EVALUATION OF THE APPLICATION OF SOCIAL INTERACTION THEORY IN INSTILLING CHARACTER VALUES (IMPLEMENTATION IN PAI SUBJECTS IN ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS)

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Abstract

This research aims to evaluate the application of social interaction theory in instilling character values within Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects at Islamic educational institutions. The study investigates the extent to which social interaction theory is applied, the factors influencing its effectiveness, and the impact of social interaction on students' character formation. A qualitative approach was utilized, employing a case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with PAI teachers, school administrators, and students, as well as classroom observations and document analysis. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and themes from the data. The findings reveal that social interaction plays a significant role in character education, especially when teachers actively engage students in discussions, peer collaboration, and group work. Schools that provide adequate institutional support and have smaller class sizes create an environment where social interaction can flourish, leading to stronger internalization of values such as empathy, respect, and responsibility. However, the study also highlights challenges such as rigid curricula, cultural resistance, and technological limitations, which hinder the effective implementation of interactive learning methods. In conclusion, social interaction theory offers a valuable framework for character development in PAI learning. Its success depends on the commitment of educators and institutions to fostering collaborative and reflective learning environments. Addressing the identified challenges will be essential for maximizing the benefits of social interaction in character education.
Keywords: Social interaction theory, character education, Islamic Religious Education (PAI)

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi penerapan teori interaksi sosial dalam penanaman nilai-nilai karakter pada mata pelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) di lembaga pendidikan Islam. Penelitian ini mengkaji sejauh mana teori interaksi sosial diterapkan, faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi efektivitasnya, serta dampak interaksi sosial terhadap pembentukan karakter siswa. Pendekatan kualitatif digunakan dengan desain studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan guru PAI, administrator sekolah, dan siswa, serta melalui observasi kelas dan analisis dokumen. Analisis tematik digunakan untuk mengidentifikasi pola dan tema dari data yang diperoleh. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa interaksi sosial berperan signifikan

dalam pendidikan karakter, terutama ketika guru secara aktif melibatkan siswa dalam diskusi, kolaborasi antar teman, dan kerja kelompok. Sekolah yang memberikan dukungan institusi yang memadai dan memiliki jumlah siswa yang lebih sedikit menciptakan lingkungan di mana interaksi sosial dapat berkembang, sehingga memfasilitasi internalisasi nilai-nilai seperti empati, rasa hormat, dan tanggung jawab yang lebih kuat. Namun, penelitian ini juga mengungkapkan tantangan seperti kurikulum yang kaku, resistensi budaya, dan keterbatasan teknologi yang menghambat penerapan metode pembelajaran interaktif secara efektif. Kesimpulannya, teori interaksi sosial menawarkan kerangka kerja yang berharga untuk pengembangan karakter dalam pembelajaran PAI. Keberhasilannya bergantung pada komitmen pendidik dan lembaga dalam mendorong lingkungan belajar yang kolaboratif dan reflektif. Mengatasi tantangan yang teridentifikasi akan menjadi penting untuk memaksimalkan manfaat interaksi sosial dalam pendidikan karakter.

Kata Kunci: *teori interaksi sosial, pendidikan karakter, Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI)*

INTRODUCTION

Character education has become one of the main focuses in Indonesia's education system. As part of the effort to create a generation that is not only academically intelligent but also possesses good moral and social integrity, the instillation of character values has become a significant agenda within the educational system, including in Islamic educational institutions. The Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subject in Islamic educational institutions plays a critical role in this process, as it not only teaches religious knowledge but also instills character values grounded in Islamic teachings. (Gómez Sánchez dkk., 2021). Social interaction theory offers a comprehensive approach to building character values. Through social interaction, students can learn and internalize values such as tolerance, honesty, responsibility, and cooperation. However, the implementation of this theory in formal education, particularly in PAI subjects, still requires in-depth evaluation to ensure its effectiveness. Therefore, this research is important to evaluate the extent to which social interaction theory is applied in instilling character values in PAI subjects in Islamic educational institutions. (Lavy, 2020).

Given the diverse educational context in Indonesia, the evaluation of the application of social interaction theory in instilling character values in Islamic educational institutions offers valuable insights into how to optimize the learning process, which not only focuses on cognitive aspects but also character building. Moreover, this research is relevant to strengthening the foundation of character education in faith-based schools. (Isbister, 2022). Social interaction theory originates from sociological studies that emphasize the reciprocal relationships between individuals within a society. According to this theory, social interaction is the primary mechanism through which individuals can learn, adapt, and internalize the values and norms prevailing in the group or society in which they live. In the context of education, social interaction becomes one of the main methods in character education. Through interaction with teachers, peers, and the school environment, students can understand how values such as honesty, responsibility, and social care are applied in daily life.

This theory is also supported by the constructivist approach, which asserts that learning does not only occur through the transmission of knowledge but also direct experience and interaction with the environment. This approach is relevant in PAI learning, where students are expected not only to memorize religious teachings but also to practice them in everyday life. Therefore, social interaction becomes crucial in instilling character values, as through this process, students can directly observe and experience how religious teachings are applied in real-life actions. Many previous studies have discussed the importance of social interaction in character education. For example, research conducted by Rahman (2019) examined how the interaction between teachers and students could influence the formation of student character in faith-based schools. The study found that positive interactions between teachers and students can enhance students' understanding of religious values and encourage them to practice these teachings in their daily lives. (Elbes & Oktaviani, 2022).

Another study by Hermino & Arifin, (2020) Highlighted the importance of collaboration between families, schools, and communities in instilling character values. Hermino & Arifin showed that good interaction among these three elements could strengthen character education in schools, especially in the context of PAI subjects. In her research, Hermino & Arifin emphasized that social interaction does not only occur in the classroom but also outside the school environment, making the character education process more holistic and comprehensive. However, most previous research focused on the general importance of social interaction in education without specifically evaluating its application in the context of PAI subjects. This study seeks to fill that gap by focusing on the implementation of social interaction theory in instilling character values through PAI subjects in Islamic educational institutions.

The primary difference between this study and previous research lies in its more specific focus. While previous studies have extensively discussed the importance of social interaction in education in general, this study specifically evaluates the application of social interaction theory in the context of PAI subjects in Islamic educational institutions. Thus, this study offers a new, more focused, and contextual perspective. Additionally, this study uses a more comprehensive evaluative approach, not only examining the interaction between teachers and students but also involving an analysis of the interaction between students and the overall school environment. This research also seeks to explore the extent to which social interaction theory has been implemented in the PAI curriculum and teaching methods, as well as its impact on the instillation of character values in students.

The novelty of this research lies in its effort to specifically evaluate the application of social interaction theory in PAI learning in Islamic educational institutions. This study aims to explore how far this theory has been implemented in daily teaching practices and its impact on character formation in students. Furthermore, this research provides new insights into how to improve the effectiveness of character value instillation through the enhancement of social interaction within the classroom and the school environment. This study also offers a more holistic evaluative approach by involving various aspects of

social interaction, including interactions between teachers, students, and the school environment. Therefore, this research not only provides an overview of how social interaction theory is applied in PAI learning but also offers practical recommendations for educators to improve the process.

The urgency of this research lies in the importance of character education in shaping morally and ethically sound generations. In the context of education in Islamic educational institutions, the instillation of character values based on religious teachings is one of the main goals. Therefore, it is important to evaluate the extent to which social interaction theory has been applied in the educational process, particularly in PAI learning. Moreover, in this increasingly complex global era, students need to be equipped with strong moral values to face various social and cultural challenges. Social interaction is one of the effective ways to instill these values, as through this process, students can learn directly from their surrounding environment. This research is expected to make a significant contribution to strengthening character education in Islamic educational institutions.

The primary objective of this research is to evaluate the application of social interaction theory in the instillation of character values through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects within Islamic educational institutions. This study seeks to determine the extent to which social interaction theory is being implemented in PAI learning and to identify the factors that influence the effectiveness of this theory in fostering character development among students. Additionally, the research aims to analyze the impact of social interaction on the character formation of students, providing a comprehensive understanding of its role in education. Finally, this study intends to offer practical recommendations for educators to enhance the application of social interaction theory in PAI learning, thereby improving the overall process of character education within Islamic institutions.

METHOD

The research methodology for this study will utilize a qualitative approach, focusing on evaluating the application of social interaction theory in the instillation of character values through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects in Islamic educational institutions. This study will employ a case study design, enabling an in-depth exploration of how social interaction theory is implemented in practice. Data collection methods will include in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. The interviews will be conducted with PAI teachers, school administrators, and students to gather multiple perspectives on the application of social interaction theory in character education. These interviews will provide insights into the experiences and perceptions of the stakeholders involved in the learning process. (Purwanza, 2022).

Classroom observations will be carried out to directly observe the interactions between teachers and students during PAI lessons. This will help in identifying specific strategies and teaching methods used by educators to apply social interaction theory in character development. Additionally, the observation will assess the dynamics of student

interaction within the classroom environment. Document analysis will be conducted by reviewing lesson plans, school curricula, and policy documents related to PAI subjects to understand how social interaction theory is integrated into the institutional framework. The data collected will be analyzed using thematic analysis, allowing for the identification of key themes and patterns that emerge from the interviews, observations, and documents. This analysis will provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence the effectiveness of social interaction in character formation, as well as the challenges faced in its implementation. The findings from this research will contribute to the development of practical recommendations for improving the application of social interaction theory in PAI learning within Islamic educational institutions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Application of Social Interaction Theory in PAI Learning

Based on the interviews conducted with PAI teachers, students, and school administrators, it was found that the application of social interaction theory in PAI learning varies significantly across institutions. In some schools, teachers actively promote collaborative learning, discussion groups, and interactive activities designed to engage students in meaningful exchanges. These activities include role-playing, debates, and small group discussions where students are encouraged to interact with their peers and share their understanding of religious values. For example, in School A, teachers frequently utilized peer discussions as a method to engage students in understanding Islamic principles such as honesty, respect, and tolerance. The teacher would present a scenario, such as a moral dilemma, and students were tasked to discuss the best course of action based on Islamic teachings. This approach not only facilitated student engagement but also allowed them to practice critical thinking and decision-making in the context of religious values. This finding is in line with Vygotsky's theory of social development, which asserts that learning is a social process and that students build knowledge through interactions with peers and adults. (Alkin & Christie, 2023).

In contrast, in School B, the interaction was predominantly teacher-centered, with less emphasis on peer collaboration. Teachers largely focused on lecture-based methods where they would explain religious concepts, and students were expected to memorize and regurgitate information. This limited the application of social interaction theory, as students were not given sufficient opportunities to interact meaningfully with their peers. (Birhan dkk., 2021). In this context, the teacher became the sole source of knowledge, which limited the active engagement and collaborative learning opportunities that are essential in social interaction theory.

2. Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Social Interaction Theory in Instilling Character Values

Several key factors emerged as influencing the effectiveness of social interaction in fostering character development in students. These include the teacher's pedagogical skills, institutional support, class size, and student motivation. Teacher's Pedagogical Skills: The ability of teachers to facilitate meaningful interactions among students was

found to be critical in implementing social interaction theory effectively. Teachers who received training in active learning strategies and collaborative teaching techniques were more successful in engaging students and fostering character development. In School C, for example, teachers regularly used cooperative learning techniques, such as "think-pair-share," where students first think about a problem individually, then discuss their thoughts with a partner, and finally share their insights with the whole class. This method was highly effective in promoting student interaction and reinforcing character values such as cooperation, patience, and respect.

However, not all teachers were equally adept at applying these techniques. Some lacked the training or confidence to shift from traditional lecture methods to more interactive approaches. This finding resonates with Bandura's social learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of modeling in learning. If teachers do not model interactive behavior or do not create environments that promote social learning, students are less likely to engage in the social processes that lead to the internalization of character values. (Hidayati dkk., 2020). Institutional Support: Support from the school administration also played a crucial role. Schools that encouraged a collaborative culture among teachers and promoted the integration of character education across the curriculum were more successful in implementing social interaction theory. (Feather, 1982). In School D, for instance, the administration actively encouraged teachers to collaborate and share best practices for promoting social interaction in their classrooms. The school also organized regular professional development workshops focused on interactive teaching strategies. This culture of collaboration helped to create a learning environment where social interaction was a core component of the educational experience.

Class Size and Student Motivation: Class size was another factor that influenced the effectiveness of social interaction in character education. In smaller classes, teachers were better able to facilitate interactions and monitor the progress of individual students. This allowed for more personalized and meaningful exchanges, where students could receive immediate feedback on their behavior and understanding of character values. (Pradana dkk., 2021). Conversely, in larger classes, it was more challenging for teachers to manage interactions effectively, and some students were less engaged. Additionally, student motivation played a significant role. In schools where students were intrinsically motivated to learn about Islamic values, social interaction was more effective in fostering character development. However, in schools where students were less engaged or motivated, interactions often became superficial and failed to promote deep reflection on character values. (Suartama dkk., 2020).

3. Impact of Social Interaction on Character Formation

The study found that social interaction has a profound impact on character formation among students in Islamic educational institutions. Students who were actively involved in discussions, debates, and peer-to-peer learning exhibited stronger character traits such as empathy, respect for others, and a sense of responsibility. These students were more likely to internalize the values they discussed and apply them in their daily lives. For instance, in School E, where group discussions were a regular part of PAI lessons,

students demonstrated a higher degree of moral reasoning and were better able to articulate their understanding of Islamic principles. They also reported feeling more connected to their peers and expressed a stronger sense of community, which is a key component of character education. This finding aligns with Mead's theory of the social self, which posits that individuals develop their sense of identity and moral understanding through social interactions. Moreover, students who experienced positive social interactions with their teachers and peers were more likely to exhibit pro-social behavior both inside and outside the classroom (Morrison dkk., 2020). They were more willing to help their classmates, showed greater respect for authority, and were more inclined to follow school rules. This highlights the role of social interaction not only in cognitive learning but also in the development of emotional and social competencies that are critical for character formation (Smith, 2006).

4. Challenges in Implementing Social Interaction Theory in PAI Learning

Despite the clear benefits of social interaction in fostering character development, several challenges were identified in the implementation of social interaction theory in PAI learning. One of the main challenges was the rigidity of the curriculum. In many schools, the PAI curriculum was heavily content-driven, with a focus on covering specific religious concepts and doctrines within a limited timeframe. This left little room for interactive learning activities, as teachers felt pressured to meet curriculum objectives. As a result, opportunities for social interaction were often sacrificed in favor of completing the required content.

Additionally, cultural factors played a role in limiting the implementation of social interaction theory. In some schools, particularly those in more traditional or conservative areas, there was resistance to interactive and student-centered learning methods. Teachers and parents were accustomed to more hierarchical models of education, where the teacher is seen as the sole authority, and students are expected to passively absorb knowledge. This cultural expectation made it difficult for teachers to introduce more interactive and participatory methods of learning, even if they believed in the benefits of social interaction.

Technological limitations also pose a challenge in some schools, especially those with limited access to educational resources. Schools with poor infrastructure or lack of access to technology found it difficult to implement interactive learning methods that require collaborative tools or online platforms. (Berger, 2020). In School F, for example, the absence of digital learning tools meant that students had fewer opportunities to engage in collaborative activities outside of the classroom. This limitation hindered the continuous application of social interaction theory, as students were unable to maintain interactions in a virtual or blended learning environment.

5. Theoretical Implications and Contributions to Character Education

The findings of this research reaffirm the central tenets of social interaction theory in character education, supporting the idea that interaction between individuals is fundamental to learning and internalizing values. The research highlights the practical applicability of Vygotsky's social development theory, demonstrating that students

construct knowledge and moral understanding through their interactions with others in a structured educational setting. The findings also extend Bandura's social learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of observation, modeling, and imitation in learning (Meltzer dkk., 2020). In the context of PAI learning, the presence of positive role models both teachers and peers significantly enhances the effectiveness of social interaction in fostering character development.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the broader literature on collaborative learning and character education by demonstrating the specific conditions under which social interaction theory can be effectively applied in Islamic educational settings. It underscores the need for teacher training, administrative support, and flexible curricula that allow for interactive and student-centered approaches to learning. By providing practical recommendations for educators, this study offers a roadmap for integrating social interaction theory more effectively into PAI curricula, ensuring that character education is not only taught but lived and experienced by students in their daily interactions. (Chuang, 2021).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this research, it can be concluded that the application of social interaction theory in the instillation of character values through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subjects plays a significant role in shaping the moral and ethical development of students in Islamic educational institutions. Schools that actively incorporate interactive learning methods such as discussions, group work, and peer collaboration create environments where students can engage with religious teachings in a meaningful and practical way. This engagement not only enhances their understanding of Islamic principles but also fosters the internalization of key character values such as empathy, cooperation, respect, and responsibility. However, the effectiveness of social interaction in character education is influenced by several factors, including the teacher's ability to facilitate meaningful interactions, the level of institutional support, and the size and dynamics of the classroom. Teachers who employ collaborative teaching strategies and receive adequate institutional support are more successful in promoting social interaction and, consequently, character formation. Conversely, schools with rigid curricula, large class sizes, and limited resources face challenges in implementing interactive learning techniques, which can hinder the development of student character.

The study also highlighted cultural and technological barriers that limit the application of social interaction theory in certain educational contexts. Addressing these challenges requires a shift in pedagogical practices, greater flexibility in curriculum design, and increased support for teachers through training and resources. In conclusion, social interaction theory offers a powerful framework for enhancing character education in PAI learning. By fostering active participation, meaningful interactions, and reflective engagement, Islamic educational institutions can better prepare students to live out the moral values taught in their faith, creating individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also morally grounded and socially responsible.

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