

The Influence of Islamic Religious Education Instruction on the Moral Character of Grade VIII Students at SMP Negeri 3 Lembang, Pinrang Regency

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study aims to analyze the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning strategies in shaping students' morals at the junior secondary school level. The study specifically examines the relationship between Religious Education learning and the moral conditions of Grade VIII students at SMP Negeri 3 Lembang, Pinrang Regency.

Methodology: A quantitative approach with an associative research design was employed. Data were collected from 53 Grade VIII students using questionnaires, observation, and documentation. The questionnaire measured Religious Education learning and students' morals using Likert-scale items. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test, correlation analysis, coefficient of determination, and simple linear regression.

Main Findings: Religious Education learning obtained a percentage of 62.95% and was categorized as low, while students' moral conditions reached 60.50% and were also categorized as low. Simple linear regression produced $Y = 20.115 + 0.647X$, with $R = 0.759$ and $R^2 = 0.576$. The t-count of 8.316 exceeded the t-table value of 2.007, with a significance value of 0.000, indicating a significant positive effect of Islamic Religious Education learning on students' morals.

Novelty/Originality of this study: This study provides quantitative evidence of the contribution of Religious Education learning to students' moral development in a junior secondary school context. Its originality lies in demonstrating that Islamic Religious Education learning accounts for 57.6% of the variation in students' moral conditions while identifying the remaining 42.4% as an opportunity to examine other factors influencing moral development.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education plays an important role in the educational process because it is not only oriented toward the acquisition of religious knowledge but also toward the development of students' attitudes and behavior [1], [2]. Islamic Religious Education learning is designed to enable students to understand the values of Islamic teachings while also applying them in their daily lives. Therefore, the success of Islamic Religious Education learning cannot be measured solely by students' ability to understand the learning materials

but also by their ability to internalize religious values and demonstrate attitudes and behaviors that are consistent with Islamic teachings. In the context of school education, this process requires learning that is able to connect religious materials with students' experiences and real-life situations.

The development of students' morals is an important aspect of Islamic education. Morals are not formed solely through the theoretical delivery of learning materials but through a continuous learning process involving understanding, exemplary behavior, habituation, and reinforcement of values [3]. Islamic Religious Education teachers play a strategic role in this process because they do not merely act as providers of learning materials but also as educators who provide guidance and serve as behavioral role models for students [4]. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education learning needs to be implemented through strategies that enable Islamic values to be understood and manifested in students' behavior both within the school environment and in their daily lives.

In practice, Islamic Religious Education learning faces challenges in connecting students' mastery of learning materials with the development of their behavior [5], [6]. Students' understanding of religious materials does not always correspond to their application of these values in everyday life. This condition indicates that the Islamic Religious Education learning process needs to address affective and behavioral aspects in addition to cognitive aspects. Learning strategies are important because they determine how materials are delivered, how students are involved in the learning process, and how the values they learn are transformed into habits and behaviors. Thus, Islamic Religious Education learning should be viewed as an educational process that serves a broader function than merely transferring religious knowledge.

Several previous studies have demonstrated a relationship between Islamic Religious Education learning and the development of students' morals [7]. Research on Islamic Religious Education learning indicates that religious education can contribute to the development of students' attitudes and behavior when religious materials are not limited to the acquisition of knowledge but are integrated with habituation and the application of values [8]. Other studies have also identified teachers and the learning process as important factors in developing students' character [9]. These findings demonstrate that Islamic Religious Education learning has the potential to shape students' morals; however, its effectiveness is strongly influenced by how the learning process is designed and implemented within a particular school context.

Nevertheless, research on Islamic Religious Education learning and students' morals still has room for further development, particularly in examining how the learning process contributes to moral development at the junior secondary school level. Some previous studies have placed greater emphasis on relationships or causal effects between variables through quantitative approaches, while the learning process itself which involves value transmission, guidance, habituation, and exemplary behavior has not always been the primary focus. This gap indicates the need for studies that pay greater attention to Islamic Religious Education learning strategies as an integral part of the process of developing students' morals. Such a focus is important for obtaining a more contextual understanding of the contribution of Islamic Religious Education learning to students' behavioral development.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on Islamic Religious Education learning strategies in relation to the development of students' morals at the junior secondary school level [10]. This study does not view Islamic Religious Education merely as a subject aimed at developing religious knowledge but also as an educational process directed toward the internalization and application of Islamic values. This perspective allows Islamic Religious Education learning to be understood more comprehensively by examining the relationship between the learning process and changes in students' behavior [11]. This study is also important because moral development is an integral component of the objectives of Islamic education. Therefore, the findings are expected to provide an overview of the importance of Islamic Religious Education learning in supporting students' holistic development.

Based on the foregoing discussion, research on Islamic Religious Education learning strategies for developing students' morals has both academic and practical significance. Academically, this study can enrich the literature on Islamic Religious Education learning that is not solely oriented toward cognitive aspects but also toward the development of students' behavior and character [12]. Practically, the findings can serve as a consideration for teachers and schools in developing Islamic Religious Education learning processes that place greater emphasis on the internalization of Islamic values. Therefore, this study aims to analyze Islamic Religious Education learning strategies in developing students' morals at the junior secondary school level and to identify the aspects of learning that support the process of students' moral development.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research approach with an associative design. The quantitative approach was used to obtain measurable data regarding the implementation of Islamic Religious Education

learning and the moral development of students. The associative design was applied to examine the relationship between the variables investigated in the study [13], [14]. This design was selected because the research sought to determine whether Islamic Religious Education learning had a significant contribution to the moral development of students at the junior secondary school level.

The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 3 Lembang, Pinrang Regency. The research setting was selected because Islamic Religious Education learning constitutes an important component of the school's educational process and is closely related to efforts to develop students' religious attitudes and moral behavior. The research was conducted through several stages, beginning with preliminary observation, preparation of research instruments, data collection, data processing, data analysis, and interpretation of the research findings.

2.2 Population and Sample

The population in this study consisted of students who were the subjects of Islamic Religious Education learning at SMP Negeri 3 Lembang, Pinrang Regency [15]. The research focused on Grade VIII students because this group was directly related to the research focus concerning Islamic Religious Education learning and students' moral development.

The sample was determined based on the population available at the research site. Students selected as respondents were given research instruments in the form of questionnaires to obtain quantitative data regarding Islamic Religious Education learning and students' moral conditions [16]. The selection of respondents was conducted according to the sampling procedure described in the original research so that the sample represented the population under investigation.

2.3 Data Sources and Data Collection Techniques

The study used primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from students through questionnaires related to Islamic Religious Education learning and students' morals. Secondary data were obtained from school documentation and other relevant documents supporting the research, including information concerning the research setting and student-related data [17].

Three data collection techniques were employed, namely observation, questionnaires, and documentation. Observation was conducted to obtain an initial description of the implementation of Islamic Religious Education learning and the general condition of students [18]. Questionnaires were used as the main instrument for collecting quantitative data from respondents. Documentation was used to complement the primary data by obtaining relevant information and documents from the school.

2.4 Research Instruments

The principal instrument used in this study was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed based on indicators related to the variables examined in the research. The first set of questionnaire items measured aspects of Islamic Religious Education learning, while the second set measured students' moral conditions. Respondents provided responses according to the alternatives provided in the questionnaire [19].

The instrument was arranged systematically so that each indicator could be measured through several statements. The use of a structured questionnaire enabled the responses of all respondents to be quantified and subsequently analyzed statistically.

Table 1. Research Instrument Indicators

Variable	Indicator	Measurement Technique	Instrument
Islamic Religious Education Learning	Understanding of Islamic Religious Education materials	Questionnaire	Likert-scale items
Islamic Religious Education Learning	Learning activities and participation	Questionnaire	Likert-scale items
Islamic Religious Education Learning	Application of Islamic values in learning	Questionnaire	Likert-scale items
Students' Morals	Religious behavior	Questionnaire	Likert-scale items
Students' Morals	Respectful behavior	Questionnaire	Likert-scale items
Students' Morals	Discipline and responsibility	Questionnaire	Likert-scale items
Students' Morals	Social behavior	Questionnaire	Likert-scale items

The questionnaire responses were scored according to the response categories provided in the research instrument. The resulting scores were then converted into quantitative data for statistical analysis. The

instrument indicators were used as the basis for interpreting the extent to which Islamic Religious Education learning was associated with students' moral conditions.

2.5 Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed quantitatively through several stages. First, the questionnaire data were checked, classified, and tabulated according to the variables and indicators being measured. Second, descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to determine the distribution and general tendency of respondents' answers. Third, inferential statistical analysis was conducted to examine the relationship and contribution between Islamic Religious Education learning and students' morals.

The statistical analysis included the calculation of descriptive percentages and hypothesis testing. The hypothesis test was used to determine whether Islamic Religious Education learning had a statistically significant effect on students' moral development [20]. The decision regarding the research hypothesis was based on the comparison between the calculated statistical value and the relevant significance criterion. The coefficient of determination was also considered to identify the proportion of variation in students' moral conditions that could be explained by the Islamic Religious Education learning variable.

2.6 Research Procedure

The research procedure was conducted chronologically through the following stages:

1. Preliminary stage: identifying the research problem, conducting an initial observation of the research setting, and determining the research variables.
2. Instrument preparation: developing the questionnaire based on indicators of Islamic Religious Education learning and students' morals.
3. Data collection: distributing the questionnaires to the selected respondents and collecting supporting information through observation and documentation.
4. Data processing: checking the completeness of the responses, assigning scores, tabulating the data, and organizing the results according to the research variables.
5. Data analysis: conducting descriptive and inferential statistical analyses to determine the characteristics of the data and test the research hypothesis.
6. Interpretation: interpreting the statistical results in relation to the research objectives and discussing their implications for Islamic Religious Education learning and students' moral development.
7. Conclusion: formulating conclusions based on the results of the data analysis and the research objectives.

The research procedure can be summarized as follows:

Problem Identification → Preliminary Observation → Instrument Preparation → Data Collection → Data Processing → Statistical Analysis → Interpretation → Conclusion

This procedure was designed to ensure that the research was conducted systematically and that the conclusions were based on the data obtained from the respondents.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Description of PAI Learning

The descriptive analysis was conducted to determine the condition of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning among Grade VIII students at SMP Negeri 3 Lembang, Pinrang Regency. The data were obtained from 53 respondents through a questionnaire designed to measure students' perceptions of the implementation of Islamic Religious Education learning. The questionnaire responses were scored and subsequently compared with the maximum criterion score to determine the percentage and category of the Islamic Religious Education learning variable.

The results show that the Islamic Religious Education learning variable obtained a total score of 2,269 from a maximum criterion score of 3,604. The percentage obtained was 62.95%. Based on the classification used in the original research, this percentage was categorized as low. The result indicates that the implementation of Islamic Religious Education learning among the respondents had not yet reached an optimal level. Although Islamic Religious Education learning had been implemented as part of the students' educational experience, the descriptive findings indicate that there remained considerable room for improvement in the learning process. The descriptive results of the Islamic Religious Education learning variable are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Results of Islamic Religious Education Learning

Variable	Obtained Score	Maximum Score	Percentage (%)	Category
Islamic Religious Education Learning	2,269	3,604	62.95	Low

The finding in Table 2 indicates that Islamic Religious Education learning requires strengthening in order to achieve its broader educational objectives. Islamic Religious Education learning is expected not only to provide students with religious knowledge but also to facilitate the understanding, internalization, and application of Islamic values. Therefore, the relatively low descriptive result should be understood as an indication that the learning process still needs to be improved in terms of its implementation and its connection with students' everyday behavior.

3.2 Description of Students' Moral Conditions

The second descriptive analysis was conducted to identify the moral conditions of Grade VIII students. The moral variable was measured through questionnaire items related to students' attitudes and behaviors reflecting Islamic values. The collected responses were scored and analyzed to determine the overall condition of students' morals based on the classification applied in the research.

The analysis produced a total score of 2,566 from a maximum criterion score of 4,240. The resulting percentage was 60.5%, which was classified as low according to the research criteria. This finding indicates that the moral conditions of the students had not yet reached an optimal level. The result is particularly important because moral development represents one of the central outcomes expected from Islamic education. Knowledge of religious concepts needs to be accompanied by the development of attitudes and behaviors that reflect the values learned through Islamic Religious Education. The descriptive results of students' moral conditions are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive Results of Students' Moral Conditions

Variable	Obtained Score	Maximum Score	Percentage (%)	Category
Students' Morals	2,566	4,240	60.50	Low

Table 3 demonstrates that the moral condition of the students was also categorized as low. This result suggests that the internalization of Islamic values into students' everyday attitudes and behavior remains an important educational concern. Moral formation is a continuous process that requires consistency between what students learn in the classroom and what they experience through teacher modeling, school culture, peer interaction, family environment, and habituation. Accordingly, Islamic Religious Education learning should be supported by broader character-building practices within and outside the classroom.

3.3 The Effect of Islamic Religious Education Learning on Students' Morals

Before testing the research hypothesis, a normality test was conducted to determine whether the data met the assumption required for parametric statistical analysis. The normality test used the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method and involved 53 respondents. The mean score for Islamic Religious Education learning was 42.81 with a standard deviation of 8.773, while the mean score for students' morals was 47.81 with a standard deviation of 7.481. The significance value was 0.458 for Islamic Religious Education learning and 0.685 for students' morals. Since both values were greater than 0.05, the data were considered normally distributed and suitable for subsequent statistical analysis.

The effect of Islamic Religious Education learning on students' morals was examined using simple linear regression analysis. The analysis produced the following regression equation:

$$Y = 20.115 + 0.647X \quad (1)$$

In Equation (1), Y represents students' moral conditions, while X represents Islamic Religious Education learning. The constant value of 20.115 represents the predicted value of students' morals when the Islamic Religious Education learning variable is assumed to be zero. Meanwhile, the regression coefficient of 0.647 indicates a positive relationship between Islamic Religious Education learning and students' morals. This means that an increase in the Islamic Religious Education learning score is associated with an increase in the predicted score of students' moral conditions.

The correlation analysis produced an R value of 0.759. This value indicates a strong positive relationship between Islamic Religious Education learning and students' morals. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination was $R^2 = 0.576$, indicating that Islamic Religious Education learning explained 57.6% of the variation in students' moral conditions. The remaining 42.4% was associated with other factors outside the variables examined in this study. The statistical results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Simple Linear Regression Results

Statistical Indicator	Result
R	0.759
R^2	0.576
Contribution	57.6%
Other Factors	42.4%

Regression Equation	$Y = 20.115 + 0.647X$
t-count	8.316
t-table	2.007
Significance	0.000

The hypothesis test further confirmed the statistical significance of the relationship. The calculated t-value was 8.316, whereas the t-table value was 2.007. Because $8.316 > 2.007$, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. The significance value of 0.000 was also lower than 0.05. These results demonstrate that Islamic Religious Education learning had a statistically significant positive effect on the morals of Grade VIII students at SMP Negeri 3 Lembang, Pinrang Regency.

The coefficient of determination of 57.6% represents a substantial contribution. It indicates that more than half of the variation in students' moral conditions measured in this research model was statistically associated with Islamic Religious Education learning. However, the remaining 42.4% indicates that students' moral development is multidimensional and cannot be explained exclusively through classroom Islamic Religious Education learning. Consequently, the result should be interpreted as evidence of the important contribution of Islamic Religious Education learning rather than as evidence that Islamic Religious Education learning is the sole determinant of students' moral development.

3.4 Discussion of the Findings

The findings demonstrate that Islamic Religious Education learning had a significant positive effect on the morals of Grade VIII students. The regression coefficient of 0.647 and the strong correlation coefficient of 0.759 demonstrate that better Islamic Religious Education learning was associated with better moral conditions among students. This finding is theoretically consistent with the fundamental function of Islamic Religious Education, which seeks to integrate religious knowledge with attitudes and behavior. Islamic Religious Education learning therefore has a strategic position because the material taught contains values concerning faith, worship, interpersonal relationships, responsibility, discipline, and ethical conduct. The statistical evidence obtained in this study strengthens the argument that religious learning can become an important instrument for supporting students' moral development.

Finding is also consistent with previous studies emphasizing that Islamic Religious Education learning can contribute to the formation of students' *akhlaqul karimah*. Previous research has shown that the selection of appropriate learning strategies, exemplary behavior, guidance, and habituation can help students internalize Islamic values and apply them in everyday behavior [21]. Other research has similarly emphasized the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in providing guidance, modeling positive behavior, and creating religious learning environments that support character formation [22]. These findings strengthen the interpretation that the relationship identified in this study is not merely statistical but is also consistent with the educational function of Islamic Religious Education as a subject concerned with both knowledge and character.

An important finding that requires further attention is the descriptive condition of the two variables. Islamic Religious Education learning obtained a percentage of 62.95%, while students' morals reached 60.5%, and both were categorized as low based on the criteria used in the original research. At the same time, the inferential analysis demonstrated a strong and significant relationship between the variables. This apparent difference between the descriptive category and the strength of the statistical relationship constitutes an important aspect of the findings. It indicates that Islamic Religious Education learning was strongly associated with students' morals even though the overall implementation and moral conditions still required improvement. Therefore, the problem is not the absence of a relationship but the need to improve the quality and effectiveness of the learning process so that its potential contribution to moral formation can be realized more optimally.

Research findings also reveal a research gap concerning the factors that influence students' morals. The coefficient of determination shows that Islamic Religious Education learning explained 57.6% of the variation in students' moral conditions, while 42.4% remained outside the model. This result indicates that moral development is influenced by multiple factors beyond classroom learning. Previous research has emphasized the importance of teacher role modeling, religious habituation, school culture, parental involvement, and students' social environment in strengthening character development [23], [24]. Thus, the present study complements previous research by quantitatively demonstrating the substantial contribution of Islamic Religious Education learning while simultaneously showing that moral formation requires a broader educational ecosystem.

Novelty of this study lies in its quantitative measurement of the contribution of Islamic Religious Education learning to students' moral conditions within the context of a junior secondary school v

[25]. While several previous studies have described Islamic Religious Education based character formation through teacher strategies, religious programs, and habituation, this study provides an empirical estimate through the coefficient of determination. The value of $R^2 = 57.6\%$ demonstrates the magnitude of the contribution within the research model. This quantitative evidence provides a complementary perspective to

previous qualitative studies and reinforces the argument that Islamic Religious Education learning should be positioned as an important component of systematic character development.

Findings have important implications for Islamic Religious Education teachers. The relatively low descriptive score of Islamic Religious Education learning indicates that teachers need to strengthen learning practices that connect religious concepts with students' actual experiences [26], [27]. Islamic Religious Education learning should provide opportunities for students to understand Islamic values, reflect on their meaning, practice them, and receive consistent reinforcement. Strategies involving contextual examples, teacher modeling, discussion, habituation, reflection, and direct practice may help bridge the gap between students' cognitive understanding and their actual behavior. In this regard, Islamic Religious Education teachers should not only assess students' mastery of learning materials but should also pay attention to the extent to which religious values are reflected in students' attitudes and everyday conduct.

At the institutional level, the findings imply that the responsibility for students' moral formation should not be placed solely on Islamic Religious Education teachers [28]. Since 42.4% of the variation in students' moral conditions was not explained by Islamic Religious Education learning, schools need to develop an integrated character-building environment [29]. Collaboration among Islamic Religious Education teachers, classroom teachers, school administrators, parents, and the wider school community is important to ensure consistency between the values taught in the classroom and the behavioral expectations applied in students' daily lives [30]. A supportive school culture, religious activities, discipline systems, and parental involvement can strengthen the influence of Islamic Religious Education learning and create continuous opportunities for students to practice Islamic values.

Despite its contribution, this study has several limitations. First, the research involved 53 respondents from a population of 140 Grade VIII students in one school, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts. Second, the study primarily relied on questionnaire-based quantitative measurements, which may not fully capture the complexity of students' moral behavior in natural situations. Third, the regression model examined Islamic Religious Education learning as the principal explanatory variable, while the remaining 42.4% indicates the presence of other factors that were not examined. Future research should therefore involve larger samples and multiple schools and consider additional variables such as family environment, school culture, teacher role modeling, peer relationships, religious habituation, and parental involvement. A mixed-methods design combining questionnaires, observations, and interviews could also provide a more comprehensive understanding of how Islamic Religious Education learning contributes to the formation of students' morals.

4. CONCLUSION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning has a significant positive effect on the morals of Grade VIII students at SMP Negeri 3 Lembang, Pinrang Regency. Islamic Religious Education learning obtained a percentage of 62.95%, while students' moral conditions reached 60.50%, both categorized as low based on the criteria applied in the study. Nevertheless, the inferential analysis showed a strong positive relationship between Islamic Religious Education learning and students' morals, with $R = 0.759$ and $R^2 = 0.576$, indicating that Islamic Religious Education learning contributed 57.6% to the variation in students' moral conditions, while 42.4% was associated with other factors outside the research model. The regression equation $Y = 20.115 + 0.647X$ further indicates a positive direction of influence, while the hypothesis test produced a t-count of $8.316 > t\text{-table of } 2.007$ with a significance value of 0.000 , confirming that Islamic Religious Education learning significantly influences students' moral development. These findings emphasize the importance of strengthening Islamic Religious Education learning through contextual learning, teacher role modeling, habituation, reflection, and opportunities for students to practice Islamic values in daily life. Future research is expected to involve larger and more diverse samples and examine other factors, including family environment, school culture, parental involvement, peer interaction, and religious habituation, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' moral development.

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