

PROBLEMS FACED BY TEACHERS OF AKIDAH AKHLAK IN DEVELOPING STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AT MTS S DARUL 'ARAFAH PANGKALAN BRANDAN

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Abstract

This research aims to identify the specific challenges faced by Akidah Akhlak teachers in shaping students' moral attitudes and to analyze the strategies implemented to address these issues at MTs S Darul 'Arafah Pangkalan Brandan. Despite the central role of Akidah Akhlak in Islamic education, studies exploring the practical barriers and adaptive strategies of teachers in local madrasah contexts remain limited. This study fills that gap by providing empirical insights into the micro-level dynamics of character education in Islamic schools. Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected from four purposively selected teachers through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and documentation. Data credibility was ensured through triangulation and member checking, while analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model. The findings reveal that teachers encounter persistent obstacles, including low student motivation, negative peer and media influences, limited facilities, and weak parental support. Contributing factors are rooted in family background, peer pressure, social media exposure, and students' psychological conditions. To overcome these challenges, teachers adopt multifaceted strategies such as role modeling (uswah hasanah), moral advice, habituation through routine activities, individualized approaches, the use of digital media, and collaborative partnerships with parents and madrasah authorities. This study contributes to the broader discourse on Islamic character education by highlighting the necessity of a holistic, contextual, and collaborative approach. The implications underscore the importance of strengthening teacher capacity, parental engagement, and institutional support in sustaining effective Akidah Akhlak education.

Keywords: Akidah Akhlak; Character Education, Islamic Education, Moral Development, Teacher Strategies

A. Introduction

The development of the times and technological advances have had a major impact on the world of education. Education not only serves as a means of transferring knowledge, but also as a medium for shaping the character and morals of students. (Ichsan, 2021) states that education is a conscious and planned effort to develop the potential of students through learning processes, management, and extracurricular activities.

In the context of Islamic education, learning about faith and morals plays an important role in instilling values of divinity and humanity. As emphasized by (Maulidah, 2022), the main objective of moral education is to shape people who are pious and have noble character in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunnah. This is reflected in Luqman's advice to his son

not to associate partners with Allah (Q.S Luqman: 13), which is an important foundation in early faith education.

وَإِذْ قَالَ لُقْمَانُ لِابْنِهِ ۖ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهُ ۖ يَا بُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ

Meaning: "And (remember) when Luqman said to his son, while he was teaching him: 'O my son! Do not associate anything with Allah, for associating others with Him is a great injustice.'"

This verse shows the importance of fostering faith and morals from an early age, which is the main foundation in developing students' character. However, reality shows a gap between this goal and the conditions in the field. Observations at MTs S Darul 'Arafah Pangkalan Brandan show a decline in students' discipline, responsibility, and social awareness. This condition is exacerbated by the weak role of teachers in character building, as well as challenges such as a lack of training and systematic strategies (Muhamad Arif Nugraha et al., 2024).

One of the important subjects in Islamic Religious Education in madrasahs is Akidah Akhlak. Etymologically, *akidah* comes from the word '*aqada*, which means a strong bond or connection. This term refers to a firm belief in Allah SWT, angels, scriptures, messengers, the Last Day, and destiny, as well as all the basic teachings in the Qur'an and Sunnah (ANNISA, 2021). Meanwhile, *akhlak* comes from the word *khalafa*, which means to create. In terms of terminology, *akhlak* is a trait embedded in the soul that encourages a person to act easily without thinking first (Solahudin et al., 2022). According to (Fitriyah & Wahyuni, 2023), Akidah Akhlak teachers are educators who instill values of faith and noble behavior in accordance with Islamic teachings. They play an important role in shaping the character of students through learning that touches on cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects.

Problems Akidah Akhlak teachers face various challenges in the learning process. According to (Devi et al., 2024), these problems include student factors such as low motivation to learn, diverse family backgrounds, and the negative influence of the environment and social media. These conditions make it difficult for students to understand the importance of akidah and akhlak in their lives. From the teachers' perspective, the problems include limited pedagogical competence, lack of mastery of interactive learning methods, and a lack of learning media and time. A dense curriculum and administrative burdens are also obstacles, causing the delivery of material to be rushed and tend to be dogmatic. According to (Ulawal & Satria, 2023), challenges in the digital age are increasingly complex. Teachers must be able to bridge the Islamic values taught with the realities of students' lives influenced by digital culture, while developing learning strategies that remain relevant and contextual without abandoning Islamic principles.

Attitude, or *mauqif* in Arabic, is a tendency to act in a certain way based on mental readiness formed from experience (Cut Sarha Airlangga et al., 2024). In the context of Islamic education, attitude not only covers cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, but is also based on the values of faith and piety. (Himmah et al., 2023) states that attitude is a manifestation of adab, which is the recognition of the order and hierarchy of knowledge and the creation of Allah SWT (Maulidah, 2022) explains that attitudes in Islamic education cover three main interrelated domains, namely: attitudes towards Allah SWT that reflect faith, piety, and obedience in worship; attitudes towards fellow human beings, reflected in social morals such as honesty, fairness, and mutual assistance; and attitudes towards the environment, emphasizing responsibility in preserving and utilizing nature wisely. These three domains are an important basis for shaping the character of students to be well-rounded and noble.

The factors causing this problem include internal aspects, such as ineffective teaching methods and teachers' limited understanding of students' characters, and external aspects, including an unsupportive family and social environment (Latifah, 2023). Although technology-based learning innovations have been introduced (Alamin et al., 2022), infrastructure limitations remain an obstacle, especially in madrasas such as MTs S Darul 'Arafah.

The novelty of this study lies in its specific focus on the problems faced by Akidah Akhlak teachers in the local context at MTs S Darul 'Arafah Pangkalan Brandan. The study (Nasukah & Winarti, 2021) focuses more on the transformation of Islamic education in general, while the study (Triana, 2022) emphasizes character education strategies in the context of. One of the important subjects in Islamic Religious Education in madrasahs is *Akidah Akhlak*. Etymologically, akidah comes from the word *'aqada*, which means a strong bond, referring to a firm belief in Allah SWT, angels, scriptures, messengers, the last day, and destiny, as taught in the Qur'an and Sunnah (Annisa, 2021). Meanwhile, akhlak comes from the word *khalafa*, which means to create. Terminologically, akhlak is defined as a trait embedded in the soul that encourages a person to act spontaneously without thinking first (Solahudin et al., 2022).

According to Fitriyah and Wahyuni (2023), Akidah Akhlak teachers play an important role in instilling the values of faith and noble behavior in accordance with Islamic teachings through learning that covers cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. However, the practice faces many challenges. Devi et al. (2024) identified internal factors in students, such as low motivation, diverse family backgrounds, and negative influences from the environment and social media. From the teachers' perspective, obstacles include limited pedagogical competence, lack of mastery of interactive methods, lack of learning media, and high administrative burdens, which tend to result in rushed delivery of material. In the

digital age, these challenges have become even more complex. Ulawal and Satria (2023) emphasize the need for teachers to bridge Islamic values with the realities of students' lives, which are influenced by digital culture, while developing relevant and contextual learning strategies without abandoning Islamic principles.

B. Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design, which was chosen because it allows a deeper exploration of the problems faced by *Akidah Akhlak* teachers in developing students' attitudes at MTs S Darul 'Arafah Pangkalan Brandan. The case study approach provides contextual, detailed, and comprehensive insights into real-life phenomena, thereby enabling a nuanced understanding of the interaction between teachers, students, and the madrasah environment. The conceptual framework of this study is grounded in the classical thought of Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali (1058–1111 CE), especially in *Ihya' Ulumuddin*. His ideas on *tazkiyatun nafs* (purification of the soul), control of desires, and the cultivation of noble character are not used merely as philosophical justification but serve as an analytical lens to interpret empirical findings. For example, when teachers apply habituation or role modeling strategies, these practices are examined in light of Al-Ghazali's view of moral training, thus integrating classical theory with contemporary classroom practices.

The research context is MTs S Darul 'Arafah Pangkalan Brandan, a private Islamic junior high school in North Sumatra that accommodates around 250 students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. The school has a "B" accreditation status and is situated in a semi-urban setting where students are influenced by both traditional community values and modern digital culture, creating unique challenges for teachers in implementing Islamic character education. The subjects of this study were four *Akidah Akhlak* teachers selected through purposive sampling with criteria including a minimum of five years of teaching experience, at least a bachelor's degree in Islamic education, and active involvement in teaching *Akidah Akhlak* during the 2023/2024 academic year. These criteria were applied to ensure that the informants had sufficient expertise and reflective experience related to the research problem.

Data collection was carried out using three techniques: in-depth interviews with teachers to explore the challenges and strategies in developing students' attitudes, classroom observations to examine teacher-student interactions and the implementation of character education methods, and document analysis of lesson plans, school programs, and student development reports to complement and validate the other data sources. In this process, the researcher acted as the main instrument (*human instrument*) while employing interview guidelines, observation protocols, and document analysis formats to maintain

consistency. The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which consists of three interconnected stages: data reduction by filtering and simplifying relevant information, data display through narrative and categorical organization, and conclusion drawing and verification by interpreting the organized data to obtain valid findings. To ensure data credibility, the study employed source triangulation by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documents, technique triangulation through the use of multiple data collection methods, and member checking by confirming the accuracy of the findings with the participants.

C. Findings and Discussion

1. Findings

Problems Faced by Akidah Akhlak Teachers in Developing Student Attitudes

Based on the results of interviews and observations conducted at MTs S Darul 'Arafah Pangkalan Brandan, a number of significant problems were found to be faced by Akidah Akhlak teachers in the process of developing student attitudes. First, teachers find it difficult to motivate students to internalize moral values in their daily lives. Many students have not shown a deep interest in the material, especially that related to character building.

In addition, students' responses to learning vary greatly. Some students show attention and active participation, but others are less responsive due to their family background, peer influence, and lack of awareness of the importance of morals. This poses a challenge for teachers in creating an effective learning environment. The social environment also influences students' attitudes. Teachers say that family, community, and social media play a big role in shaping student behavior, both positively and negatively. Other factors that pose obstacles are limited learning facilities and methods that are not interactive enough, resulting in a less than optimal process of learning morals. Another study by (Suhardi et al., 2022) in their journal also presented similar findings, namely that a lack of intrinsic motivation among students is often the main obstacle to the internalization of moral values. This is in line with the problems faced by teachers at MTs S Darul 'Arafah, where student motivation is an important foundation in character building.

Factors Causing the Emergence of Problems

Various factors contribute to the emergence of problems in developing students' attitudes, especially in the subject of Aqidah Akhlak. First, family backgrounds that do not pay enough attention to character building have an impact on low discipline and moral values in students' daily lives. Second, the influence of peers is also very significant; a negative social environment can encourage students to imitate deviant behavior. Third, social media is a powerful external factor; uncontrolled use exposes students to uneducational content, distancing them from moral values. Fourth, students' psychological conditions, such as lack of affection and economic pressure, also influence their attitudes

and behavior at school. Finally, students' low awareness of the importance of morals causes them to be less motivated to change even after receiving character education.

This is relevant to the words of Allah SWT, which emphasize the freedom to choose between truth and disbelief, and its implications, which indirectly describe the internal challenges students face in choosing the path of good or evil amid external influences (QS. Al-Kahf: 29).

وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ نَارًا أَحَاطَ بِهَا مِنْ سُرَادِقُهَا

Meaning: "And say (Muhammad), 'The truth has come to you from your Lord; so let him who will believe, and let him who will disbelieve.' Indeed, We have prepared for the wrongdoers a Fire whose walls will surround them. And if they ask for a drink, they will be given a drink of boiling water that will scorch their faces. That is the worst drink and the worst resting place."

Research by (Anisa Nurjanah, 2022) also highlights that family environment and uncontrolled exposure to digital media are the two biggest contributors to behavioral and character problems in adolescents, reinforcing the findings at MTs Darul 'Arafah.

Teacher Strategies in Addressing Problems

Facing these conditions, Akidah Akhlak teachers implement various strategies. Exemplary behavior is the main approach, where teachers strive to demonstrate behavior that reflects moral values in everyday life. In addition, advice and *mau'izhah* are delivered regularly to instill moral values. Habits are formed through routine activities such as praying together and religious extracurricular activities to reinforce positive attitudes among students. A personal approach is an important step in understanding the background of students with problems and helping them find solutions. In the digital age, the use of media such as motivational videos has begun to be used as a relevant method. Evaluation and monitoring of students' attitudes are continuously carried out to see their overall development, both inside and outside the classroom. In addition, collaboration with parents and madrasahs is also intensified to create an environment that supports the process of character building in a sustainable manner.

This exemplary strategy is very relevant to Islamic teachings, considering that the Prophet Muhammad SAW was sent to perfect noble character (HR. Bukhari in *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad* no. 273, and Ahmad in his Musnad no. 8952). This emphasizes the importance of morals in Islam and the role of the Prophet as the ultimate role model, which is relevant to the efforts of teachers to be role models for students.

Meaning: "From Abu Hurairah, *may Allah be pleased with him*, he said: The Messenger of Allah, *peace and blessings be upon him*, said: 'Indeed, I have been sent to perfect noble character.'" (Narrated by Al-Bukhari in *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad* no. 273, and Ahmad in his Musnad no. 8952, with a *sahih* chain of transmission).

A journal by (Salman, 2022) explains that the combination of teacher role modeling and positive habits in the school environment is the most effective strategy in shaping

students' character holistically, reinforcing the strategy applied at MTs S Darul 'Arafah.

Critical Analysis Based on Theory

Based on the findings of this study, Akidah Akhlak teachers at MTs S Darul 'Arafah Pangkalan Brandan face various significant problems in developing students' attitudes. The main challenges include low intrinsic motivation among students, the strong negative influence of the social environment and digital media, and a lack of awareness among students of the urgency of moral values in everyday life.

This situation can be analyzed using Thomas Lickona's character education theory, which emphasizes three dimensions: moral *knowing*, moral *feeling*, and moral *action*. Although teachers have succeeded in instilling knowledge and fostering moral feelings through learning, the process of encouraging students to take consistent and internalized moral actions remains a major challenge. This is in line with research (Karimah et al., 2022) which highlights that the transition from *moral knowing* to *moral action* is often constrained by environmental factors and a lack of external support, consistent with the findings at MTs S Darul 'Arafah.

However, this study also identified various positive outcomes from the adaptive strategies implemented by teachers. Carl Rogers' humanistic approach, in which teachers act as facilitators with empathy and understanding of students' backgrounds, is highly relevant. This strategy has proven to be effective and is reflected in the teachers' efforts to take a personal approach and communicate openly with students and parents. This approach has succeeded in building positive relationships, increasing student confidence, and facilitating student self-expression, which in turn increases active participation in the attitude formation process.

In the perspective of Islamic education, moral values are not only conveyed verbally, but also through exemplary behavior (*uswah hasanah*), good advice (*mau'izhah hasanah*), and habits that shape manners (*ta'dib*), as explained by Al-Ghazali and Ibn Miskawaih. This strategy is strongly implemented through various routine religious activities at madrasahs (e.g., congregational prayers, recitation of the Qur'an) and daily habits (e.g., practicing greetings, cleanliness), as well as the consistency of teachers' attitudes as role models. This implementation significantly contributes to the internalization of moral values in most students, forming good habits and awareness of the importance of manners in social interactions.

Albert Bandura's social-cognitive theory also reinforces the importance of the teacher's role as a behavioral model. Consistent teacher role modeling has been proven to be a highly effective strategy in shaping student attitudes, as students tend to imitate the positive behaviors they observe in respected authority figures. On the other hand, Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological approach explains that the development of student attitudes is influenced by interrelated social systems (microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, macrosystems), such as family, school, peers, and the media. Teachers' efforts to involve parents through active communication, as well as the positive use of digital media for learning, have shown a positive impact in creating a more holistic and integrated

supportive environment for student character development. A study by (Yuliawan & Taryatman, 2020) confirms that integrating Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory into character education practices can significantly improve program effectiveness by involving various student environments, which is in line with the collaborative efforts of teachers at this madrasah.

However, this study also identified several negative results or obstacles that still need to be addressed continuously. Although various strategies have been implemented, the low intrinsic motivation of students to have good character remains a challenge, especially when the values taught conflict with peer norms or media content. In addition, the strong negative influence of the external social environment (such as promiscuity and uncontrolled exposure to social media) remains a dominant factor that hinders the optimization of student attitude development. Limited learning facilities or access to supporting resources in madrasahs can also be a hindering factor. This indicates that even though teachers have made maximum efforts, influences beyond their direct control are still very dominant and require broader intervention. Overall, although the Akidah Akhlak teacher's strategy at MTs SDarul 'Arafah has been in line with character education, Islamic, and modern social theories in a holistic and contextual manner, continuous support from madrasahs, families, and the wider community is needed so that the process of shaping students' character can take place more effectively and sustainably.

E. Conclusion

This study reveals that *Akidah Akhlak* teachers at MTs S Darul 'Arafah Pangkalan Brandan face significant challenges in developing students' attitudes, particularly low motivation, negative influences from peers and social media, and limited facilities. To address these issues, teachers employ several strategies, including *uswah hasanah* (role modeling), moral advice, habituation through routine activities, personal approaches, digital media utilization, and collaboration with parents and the madrasah. Among these, role modeling and parental collaboration proved to be the most effective in strengthening student discipline and responsibility. The novelty of this study lies in demonstrating how the integration of classical Islamic moral concepts (Al-Ghazali, Ibn Miskawaih) with contemporary character education theories (Lickona, Bandura, Bronfenbrenner) provides a comprehensive framework that is particularly relevant in the socio-cultural context of MTs S Darul 'Arafah. This contributes both to theory –by linking Islamic ethics with modern educational psychology and to practice by showing context-specific strategies that teachers can apply in similar madrasah environments. In terms of implications, the study underscores that character education cannot rely solely on classroom teaching but requires a holistic, contextual, and collaborative approach involving teachers, parents, and the school community. Practically, teachers should strengthen exemplary practices and digital literacy integration; school principals need to provide systematic training and adequate facilities; while policymakers are encouraged to design programs that support madrasahs in addressing external influences and family-related challenges.

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