Islamic Religion; “First, the problem of low mastery of science and media used is less varied in 2020, with data reaching 55%” (Maria Ulfa,

02 May 2023). This is due to the outbreak of the covid '19 pandemic.

In the era of covid '19, problems at SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Tanggulangin, teachers who taught Islamic education subjects amounted to 1 person with the number of classes taught 9 classes with 18 hours per week and 191 students taught. “The learning carried out at the school does not apply the full-day school learning system, meaning there are 6 learning days per 1 week. This impacts educated teachers because of the need for more learning hours (inefficient). Whereas during covid '19, a teacher moved all students to study at home, in other words homeschooling. Learning at home is very concerning; if communication tools are misused, there will be a negative side to the increased lousy behavior problems in adolescence” (Maria Ulfa, 02 May 2023). Supporting factors for this is the emergence of boredom while at home, limited internet network access (quota), student learning load that is considered too much, the difficulty for parents to accompany their children's learning, and little learning media so that they do not use the gadget function properly as is known that in online learning, educational values, especially in discipline, honesty, education in behavior and speaking to teachers are shallow.

“Another obstacle is that students and teachers use technology in distance learning, such as living in rural areas”¹⁸. When economic conditions do not allow it, parents and students must have a smartphone plus buy an internet quota to access it daily. Due to limited network access, technology can only partially help the distance learning process become easy to implement.

The issue of lack of abilities and skills in 2021 came in second, with data reaching 27% after the outbreak of the covid '19 pandemic. However, the episode made the Muhammadiyah 8 Tanggulangin Junior High School implement an offline system. At this time, “Some students behave defiantly or often commit violations when in the school environment, the cause of

¹⁸ Maria Ulfa, Interview {08 May 2023}

which the student experiences a broken home. Deviant behavior that occurs in the school environment, such as violations of school rules, disobeying teacher orders, arriving late, dressing too fashionably (immodest), wearing colored shoes and colored socks, being lazy to do assignments, being in the cafeteria during learning hours, and even still some students who go home first (skip class)” (Maria Ulfa, 03 May 2023). The behavior of children who are broken at home initially comes from a family structure that is not intact. For this reason, the function of teachers as agents of change, being able to create or enrich themselves, also needs to pay attention to students who experience broken homes, especially teachers who are educated Agama Islam at SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Tanggulangin.

Third, the problem of lack of supervision and coaching of student behavior in 2022 is third, with data reaching 11%. “Based on the conservation results, one of the students of SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Tanggulangin still needs to respect his teacher. The causes of negative behavior are face-to-face or offline learning and lack of application of 5S culture (smile, greeting, greeting, politeness, and courtesy). Another example moves on from a small model applied in everyday life: cheating in exams and not praying fardhu”¹⁹. Teachers should not only see the intelligence of students in answering exam questions but also in the application of daily life. “Researchers still observed other examples at SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Tanggulangin regarding students and students. Interacting with peers is free. There are no boundaries between men and women. A miniature model that often happens is nudging his friend”²⁰. This is because teachers are indifferent to this behavior. In fact, for schools where most Muslim students, such causes need serious attention, especially PAI teachers.

Fourth, the problem of lack of assessment and motivation in 2023 is fourth, with data reaching 7%. Research shows that in SMP

Muhammadiyah 8 Tanggulangin, the number of classes taught is 9 classes. In grade 7, there are 53 students; in grade 8, there are 56; in grade 9, there are 82 students. When implementing the 2013 curriculum into an independent learning curriculum, teachers with a high degree of education experience difficulty assessing aspects of attitudes and assessing for oral tests. Most of the time in the assessment, the students' attitudes could be more honest in reviewing attitude aspects, so the assessment results are only partially valid. This problem is due to teacher limitations so that the number of students assessed is quite large, and achievement indicators that must be evaluated in a lesson, and in carrying out the assessment process have difficulties when given grades one by one”²¹.

During the pandemic, character education serves to overcome teacher problems in online learning, especially in Islamic Religious Education subjects. So, teachers of Islamic Education must be able to create, enrich themselves, become a controller or advisors, and adjust teaching methods to attract interest so that students easily understand it.

Solutions that need to be considered by an Islamic Religious Education teacher according to an Islamic Religious Education or BTQ teacher with an informant named Maria Ulfa; *“first, the empowerment of Islamic Religious Education teachers. Second, training and professional development. Third, create engaging and interactive learning resources such as audiovisuals, learning videos, and other platforms. Fourth, collaboration and knowledge sharing. Fifth, coaching student motivation. Sixth, monitoring and evaluation”²².*

2) Strengthening Character Education during a Pandemic

Here are things a teacher can do to strengthen character education during a pandemic:

¹⁹ Maria Ulfa, *Interview* {03 May 2023}

²⁰ Maria Ulfa, *Interview* {03 May 2023}

²¹ Maria Ulfa, *Interview* {03 May 2023}

²² Maria Ulfa, *Interview* {04 May 2023}

Table 1. Strengthening Character Education During a Pandemic

Level of Self-Awareness:	We must evaluate values and principles in difficult situations such as a pandemic. This can help us understand ourselves better and become more accountable for our actions.
Empathy:	The pandemic has brought many challenges, so learning to develop empathy for others is essential. By understanding other people's perspectives, we can gain new insights and become more open to other people's experiences.
Positive Relationship:	In difficult situations such as a pandemic, it is crucial to have strong social support. We can build positive relationships with others by being good listeners and offering help when needed.
Patience and Resilience:	The pandemic has created many uncertainties and challenges, so it is vital to develop patience and resilience in dealing with such situations. By developing these skills, we can more easily cope with stress and overcome obstacles that arise.
Digital Skills :	We have increasingly relied on technology during the pandemic to communicate and learn. Therefore, knowing the digital skills necessary to adapt to these changes is essential.
Creativeness:	The pandemic has limited many of our usual activities, so learning to develop creativity to find new solutions to emerging challenges is essential.

From the acquisition of the data above, it can be concluded that to overcome the problems of Islamic Religious Education teachers, especially in online learning, especially in Islamic Religious Education subjects, an Islamic Religious Education teacher must have planned. Based on the results of research that researchers found from several previous article reviews, it is evident that 26% of articles contain difficulties in assisting in strengthening religious character

education. Meanwhile, 58% of studies are needed to enhance students' religious character during the pandemic, and various institutions have conducted data on 42% of strengthening religious character.²³ The study results stated that pandemic conditions must have a unique strategy because children's mental conditions and activities differ from previous conditions.²⁴

The results of the study show that to strengthen character education, it is necessary to strengthen character education during the Covid-19 period at SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Tanggulangin through *a) morning routines involving the entire academic community, b) integration of the five central character values in the curriculum according to the vision and mission of the school; c) additional learning by visit home; d) the role of parents in guiding children's learning* (Maria Ulfa, 05 May 2023). These activities can be described in the description below:

a) Morning habituation by involving the entire academic community is a model for the implementation of strengthening character education at SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Tanggulangin, namely the awareness and commitment of the academic community, both principals, teachers, students, education staff to the obligation to participate in morning habituation activities. "The morning routine is broadcast live via Whatsapp grub using a 1-week learning system. There are 2 face-to-face times alternately. Then, all grade 7-9 students from home via Whatsapp grub. Educators and education staff were present at the school at 06.30 WIB. Activities are held at 07.00-08.00, accompanied by dhuha prayers under the supervision of their respective homeroom teachers; SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Tanggulangin has excellent programs, including;

²³ Nur Kholifah and Eni Fariyatul Fahyuni, 'Strengthening Students' Religious Character During the COVID-19 Pandemic', *KnE Social Sciences*, 2022 (2022), 442–51 <<https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v7i10.11247>>.

²⁴ Situasi Pandemi Covid-, 'Character Strengthening Children in the Family in the Pandemic Covid-19 Situation', 12.02 (2021), 84–93 <<https://doi.org/10.24036/jpk/vol12-iss02/800>>.

*Tahfidz Al-Qur'an, Mabit (Malam Bina Iman dan Taqwa), Diniyah, Tata Boga, and Multimedia. At 09.00-10.00, Tahfidz Al-Qur'an is carried out with the guidance of each Qur'an Tahfidz teacher. The worship control book masters Tadarus Al-Qur'an. Online learning at 10.00-12.00; Dhubur, Asr, Maghrib, Isya', dawn prayers are controlled by the class teacher through the worship control book. Remember that the school applies Diniyah learning after learning. Diniyah is held on Wednesday and Thursday alternately with material on the science of hadith and jurisprudence. Every Friday, the school makes it a habit to read QS. Al-Kahfi jointly and lead through class audio at 07.00-07.30"*²⁵. Habituation is one of the value-building approach techniques to get used to positive things so that habituation becomes a habit.



Figure 2. Mabit Activities (Night of Bina Iman and Taqwa)

*"The Mabit activity was held Friday-Saturday at the mosque owned by SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Tanggulangin. Usually, each class is made in 2 waves. For grade 8, it is carried out in the second week of the beginning of the month. As for grade 7, it is carried out in the third week of the middle of the month. For grade 9, there is no Mabit activity because it is the exam's focus"*²⁶. The picture shows the activities of students while Tadarus is side by side with the Tahfidz Qur'an.

- b) Integrating into the curriculum according to the school's vision and mission, the online learning activity model is carried out through Zoom meetings, google classes, and

google meet. *"The teacher makes RPP (Learning Implementation Plan) according to KD or material in an exciting way so that when presented, it causes curiosity in students, discipline in following the implementation of learning, and a collection of tasks given great attention giving; the teacher who will carry out the teaching is already in class (virtual) at least 5 or 10 minutes before it starts; before the lesson is carried out the teacher leads a prayer together; learning is carried out interestingly by using active learning methods of character quality, contextual learning loaded (CTL) with characters, inquiry loaded with characters, character-based learning problems (PBL) loaded with characters, packs loaded with characters, quantum learning loaded with characters; Teachers must be able to innovate in the implementation of education, so that students in addition to knowing the value cognitively, affectively, also apply it tangibly"* (Maria Ulfa, 09 May 2023). Teachers can describe or explain the material and provide evaluations that contain the central character values, such as religion, nationalism, integrity, independence, and mutual assistance; Teachers as facilitators prepare attractive teaching aids according to the KD or material presented; The teacher closes the lesson by praying together and saying goodbye.

- c) Additional learning with home visits, this activity model is carried out with the agreement of parents and the school because online learning is considered less than optimal; *"activities carried out on a visit-home basis to avoid social jealousy among children; carried out in groups and sequentially, while still implementing health protocols (wearing masks, washing hands, maintaining distance); morning habits such as Dhuha prayer, praying before learning takes place even though it is a visit home"*²⁷. The classroom climate has a significant effect on learning motivation. However, online learning conditions make it

²⁵ Maria Ulfa, Interview {08 May 2023}

²⁶ Maria Ulfa, Interview {08 May 2023}

²⁷ Maria Ulfa, Interview {08 May 2023}

difficult for teachers to control and maintain the learning climate because it is limited to virtual space. This condition causes student learning motivation to decrease, even affecting learning outcomes. If students lose motivation, they can experience boredom in learning.

- d) *"The role of parents in guiding children's learning at home during the Covid-19 pandemic is very influential in efforts to implement character education; parents have plenty of time in the family to mold their children to belong, develop and set a good example of character; strengthening character education during the Covid-19 pandemic by providing a pattern of character life from an early age anywhere and in all conditions; parents play a more critical role in shaping the character of children to become whole people"*²⁸

Thus, this study concluded that there is a need to strengthen character education. Maintaining character education at SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Tanggulangin during the Covid-19 period includes; Routine activities in the morning, containing the entire academic community integrated into the curriculum according to the school's vision and mission, learning media used through Zoom meetings, google classroom, and Google meet. In addition, teachers also conduct home visits to measure students' level of understanding and students' readiness for distance learning. Observations show that strengthening character education must also be maintained by the role of parents in accompanying children because currently, the part of parents is crucial and plays a central role in education at home.

It also includes solutions that must be appropriately considered to strengthen character education. Another solution, according to the teacher of Islamic Religious Education or BTQ with an informant

named Maria Ulfa, is First to develop a relevant and exciting curriculum. Second, improving teacher skills in managing classes effectively.

Discussion

1) Problems of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Strengthening Character Education

In Islam, the word guru is interpreted as "murabbi, mu'allim, mudarris, and mu-addib, " most commonly referred to by the terms ustadz and ustadzah. This means someone fully responsible for the development of students with all the competencies they have, both cognitively, affectively, and psychometrically. Thus, simply in the Islamic view, the teacher is the one who can instill important components and direct students to obtain their position as social or complete beings capable of carrying out their duties as caliphs in the world.²⁹ A teacher has the highest rank, as quoted in the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him): "The ink of a scientist is more precious than the severe blood of martyrs".³⁰ That is, the example of personality and authority possessed by a teacher will positively or negatively affect the formation of a child's character.

Islamic Religious Education is vital in strengthening character education in Indonesia. However, teachers often need help with their duties to enhance student character education. Below are some of the problems of A Islamic Education Teachers, along with solutions for strengthening character education in general.³¹

²⁹ Mulyawan Mulyawan, 'Problematisa Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam Di Madrasah', *Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Pendidikan Islam*, 9.1 (2020), 165–86.

³⁰ Rahmad Fauzi Lubis, 'Upaya Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam Dalam Mengatasi Kesulitan Belajar Siswa', *Jurnal Kreatifitas : Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Islam*, 9 (2020), 1–30.

³¹ Zainiya Anisa, 'Jurnal Teknologi Pendidikan : Pembelajaran Daring PAI : Implementasi Dan Problematisa Penggunaan Google Classroom Pada Kelas

²⁸ Maria Ulfa, *Interview* {08 May 2023}

- a) Lack of character understanding: Teachers may need help understanding the character students need to strengthen and how to integrate religious values into the learning process. Solution: there needs to be an increased understanding of the required character in society and how to instill those values in students.
- b) Lack of parental involvement: Parents often need to be more involved in their children's character education. Good cooperation between teachers and parents also raises awareness about the importance of character education and how parents can help shape their children's character. Solution: have regular meetings with parents, and use social media or online discussion group to communicate.
- c) Lack of resources: Teachers often need help finding adequate and relevant resources due to a lack of school and government support to help strengthen students' character education. Solution: improve the quality of teachers in Islamic Education.
- d) Challenges in integrating religious values: Although Islamic Education is a subject that focuses on spiritual matters, teachers often need help in integrating these values into the learning process. Solution: efforts are required to strengthen teacher skills in integrating religious values in teaching and making religious values the basis for building student character.
- e) Hard-to-measure results: Strengthening character education is a long-term process that cannot be measured in the same way as in academia. Therefore, teachers often need help to measure the results of the character education program they lead. Solution: there needs to be an improvement in teaching skills in

developing and using measuring instruments following the character to be strengthened.

Based on the description researchers have put forward, it can be concluded that teachers often face several problems and challenges in carrying out their duties to strengthen student character education. Teachers' issues in maintaining character education are: first, the low mastery of knowledge and the media used could be more varied. Secondly, need for abilities and skills. Third, lack of supervision and coaching of student behavior. Fourth, need for judgment and motivation. So, it would be nice for a teacher to guide and develop students' ability to understand and practice religious teachings in everyday life. It cannot be separated from the educational process.³²

2) Strengthening Character Education during a Pandemic

Character (moral) can be defined as actions carried out by an individual continuously so that they become accustomed and based on good intentions according to the norms that apply to their environment. Repeated activities can make it a culture embedded in the conscious world.³³ Nopan Omeri 2015 said that: character is a combination of morals, ethics, and morals. On the other hand, ethics provides judgments about good and evil based on norms. They prevail in a given society, while the morality of order emphasizes that man has essentially ingrained the belief that both (good and bad) exist.³⁴

Character education is lifelong learning as a form of growth towards kaffah humans, which requires precision and touch from an early age to old age. A susceptible period and

³² Ahmad Shofiyuddin, 'Problematika Guru PAI Dalam Membina Perilaku Sosial Siswa', *Pai*, 2.1 (2019), 44–59.

³³ Endang Komara, 'Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter Dan Pembelajaran Abad 21', 4.April (2018), 17–26.

³⁴ D A Bangun, R Oktavianda, and ..., 'Pendidikan Karakter Di Masa Pandemi', ... *Merdeka Belajar*, 2021.

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certainty in education lie in family learning because it is the responsibility of parents.³⁵

In character education, a child is not directed about right and wrong but is taught the importance of instilling good habits so that students can understand, feel, and want to do good. The implementation of character education is based on a solid solitude and identity and is not easily affected by external trends and problems. Character education is crucial during a pandemic because the pandemic has changed the way we live and interact with others. Character education can help us navigate challenges and become better people.

During a pandemic, a child spends more time at home because parents are imitated figures. So parents must be fully responsible for the formation of children's character. For example, when practicing religion, students should be tolerant of followers of other religions and live in harmony with followers of other faiths in the community. As in the hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) affirmed that the brotherhood of Muslims looks like a building when someone falls ill, other Muslims feel the same feeling. Thus, the heart and body are moved to handle and help to create a sense of belonging and affection.³⁶

Every parent wants their children to have good character. So, in this case, parents have an essential role in teaching their children about the importance of worship, especially during a pandemic. The task of parents during the pandemic is to emphasize polite behavior towards teachers, one of which is by wearing polite clothes. During online learning, children must pay attention to teachers when

delivering material.³⁷ In addition to polite behavior, honesty and responsibility must be applied to children. This application is during exams or assignments during a pandemic. This happens because the teacher of Islamic Education needs more supervision and accountability.

A teacher is said to be capable when in the face-to-face (offline) and online learning process if the teacher significantly influences students' ability to receive learning material Peducation Agama Islam.³⁸ Strong character-building can only be formed through something other than distance learning. This is because the character is created when applying the teacher's personality is assisted by communication tools that can be observed directly.³⁹

The motivation and enthusiasm of teachers in teaching and learning activities can be seen in home visit activities and making educational videos. Teachers make door-to-door visits equipping students with learning materials to study and work on. Visit home activities, and teachers visit students in groups to receive material from teachers in a limited atmosphere and follow health protocols. Teachers also make learning videos independently, then upload them to Youtube, and the link is sent to students. This is so that students can follow learning as a substitute for face-to-face.⁴⁰

³⁵ Menteri Pendidikan, D A N Kebudayaan, and Republik Indonesia, 'Menteri Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia', 08.01 (2013), 2013–15.

³⁶ Siti Zulaikah, "Penguatan pendidikan Karakter Melalui Pendidikan Agama Islam Di SMPN 3 Bandar Lampung Pendahuluan Saat Ini Indonesia Sedang Dihadapkan Pada Permasalahan Melemahnya Karakter Bangsa .(Anwar and Salim 2018) Karakter Mulia , Kesopanan Dan Religiusitas Yang ,” 10.1 (2019), 83–93.

³⁷ Suci Nurpratiwi, Muhamad Ridwan Effendi, and Amaliyah Amaliyah, 'Improving Religious Literacy Through Islamic Religious Education Course Based On The Flipped Classroom', *Istawa : Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 6.1 (2021), 16 <<https://doi.org/10.24269/ijpi.v6i1.3107>>.

³⁸ Siti Miftachul Ummah and Anita Puji Astutik, 'Implementation of Problem Based Learning to Improve The Quality of PAI Learning During The Covid-19 Pandemic at School', *Academia Open*, 6 (2021), 1–10 <<https://doi.org/10.21070/acopen.6.2022.2145>>.

³⁹ Siti Masyito Chairunnisak and others, 'Changes in the Behavior of Elementary School Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic', *KnE Social Sciences*, 2022 (2022), 546–55 <<https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v7i10.11257>>.

⁴⁰ Dahniar, 'Pendidikan Karakter Pada Masa Pandemi', *JURNAL AZKIA : Jurnal Aktualisasi Pendidikan*

It can be concluded that the characteristics that must be strengthened and given to students are religion, nationalism, integrity, independence, and mutual assistance.⁴¹ It's how schools can include these character values in the distance learning process. Following the recommendation of the Minister of Education, strengthening character education can be formed by integrating extracurricular and extracurricular learning.

During the Covid-19 period, strengthening character education remains essential. Here are some solutions that can help enhance character education during Covid-19:⁴² First, Implementation of an online approach using a distance learning platform. Second, collaborative learning engages students in virtual teamwork. Third, a virtual mentoring program where students can interact with mentors who will guide them in developing character values. Fourth, Involve parents with schools to hold webinars or virtual meetings to discuss strategies for strengthening character education at home.

Conclusion

From the research results, the author can conclude that teachers often face several problems and challenges in carrying out their duties to strengthen student character education. The issues teachers face in maintaining character education include: first, low mastery of knowledge and the media used are less varied; Second, lack of abilities and skills; Third, lack of supervision and coaching of student behavior; Fourth, lack of judgment and motivation. So that the solution that needs to be considered; first is the empowerment of teacher's Islamic Education. Second, training and professional development. Third, create engaging and interactive learning resources such as audiovisuals, learning videos,

and other platforms. Fourth, collaboration and knowledge sharing. Fifth, coaching student motivation. Sixth, monitoring and evaluation.

Strengthening character education during the Covid-19 pandemic at SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Tanggulangin has been carried out since educational institutions simultaneously carried out online learning starting from the 2020/2021 school year by considering the potential and characteristics of schools. The implementation of strengthening character education in online learning during the Covid-19 period at SMP Muhammadiyah 8 Tanggulangin is carried out by a) morning habituation by involving the entire academic community; b) integration into the curriculum according to the school's vision and mission; c) additional learning by visit home; d) the role of parents in guiding children's learning. Thus, the involvement, cooperation, and responsibility of educators, families, communities, and social media in creating a conducive climate, such as an example, strengthen character education in online learning. In addition to the strategies stated previously, include solutions that must be considered carefully. Other solutions; First, develop a curriculum that is relevant and interesting. Second, improving teacher skills in managing classes effectively.

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⁴¹ M.A Syaifuddin and E.F Fahyuni, 'Melalui Kurikulum Muatan Lokal', *Jurnal Studi Keislaman Dan Ilmu Pendidikan*, 7.November (2019), 267–85.

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