

## THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RELIGIOUS CULTURE IN STRENGTHENING THE TEACHING OF AQIDAH AND AKHLAK THROUGH A HOLISTIC METHOD IN ISLAMIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore how madrasahs integrate religious culture to reinforce the teaching of Aqidah Akhlak (moral theology). Employing a qualitative, descriptive field research methodology, the research was conducted at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Ar-Roudhoh in Jember. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, and then systematically narrated to provide a comprehensive overview of how religious culture is applied as a means of strengthening the learning of Aqidah Akhlak in the madrasa context. The findings reveal that the implementation of religious culture at MI Ar-Roudhoh Jember as a reinforcement for Aqidah Akhlak learning is carefully planned and executed. Within the classroom setting, activities are designed to enhance students' understanding of moral theology, while outside the classroom, religious cultural activities serve as an extension of this theoretical learning. These activities involve habituation, modeling, and the internalization of religious values in students. The outcomes of strengthening Aqidah Akhlak through religious culture include positive shifts in attitudes, spanning cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.

**Keywords:** Moral Theology, Religious Culture, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, Reinforcement.

### ABSTRAK

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mendeskripsikan bagaimana madrasah menerapkan budaya religius sebagai penguat pembelajaran Aqidah Akhlak melalui metode holistik di Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Penelitian ini merupakan jenis penelitian lapangan (field research), dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif. Penelitian ini dilaksanakan di Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Ar-Roudhoh Jember. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara, observasi dan dokumentasi. Kemudian data yang diperoleh dinarasikan untuk memperoleh gambaran umum tentang penerapan budaya religius sebagai penguat pembelajaran Aqidah Akhlak di Madrasah. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan budaya religius melalui metode holistik di MI Ar-Roudhoh Jember sebagai penguat pembelajaran Aqidah Akhlak dilakukan dengan perencanaan dan pelaksanaan yang teratur. Di dalam kelas terdapat kegiatan pengembangan wawasan materi aqidah akhlak, sedangkan di luar kelas terdapat kegiatan budaya religius dan kegiatan sebagai langkah penguatan pembelajaran aqidah akhlak. Dalam pelaksanaan kegiatan tersebut diterapkan bentuk pembiasaan, keteladanan dan internalisasi nilai-nilai budaya religius kepada peserta didik. Dampak dari penguatan pembelajaran aqidah akhlak melalui budaya religius antara lain adanya perubahan sikap yang positif, baik pada aspek kognitif, afektif maupun psikomotorik.

**Kata Kunci:** Aqidah Akhlak, Budaya Religius, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, Metode Holistik, Penguatan

## INTRODUCTION

One of the mandatory religious subjects taught in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah is Akidah Akhlak (Sari and Nazib 2023). Field observations indicate that this subject primarily focuses on conceptual understanding, yet its practical implementation in daily life remains insufficient. This, however, does not align well with the ultimate goal of Akidah Akhlak instruction, which is to strengthen students' faith, demonstrated through the application of religious teachings in their daily lives.

Akidah (creed) and Akhlak (morality) form the two fundamental pillars of Islamic teachings, encompassing a broad and profound scope. Akidah pertains to the relationship between creatures and their Creator (*hablumminallah*), while Akhlak addresses the relationship between humans and other creations (*hablumminannas*) (Solihin 2021).

Several issues surround the teaching of Akidah Akhlak: the evaluation process emphasizes cognitive aspects, even though Akhlak places a stronger emphasis on behavior. Moreover, students often lack motivation and interest in the subject. The task of a Madrasah Ibtidaiyah teacher to impart Akidah and Akhlak is challenging. Akidah materials delve into matters of faith, while students at this level primarily operate within a concrete operational stage of cognitive development. As Mochtar Buchori notes in Muhaimin's work, the failure of religious education stems from its sole focus on developing cognitive understanding of religious values, neglecting the affective aspects and the desire and determination to practice these values (Muhaimin 2009).

The teaching of Akidah Akhlak is delivered through various methods, including

habituation, role modeling, practice, training, and guidance. These diverse methods exist because Akidah Akhlak not only requires students to understand the material but also to maintain a balance between knowledge and its practical application. Therefore, to instill a firm foundation in Akidah and Akhlak toward God, fellow humans, and the environment, a guidance- and habituation-based approach is necessary in shaping character (Pahrudin 2017).

Based on interviews with Akidah Akhlak teachers at MI Ar-Roudhoh, it was revealed that classroom teaching predominantly revolves around conveying concepts, often supplemented by role modeling via instructional videos. To further cultivate practical and affective aspects, religious cultures, such as the habit of performing Duha prayer, are implemented within the school setting. These regular practices help children internalize the concepts of Akidah and apply them in their daily lives due to their continuous nature (Fitri 2023).

Instilling religious values plays a crucial role in fostering a religious culture, as through this process, children will realize the significance of these values in life. Thus, in instilling religious values, it is essential to recognize that religious teachings are not merely memorized or confined to cognitive understanding but must also encompass affective and psychomotor dimensions. Every member of the educational community shares the responsibility of participating in the cultivation of religious values (Fathurrohman 2016).

When religious values are deeply instilled in children, they will naturally evolve into a religious spirit. In this context, a religious spirit is understood as an inner strength, energy, and capacity inherent in humans, which, according to scholars of religious

psychology, stems from reason, will, and emotion. This spirit is subsequently guided by divine laws, conveyed through Prophets and Messengers, with the purpose of regulating human life toward well-being, both in this world and the hereafter.

In Islam, a religious culture refers to the comprehensive practice of religious law, as reflected in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 208:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السِّلْمِ كَافَّةً وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا  
خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

*“O believers, enter into submission (Islam) completely and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Surely, he is an open enemy to you.”*

The establishment of a religious culture within educational institutions represents an effort to integrate religious values into the organizational behavior and traditions of all members of the institution. By making religion an integral part of the institution's culture, consciously or not, every member who follows these traditions is essentially practicing religious teachings (Fathurrohman 2016).

A similar study conducted by A. Nadziroh revealed that strengthening a religious culture can effectively shape students' character, utilizing various methods, one of which is habituation. The success of reinforcing religious culture in shaping students' character depends on the approach, methods, techniques, and evaluations used. Nadziroh's research, a literature review, is theoretical in nature and not based on field data (Nadziroh 2019). Another study by Chusnul May Syaroh concluded that schools had implemented various religious practices to build students' character, such as smiling, greeting, reading the Quran, performing congregational prayers, memorizing the

Quran, holding religious gatherings, and commemorating Islamic holidays. The research employed a case study methodology (Syaroh, Hanief, and Sulistiono 2021). Additionally, Mahfudzoh's recent research explored the enhancement of students' religious character education through religious activities in schools, focusing on religious activities aimed at strengthening character education. This research used a qualitative approach (Mahfudzoh, Cahyanto, and Dewi 2023).

The novelty of this research lies in its exploration of religious culture as a reinforcement for Akidah Akhlak instruction in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Unlike previous studies that describe religious culture in schools as part of character development, this study focuses on its role in strengthening Akidah Akhlak learning.

Based on the aforementioned issues and data, conducting this research is crucial. The aim is to provide a description of how religious culture is implemented as a reinforcement for Akidah Akhlak teaching in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. It is anticipated that various innovative approaches could be developed by educators to teach Akidah Akhlak, focusing not only on conceptual understanding but also on practical application in everyday life through religious culture.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research design with a case study approach. The case study methodology was chosen to explore in-depth how religious culture is implemented in the teaching of Akidah Akhlak through a holistic approach at MI Ar-Roudhoh. This approach allows the researcher to gain a detailed understanding of the context and phenomena within a scientific setting and to

explore how religious culture is integrated into educational practices.

The study was conducted at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Ar-Roudhoh Jember during the first semester of the 2023/2024 academic year. This particular madrasah was selected due to its reputation for integrating religious culture into its daily activities and for offering Akidah Akhlak instruction. The research informants consisted of the head of the madrasah, the Akidah Akhlak teacher, and the religious affairs coordinator, as detailed in the table below:

No.	Initials	Position
1.	Mrs. P1	Head of Madrasah
2.	Mrs. P2	Akidah Akhlak Teacher
3.	Mr. P1	Religious Affairs Coordinator

**Table 1. Research Informants**

Data collection techniques utilized in this study included interviews, observations, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted with the head of the madrasah, the Akidah Akhlak teacher, and the religious affairs coordinator to gather information regarding the policies and practices surrounding the integration of religious culture in education. Participatory observation was employed to examine the application of religious culture in the madrasah, while documentation, consisting of photographs of activities related to the implementation of religious culture, served as supporting data.

The data collected were analyzed using a qualitative descriptive approach with thematic analysis techniques. The data analysis process, based on the Miles and Huberman model as cited by Alfiah, consists of three main phases: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification (Alfiah and Hariyadi, 2022).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Description of Religious Culture at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah

The religious culture at MI Ar-Roudhoh is fundamentally manifested through the values of religious teachings that have become habitual behavior, followed by the entire school community. This is achieved by adhering to Islamic law, allowing individuals to cultivate positive character traits in accordance with Islamic principles. Consequently, the habitual practice of religious culture at MI Ar-Roudhoh not only educates and shapes students into individuals with commendable character but also strengthens their piety towards Allah SWT. Religious cultural activities are integrated into the madrasah's programs, occurring regularly on a daily, weekly, and annual basis, as well as within extracurricular activities.

As stated by Mr. P1, "The religious culture implemented in this madrasah is essentially a program formulated by the madrasah curriculum stakeholders. Various religious activities are organized into daily, weekly, monthly, and annual programs, and some religious activities are part of the extracurricular programs."

According to Asmaun Sahlan, religious culture in a madrasah is a way of thinking and acting that is embraced by all members of the institution, rooted in religious values. Essentially, the religious culture of a madrasah reflects the development of attitudes and behaviors of its members that are grounded in the principles of religious teachings. Whether consciously or unconsciously, they practice religious teachings through their behavior, attitudes, and religious traditions that have become inherent in every individual within the madrasah (Sahlan 2010).

The instillation of a religious ethos within the madrasah is carried out in accordance with the provisions of Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, specifically in Article 1, paragraph (1). This article asserts that education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning environment and learning process that enables students to actively develop their potential, to possess spiritual religious strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and the skills necessary for themselves, society, the nation, and the state. Furthermore, Article 1, paragraph (2) emphasizes that national education is based on Pancasila and the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia of 1945, rooted in religious values, Indonesian national culture, and the values of Pancasila (Muhaimin 2006).

Religious culture can be defined as the embodiment of religious values that are practiced, forming the foundation for behavior, daily habits, traditions, and symbols. All of these are efforts to internalize noble character within individuals. Based on research conducted at the Madrasah, it was found that the religious culture implemented at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Ar-Roudhoh is primarily established through habitual religious activities. These activities include: *Firstly*, Daily Activities. The daily activities at the madrasah include several routines: first, Madrasah Diniyah. The first routine activity that students engage in upon arriving at the madrasah each morning is the *madrasah diniyah*. This program begins at 6:30 AM and is a regular activity designed to assess students' proficiency in reading the Qur'an. As part of the madrasah's curriculum, this practice is implemented to ensure students maintain and improve their fluency in Qur'anic recitation.



**Figure 1.**  
**Students Reciting the Qur'an in Sequence**

In Figure 1, students can be seen taking turns reciting the Qur'an. They are supervised by an ustad or ustadzah, lined up in a single row. Each student recites according to their respective level of achievement. For instance, if a student is at the first level of the *Iqro'* series, they are grouped with other students at the same level. This structure continues for each subsequent level. In addition to reciting the *Iqro'* and Qur'an, this religious education activity also includes Qur'anic memorization (*tafhidzul qur'an*). Students who have completed *Juz* 30 advance to the next level, where they begin reading and memorizing selected *munjizat* surahs.

According to Mr. P1, this religious activity not only involves reading the Qur'an, but the children are also taught how to write in Arabic. "We aim to influence the students' behavior so that it aligns with Qur'anic teachings," he explained. The purpose of this activity, according to Mr. P1 (Ichsan 2023), is based on a hadith that states: "The best among you are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it." (Narrated by Bukhari).

As further elaborated by Fathor Rosi, Qur'anic education is a process of transforming students' behavior through teaching that is grounded in its values, as the Qur'an provides comprehensive guidance for all aspects of human life, including worship (*ibadah*) and social interactions (*muamalah*) (Rosi 2021).



*Second*, the Dhuha Prayer. The Dhuha prayer is performed at approximately 7:30 AM, where all students from grades 3 to 6 are required to participate in congregational prayer in the school's prayer hall. The entire teaching staff and administrative employees also take part in this congregational prayer. According to an interview with the Head of the Madrasah, this activity aims to train and habituate the students. "The Dhuha prayer is conducted regularly to help students develop the habit of performing the prayer without needing to be reminded by their parents, especially during school holidays. We hope they will continue to perform the Dhuha prayer voluntarily from an early age." (D. T. Sari, 2023).



**Figure 2.**  
**Lower Grade Students Performing Duha Prayer in Class**

In this image, students can be seen performing the Duha prayer collectively in the classroom. For lower grade levels, the prayer is conducted in the classroom with the assistance of *murottal* recitations. According to Mr. P1, the purpose of using *murottal* is to help the students understand the appropriate recitations for each movement in the prayer. As explained by Dolah (2018), the Duha prayer is a voluntary act of worship performed when the sun rises to a significant height, typically around 7 a.m. until just before noon.

*Third*, Reciting the Prophet's Hadiths. The activity of reading and memorizing the Prophet's Hadiths and their translations is

conducted after performing the Duha prayer, under the guidance of a designated teacher. According to Mrs. P1, this activity aims to encourage children to memorize the Prophet's Hadiths and apply their content in their daily lives.

Hadiths play a highly significant role in Islamic tradition, serving as a source of moral and ethical guidance. They offer practical insights into various aspects of life, including ethical and moral considerations. Islamic education specifically emphasizes the learning and memorization of Hadiths that are relevant to ethical behavior. This approach not only deepens an individual's understanding of Islamic principles but also equips them with the skills necessary to apply these teachings in daily activities (Saleh 2022).

*Fourth*, Reciting and Memorizing Asmaul Husna. The activity of reciting Asmaul Husna is conducted after the opening prayer before lessons begin. Students are accompanied by their respective homeroom teachers. If there is still time before the class starts, the homeroom teachers will provide explanations and examples regarding the meanings of the Asmaul Husna being recited. According to Mr. P1, this practice aims to familiarize students with the names of Allah and their meanings. Moreover, we hope that, as the hadith I once heard suggests, "Whoever understands the meanings of Asmaul Husna will enter Paradise" (Ichsan, 2023).

This is in line with what was conveyed by Syaifur Rohman, who emphasized that Asmaul Husna serves as a means or intermediary given by Allah SWT to every human being, enabling them to attain happiness in both this world and the hereafter. Allah SWT promises ease for those who use Asmaul Husna as a medium to draw closer to Him. By referring to Asmaul Husna, individuals can restore positive energy to

their spiritual dimension, allowing them to achieve tranquility and peace, which ultimately leads to happiness in their lives. Inner tranquility and peace also enhance an individual's concentration. Therefore, it is no surprise that many virtuous acts of worship often begin with the recitation of Asmaul Husna. There are numerous benefits to consistently reciting, memorizing, and using Asmaul Husna in prayers when seeking something from Allah SWT (Rohman, 2020).

*Fifth, Prayers.* A routine practice at MI Ar-Roudhoh is the recitation of prayers before and after lessons. Based on an interview with Mrs. P1, it was stated that prayer recitation has become a mandatory daily activity for both students and teachers. The objective of this routine is to instill in students the habit of praying before engaging in any activity in their lives.

*Sixth, Memorizing Quranic Verses.* The memorization activities are supported by memorization books distributed to the students. The students memorize short surahs from Juz 30, with the memorization targets differing across grade levels. As students' progress to higher grades, the difficulty of the memorization increases. Each class has specific memorization targets set by the school's curriculum.



**Figure 3.**  
**Students Engaged in Quranic Review**

In this figure, students are seen reciting their Quranic memorization. Each student

takes turns reviewing their memorization with teachers, both male and female, in the classroom. This memorization activity is conducted flexibly, such as during recess, free periods of other subjects, or when the lesson explanation is sufficient, and there is still time remaining. The structure of this activity requires students to recite a minimum of five verses each day, followed by an additional five verses the next day.

*Seventh, Recitation of Akidatul Awwam.* The recitation of Akidatul Awwam is performed before the noon prayer call (Adhan). According to Mr. P1, this practice aims to help students memorize and understand the necessary and impossible attributes of Allah, the necessary and impossible attributes of the Prophets, the names of the Prophets and Messengers, and the names and duties of the Angels. The students recite Akidatul Awwam in a melodic form to facilitate easier memorization (Ichsan, 2023).

*Eighth, Congregational Dhuhr Prayer.* The congregational Dhuhr prayer is performed by all students from third to sixth grade. First and second-grade students perform the Dhuhr prayer in their respective classrooms under the guidance of their homeroom teachers. Each student who prays in the school's prayer hall (mushollah) is assigned a schedule for the call to prayer (Adhan) and the Iqama. Mr. P1 explained that this congregational Dhuhr prayer activity aims to accustom students to praying in congregation at home and wherever they may be. It is hoped that they will encourage their families to join them in performing congregational prayers at the nearby mushollah or mosque (Ichsan, 2023).

*Secondly, Weekly Activities*  
Among the weekly activities are the following: *First*, reciting Surah Yasin every

Friday. This activity is held every Friday after the students perform the Duha prayer. The aim of this practice is for the students to remember their deceased loved ones. Additionally, the school seeks to bless its students, teachers, and the broader school community by encouraging the recitation of Surah Yasin, which is recommended to be read on Fridays, a day considered particularly auspicious in Islam.

*Second*, Jum'at Beramal (Friday Charity). Every Friday, students are encouraged to set aside part of their allowance for charity. They are taught the value of sharing with peers who may be in need. According to Mrs. P1, the Jum'at Beramal initiative is used to visit sick classmates, provide support to bereaved families, and if there are leftover funds at the end of the semester, some students are invited to directly distribute food packages and cash donations to underprivileged communities (D.T. Sari, 2023).

The practice of giving charity (Sadaqah) and providing aid to those in need is regarded as a highly significant component of Islamic teachings. Islamic education fosters and promotes a culture of active participation in charitable efforts, which include various forms such as offering assistance to the needy, increasing support for institutions that require financial aid, time, expertise, or other resources to advance humanitarian and charitable objectives, and dedicating one's time and skills through voluntary service. Through participation in these activities, students not only gain personal fulfillment from helping others but also cultivate a deep understanding of empathy and compassion, which are fundamental elements of Islamic ethical principles (Sholihah & Maulida, 2020).

*Thirdly*, the annual activities. The annual activities include, first, the Commemoration of Islamic Holidays. According to Mrs. P1,

one of the most anticipated religious programs at MI Ar-Roudhoh is the celebration of Islamic holidays (PHBI), which is highly favored by the students. The PHBI organizing committee prepares a series of events to make the celebration lively and engaging. Additionally, we work closely with the students' parents to ensure the success of this event.

According to Khikayah, the Commemoration of Islamic Holidays holds significant meaning in the propagation of Islamic teachings, as it allows the Muslim community to express its identity and respect for the historical values of the religion. Furthermore, this celebration reflects the core beliefs held by Muslims (Khikayah and Prastyo 2021).

Based on an interview with Mr. P1, the forms of activities held during the Commemoration of Islamic Holidays are as follows (Ichsan 2023): Isra' Mi'raj. In celebrating Isra' Mi'raj, students gather at the school's prayer hall to recite the Qur'an together. The religious teachers narrate the story of the Isra' Mi'raj event. During this occasion, students also get to enjoy performances by their peers from the Hadrah extracurricular group.

In addition, there is the National Santri Day. The National Santri Day was celebrated on October 22, 2023. Common activities include the recitation of Surah Yasin to honor the scholars who have contributed to the development of Islamic boarding schools. Additionally, there is a choir competition where students from all grade levels perform the Santri Day anthem.





**Figure 4.**  
**National Santri Day Celebration**

Figure 4 depicts students dressed in traditional santri attire, wearing sarongs with shades of green. Students wear these sarongs on specific days only. This activity serves as a way for the madrasa to take part in the celebration of National Santri Day.

In addition, there is the commemoration of the Prophet's Birthday (Maulid Nabi). The event is a platform for strengthening students' love for the Prophet Muhammad. The Maulid Nabi celebration is typically held in the prayer room (musholla). During this event, students usually watch films related to the life and history of Prophet Muhammad, including his birth and his life's journey. Furthermore, in their respective classrooms, students, guided by their homeroom teachers, engage in fruit exchanges with their classmates.

Another important event is the Muharram Parade. The celebration of the Islamic New Year is marked by holding a Muharram parade. The objective is to familiarize the children with the Islamic New Year, so they do not only recognize the New Year based on the Gregorian calendar but also understand and celebrate the Islamic New Year as part of their cultural and religious heritage.



**Figure 5.**  
**The Implementation of the Muharram Parade**

Figure 5 shows students demonstrating great enthusiasm for this event. They wear costumes in accordance with the theme assigned to each class. This activity also aims to foster the students' confidence in performing before the general public.

In addition, the event includes a visit to the Wali's tombs.



**Figure 6.**  
**Pilgrimage to the Graves of Saints (Wali)**

In the religious pilgrimage activity depicted in **Figure 6**, students and teachers are seen praying for religious scholars by reciting Yasin and Tahlil directly at their graves. According to Mr. P1, this activity takes place during class meetings and as sixth-grade students approach their final exams. Each class takes turns visiting the graves of prominent scholars in Jember, with the aim of acquainting students with these influential figures and encouraging them to pray for those who contributed to the city's development. The pilgrimage also serves as a means for students to seek blessings (barakah) from the knowledge of the

deceased scholars. During this activity, students are instructed to maintain proper etiquette, in addition to following regular programs that focus on developing and reinforcing moral values. They are taught exemplary behavior, including the “3S” cultural principles of smiling, greeting, and offering peace, as well as practicing discipline, cleanliness, orderliness, and time management. In the madrasah, religious culture is intentionally employed to instill Islamic educational values, with the aim of fulfilling the objectives of Islamic education more effectively.

According to Asmani (2012), this religious culture is embedded in the daily activities of students, such as reading the Qur'an, memorizing Surah Yasin, performing congregational Dhuhr prayers, observing Dhuha prayers, and regularly participating in communal supplications (*istighosah*). Abdul Majid and Andayani (2012) further assert that the religious ethos cultivated in these educational institutions is designed to nurture noble character within students. This includes fostering cleanliness, honesty, compassion, humility, and discipline, while avoiding negative traits such as envy, laziness, and dishonesty. Students are also encouraged to display perseverance, trustworthiness, and respect for parents, while practicing frugality and offering assistance when needed.

Nurcholish Majid emphasizes that the foundation of a religious culture lies in the internalization of divine and human values, which are then reflected in one's attitudes, behavior, and creativity. These values include faith, *ihsan* (excellence in worship), sincerity, gratitude, and patience, as well as fostering human qualities such as empathy, justice, humility, trust, tolerance, and leadership (N. Majid, 1997). The religious activities in the madrasah are fully supported by both the

school and the students' families, with parents often playing an active role in their children's religious education at home, particularly in memorization tasks. This collaboration between the school, families, and the broader community plays a vital role in shaping the students' religiosity in their daily lives, underscoring that the responsibility for religious education extends beyond the classroom.

### **Teaching Akidah Akhlak at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah**

One of the core subjects in Islamic education that must be studied by students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) is Akidah Akhlak. The objective of teaching Akidah Akhlak at this level is to empower students by nurturing and developing their religious creed through instruction, reinforcement, and the cultivation of understanding, internalization, practice, habituation, and experience related to faith and devotion to Allah SWT. This aims to shape students into individuals who continuously strengthen their faith and piety towards Allah SWT. Moreover, it seeks to cultivate Indonesian citizens with noble character, steering them away from reprehensible conduct, both in their personal lives and in society. This embodies the concrete manifestation of the teachings and values rooted in Islamic beliefs (Madrasah, n.d.).

The subject is taught once a week. In practice, a combination of teaching methods is employed to ensure that students can easily grasp the lessons. As explained by Ms. P2, “I teach Akidah Akhlak to 19 class groups. Each group has one session per week. In teaching, I utilize various methods and media to keep the children engaged and prevent boredom” (Fitri, 2023).

Islamic religious education plays a highly significant role in shaping an individual's character. One of its primary goals is to develop individuals with commendable morals, enabling them to enhance their faith and devotion to Allah SWT (Syamsuddin et al., 2024). To achieve this goal, educators must adopt teaching methods that align with the developmental stages of the students. The intention is for the lessons to be well-received and for students to be able to apply them in their daily lives. The choice of teaching methods is crucial in improving the quality of education, as it directly affects students' comprehension and character development. Several methods can be applied, including the method of habituation, role modeling, peer tutoring, and team quizzes (Nurjanah, Yahdiyani, and Wahyuni, 2020).

In addition to employing various teaching methods, the use of educational media is considered essential to facilitate students' understanding of the material. As noted by Azhar Arsyad, the importance of integrating educational media lies in its ability to effectively convey messages and encourage learning processes to achieve educational objectives (Arsyad, 2000). This importance of media usage is also underscored in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah: 3,

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ  
اَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

*"He taught Adam the names of all things, then He presented them to the angels and said, Inform Me of the names of these, if you are truthful!"*

This verse explains that Allah taught Prophet Adam (peace be upon him) the names of all things on earth. It is understood that the objects mentioned by Adam (peace be upon him) were accompanied by a depiction of their forms. In the context of

primary education, the use of teaching media has become a serious concern for teachers, as they must continuously update and improve their approaches to address various learning challenges. Teachers are required to design lessons that prioritize effectiveness, efficiency, and engagement, with the ultimate aim of enhancing the quality of the learning process in schools. Consequently, teachers should create an engaging learning environment by utilizing creative, innovative, and diverse teaching media. This is essential to facilitate students' comprehension of the material being delivered (Fahyuni and Fauji, 2017).

According to Ms. P2, the material presented is related to *Akidah* and *Akblaq*. We know that *Akidah* pertains to matters of faith, making it somewhat challenging to explain to young learners, as these concepts are often abstract. For instance, discussing the pillars of faith involves teaching about belief in Allah, belief in angels, and so on. Meanwhile, the thinking of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah students is still concrete, heavily reliant on sensory perception.

In line with what Susiba has mentioned, the *Akidah* and *Akblaq* subjects in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah or primary schools are divided into two aspects: *Akidah* (faith) and *Akblaq* (morality). As previously outlined, *Akidah* involves the pillars of faith, *kalimat thayyibah* (the good word), and the beautiful names of Allah (*Asma'ul Husna*). If we observe closely, *Akidah* lessons regarding the pillars of faith tend to be abstract in nature, dealing with beliefs in Allah, His angels, His prophets, the Day of Judgment, and divine predestination. This necessitates the use of appropriate methods to help students grasp these concepts. On the other hand, the characteristic of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah or primary school students is that their thinking

is still concrete. Nevertheless, teachers must be capable of instilling belief in Allah's existence, which by its nature is unseen (*ghayb*) (Susiba, 2020).

According to Oemar Hamalik, teaching *Akidah Akhlak* in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah or primary schools is considered an inseparable part of religious education. Although it is not the sole factor in shaping the character and personality of students, it fundamentally contributes to motivating students to apply the values of faith (*tawhid*) and good conduct (*Akhlak Karimah*) in their daily lives (Hamalik, 2002).

In relation to the *Akidah Akhlak* material, the Ministry of Religious Affairs Regulation No. 2 of 2008 states that, essentially, the subject of *Akidah Akhlak* encourages students to embody good behavior (*al-Akhlak al-Karimah*) and Islamic manners in their daily activities as a tangible expression of their belief in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, the Last Day, and divine decree (*Qada and Qadar*). At the primary school level, especially in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, the *Akidah Akhlak* curriculum encompasses teaching the pillars of faith with a focus on understanding and internalizing *Asma'ul Husna*. Furthermore, fostering an exemplary environment and habituation in practicing commendable behavior and Islamic manners is pursued through the approach of providing role models and emphasizing the practical application of these behaviors in everyday life ("PMA\_02\_08.pdf," n.d.).

A similar point was raised by Ria Susanti, who divides the scope of *Akidah Akhlak* lessons in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah into several parts. In terms of the aspect of *Akidah* (faith), it involves immersing students in *kalimat thayyibah* and deepening their understanding of *Asma'ul Husna* as a form of habituation.

Additionally, it aims to strengthen their faith in Allah by introducing the five daily prayers and reinforcing belief in the pillars of faith. This aspect of *Akidah* serves as the foundation upon which students' understanding of core Islamic beliefs is developed, guiding them towards recognizing and embracing the unseen realities of faith, such as the existence of Allah, angels, and divine destiny. By progressively nurturing these concepts, teachers play a vital role in bridging the gap between the abstract nature of faith and the concrete cognitive abilities of primary school students (Susanti, 2022).

From the various opinions above, it can be concluded that the *Akidah Akhlak* curriculum in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah encompasses two primary aspects: faith and morality. The aspect of faith includes teachings on belief in Allah, angels, divine scriptures, prophets, the Day of Judgment, and divine predestination. Meanwhile, the aspect of morality covers both good and bad conduct, exemplary behavior, and manners towards Allah and other beings. This education in faith and morality motivates students to develop a firm belief in Allah SWT. Moreover, through the incorporation of moral teachings, this education instills in students' noble character, drawing inspiration from the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who serves as a role model for Muslims. At the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah level, the *Akidah Akhlak* curriculum aims to develop an understanding of Allah's oneness, memorize *Asma'ul Husna*, and instill virtuous behavior towards parents, teachers, and other adults. Therefore, the teacher's responsibility extends beyond merely delivering the moral creed material, but more importantly, ensuring that the material is deeply ingrained in the students' souls. The involvement of parents is also

crucial in reinforcing these teachings (G. Sari and Nazib, 2023).

### **The Relationship Between Religious Culture and Akidah Akhlak Teaching**

The religious culture implemented in madrasahs plays a pivotal role in strengthening the teaching of *Akidah Akhlak*. Activities such as congregational prayers and the recitation of supplications directly help students grasp the concepts of faith and devotion that are integral to the *Akidah Akhlak* curriculum.

The application of a religious culture facilitates *Akidah Akhlak* teachers in conveying the subject matter to students. Assessment is not limited to cognitive evaluation; it also encompasses affective and psychomotor evaluations. Teachers can observe whether students are able to perform prayers correctly, show respect to their teachers and elders, and exhibit other behaviors that align with Islamic teachings.

As noted by Benny Prasetya in his article, religious education encompasses three dimensions: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. This implies that religious education is not solely focused on imparting religious knowledge but is also aimed at fostering a habitual adherence to religious practices and encouraging students to act in accordance with the ethical standards of their respective faiths (Prasetya 2014).

Through direct observation, the researcher witnessed how the religious culture instilled in the madrasah is effectively adopted by students and the entire madrasah community. In the aspect of faith (*akidah*), students were able to perform the correct movements during prayer and accurately recite the prayer verses (particularly younger students). They could also memorize the *asmaul husna* (the 99 names of Allah) correctly.

From the perspective of ethics (*akhlak*), students bowed their heads when walking in front of their teachers, and it was rare to see students running around during break time. Additionally, they cultivated a habit of queuing during various activities outside the classroom, such as waiting in line to purchase snacks from the madrasah canteen.

The same observations were echoed by Mrs. P1, the head of the madrasah, who noted that the character development in students was a direct result of the religious culture being practiced. This also aided the *Akidah Akhlak* teachers in conveying the concepts of faith within Islam. The students became more devout in their religious practices and demonstrated moral conduct as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Sustained collaboration between teachers and parents is essential to ensure that the religious culture fostered in the madrasah as part of *Akidah Akhlak* teaching can be practiced consistently both at school and at home. This sentiment is reinforced by Sari and Nazib, who assert that parents play a crucial role in shaping the moral character of their children. Parents are seen as the front line in their children's education, and the cooperation between parents and teachers is vital in creating a collaborative environment that fosters a generation with strong ethical and spiritual foundations. Parents need to supervise and monitor their children, including engaging in discussions with them about their school activities and studies. In the context of Islam, this aligns with the principles outlined in the Qur'an, particularly in Surah At-Tahrim, verse 6,



يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا  
وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ  
شِدَادٌ لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا  
يُؤْمَرُونَ

*"O believers, protect yourselves and your families from the fire whose fuel is people and stones. Its guardians are angels, stern and severe, who do not disobey Allah in what He commands them and always do as they are ordered."*

This verse emphasizes the responsibility of families, especially the heads of households, to safeguard themselves from the fire of Hell, which is fueled by humans. Consequently, in order to achieve happiness both in this world and the hereafter, the role of parents is of paramount importance. Moreover, parents must teach their children religious education, such as how to perform acts of worship and behave virtuously, as well as social education, such as showing respect towards parents, teachers, and others (G. Sari and Nazib 2023).

### **The Implementation of a Holistic Method in Strengthening Learning**

The teaching of *Akidah Akhlak* at this *madrasah* not only addresses the cognitive aspect but also integrates the affective and psychomotor dimensions through a holistic approach. The cognitive aspect is reflected in students' understanding of religious concepts taught in class, while the affective dimension is evident in the transformation of students' attitudes, which become more religious and display Islamic values as they engage in various religious cultural activities. This comprehensive approach ensures that learning goes beyond mere theory,

encouraging students to internalize these values as part of their personal growth.

Meanwhile, the psychomotor aspect is incorporated through practical activities, such as performing congregational prayers and participating in other religious rituals. This hands-on engagement reinforces the lessons and behaviors that align with the teachings of *Akidah Akhlak*. The holistic method proves to be highly effective in embedding both knowledge and practice, fostering students' development in accordance with religious principles. Additionally, *Akidah Akhlak* teachers play a pivotal role by serving as role models, offering moral guidance, and creating a supportive learning environment that nurtures spiritual growth.

### **Challenges and Solutions**

Firstly, the implementation of religious culture at the *madrasah* has significantly contributed to reinforcing *Akidah Akhlak* education. However, both teachers and students continue to face several challenges that need to be addressed. One of the main challenges for teachers is balancing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects of learning. A holistic method demands that teachers not only focus on cognitive development but also integrate affective and psychomotor elements. Yet, teachers often find it easier to assess cognitive progress through written tests, while the affective and psychomotor aspects require more complex observational assessments. Moreover, there are limitations in the variety of teaching methods employed. Some teachers lack the knowledge or training to deliver *Akidah Akhlak* lessons using more practical, creative, and contextual approaches, which is essential in a holistic teaching model. Additionally, insufficient supporting facilities, such as small prayer spaces, make it difficult for teachers to

evaluate students' affective and psychomotor development effectively.

Secondly, students also encounter significant challenges. Many students find it difficult to apply the Akidah Akhlak values they learn at the madrasah, especially when they are outside the school environment. Unsupportive external conditions can hinder their ability to consistently practice these values. Furthermore, a lack of motivation and discipline in worship practices among students can limit the impact of Akidah Akhlak education to the confines of the madrasah. Another issue is the varying levels of comprehension among students. The holistic teaching method, which combines cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, can be overwhelming for students who are more accustomed to rote learning and theoretical approaches. Peer pressure from friends who may not value religious teachings also poses a challenge, as it can discourage students from fully participating in religious activities or applying the lessons learned in class.

Lastly, to overcome these challenges, several solutions are proposed. Teacher training on holistic teaching methods should be provided to help teachers integrate cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects more effectively. Collaboration with external partners can also help improve the facilities necessary for religious practices, such as providing more adequate prayer spaces. Additionally, fostering strong cooperation between teachers and parents is crucial to involve students in religious activities outside the madrasah, such as participating in Islamic study groups or holiday celebrations. This external involvement can help students internalize the values of Akidah Akhlak. Teachers can also adopt a more personalized approach with students who lack motivation,

offering individual support to address their specific needs. With these solutions in place, it is hoped that both teachers and students can successfully navigate the challenges of implementing religious culture through a holistic approach.

## CONCLUSION

This study found that the religious culture implemented at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah can significantly strengthen the teaching of Akidah Akhlak. The integration of religious culture through a holistic method has proven effective in enhancing students' understanding of Akidah and Akhlak values. The application of religious values in daily activities at the madrasah provides a solid foundation for the development of students' noble character.

The findings of this research have important implications for educational practices at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. The use of a holistic method that integrates religious culture into the learning process can be adopted by other madrasahs to improve the effectiveness of Akidah Akhlak instruction. This approach can be implemented by strengthening the connection between religious activities and formal classroom learning, thereby making it easier for students to internalize religious values.

For educators and madrasah policymakers, it is crucial to conduct and participate in teacher training aimed at integrating religious values into daily teaching. Additionally, madrasahs should increase the frequency of religious practices that are relevant to the lesson content, ensuring that students are more emotionally and spiritually engaged.

This study has certain limitations, as it focuses solely on religious culture in relation to Akidah Akhlak instruction. Future

research is encouraged to expand on this study by exploring other areas of education. Furthermore, the holistic method can also be applied at different educational levels beyond Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.

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