

The Role of Islamic Religious Education in Nurturing the Spirit of Nationalism Among Students

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ABSTRAK

Islamic religious education has a strategic role in shaping the character of a moral and ethical nation, as well as strengthening the spirit of nationalism among students. This study aims to explore the contribution of Islamic religious education in fostering national values through a descriptive qualitative approach. The research subjects included 30 informants, including teachers, students, and principals from five junior and senior high schools that have religious education programs integrated with national values. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis, then thematically analyzed. The results showed that religious values such as honesty, responsibility, and respect for diversity play a significant role in maintaining social harmony. The national values-based curriculum is a key element in shaping the character of students who are both religious and nationalist. Contextual learning strategies, such as group discussions and hands-on practice, help students understand the relevance of national values in everyday life. Teachers have a central role as facilitators and models of national values, although challenges such as limited time and support remain. This research confirms the importance of Islamic religious education as a bridge between local and global values, capable of producing a generation that is not only faithful but also committed to diversity and national unity..

INTRODUCTION

Islamic religious education plays a central role in the formation of a moral and ethical national character, as well as strengthening the spirit of nationality among students. This education not only guides students to understand the values of spirituality but also helps them distinguish between right and wrong in the context of social life. As stated by Choli (2019), religious education is responsible for creating a generation that is both faithful and concerned about national unity. Religious values such as honesty, responsibility, and respect for diversity are the main foundations that maintain social harmony, especially amid the challenges of globalization and modernization. Thus, Islamic religious education is not only relevant in the spiritual aspect, but also in building students' awareness of the importance of national unity.

Without a solid understanding of religion, the younger generation is vulnerable to moral disorientation that can reduce their national identity. Effective religious education acts as a bridge between local values and global cultural influences, which often have contradictory values. Yusuf (2021) asserts that Islamic religious education can be a moral fortress that directs students to appreciate the principles of inclusive and humanist nationalism. Through an adaptive approach, religious education can foster individual piety while instilling a sense of responsibility for the continuity of the nation. This confirms that Islamic religious education is a key element in building citizens who are not only spiritually pious, but also actively contribute to the sustainability and unity of the nation.

In the context of increasingly massive globalization, identity crisis has become a significant issue, especially among the younger generation who are in the phase of self-discovery. This phenomenon is exacerbated by the dominance of foreign cultures that often promote the values of individualism, materialism, and hedonism, which are contrary to national culture and values. According to Putri & Septiana (2023), this influence can create a value gap, where the younger generation tends to adopt foreign cultures without considering the relevance to their local identity. Islamic religious education, with its universal yet contextual teachings, has great potential to bridge this crisis. Through integrative learning, religious education can instill national values such as unity, justice and love of country, which are in line with Islamic teachings.

Furthermore, Islamic religious education can act as an agent of social transformation that strengthens the spirit of nationality amidst global challenges. With an adaptive approach, teachers can integrate contemporary issues, such as multiculturalism and tolerance, into religious learning materials. This is in line with Ghofir & Umam's (2020) research, which shows that religious education based on national values can increase students' awareness of the importance of maintaining national unity. In addition, this approach also emphasizes the importance of understanding diversity as a national asset that must be maintained. Thus, Islamic religious education not only forms religious individuals, but also citizens who have a collective awareness of the nation's future.

In the reality of education, Islamic values based on unity, justice, and love for the country must be translated concretely into learning practices. However, challenges arise when these values have not been fully integrated with local and global issues relevant to students' lives. Nurhayati's research (2020) shows that many Islamic religious education curricula still focus on ritualistic aspects, without giving enough emphasis on the implementation of national values (Shunhaji, 2019). To answer this challenge, Islamic religious education needs to design a contextualized learning approach based on national values, so that students not only understand, but also feel the urgency of maintaining national unity in the midst of diversity.

In addition, teachers as the spearhead of education have a vital role in developing learning materials and methods that are able to synergize Islamic values with the spirit of nationalism. Research by Riadi (2019) confirms that creative and innovative teachers in packaging religious learning materials can help students understand diversity as part of the teachings of Islam which is *rahmatan lil 'alamin*. Teachers also need to engage students in critical and reflective discussions, for example by linking current social issues with Islamic principles. With this approach, Islamic religious education is not only a vehicle for the formation of religious individual characters, but also a means of forming citizens who are committed to the sustainability of national values.

To optimize the role of teachers in integrating national values into Islamic religious education, learning strategies that are interactive, contextual, and relevant to students' needs are needed. Teachers not only act as facilitators, but also as models that reflect national values in real actions. This is relevant to the view of Istianah et al (2024), who emphasize the importance of local value-based multicultural education to build a deep understanding of nationality in the midst of diversity. Teachers need to present methods that support critical dialogue, where students are invited to analyze national issues, such as unity in diversity and the challenges of globalization, through the perspective of Islamic teachings.

In addition, collaboration between teachers and education policy makers is needed to create a curriculum that is responsive to national issues. Such a curriculum not only equips students with religious knowledge, but also trains them to think critically and act based on Islamic national principles. According to research by Firmansyah & Fakhruddin (2022), strengthening this collaboration can produce a holistic education model, which makes national values the core of Islamic religious learning. With this approach, religious education not only produces religious students, but also prepares them as agents of change who actively contribute to maintaining social harmony and building an inclusive nation.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to explore the role of Islamic religious education in fostering the spirit of nationalism among students. The research was conducted in five junior and senior high schools that have Islamic religious education programs integrated with national values. The research subjects consisted of 30 informants, including 15 Islamic religious education teachers, 10 students who were purposively selected based on their involvement in Islamic religious learning, and 5 school principals who play a role in curriculum development and implementation. This approach aims to explore in depth how religious and national values are taught, understood and applied by students through interactions with teachers and the school curriculum.

The research data was collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation and document study. Interviews were conducted with teachers to understand their teaching strategies, students to explore their experiences and understanding, and the school principal to look at policies related to the integration of national values in Islamic religious education. Observations were conducted during the learning process to monitor teacher and student interactions and the application of teaching methods in the classroom. In addition, documents such as curriculum, syllabus, and teaching materials were analyzed to evaluate the extent to which national values are integrated in the subject matter. The data obtained were analyzed thematically with the steps of data reduction, categorization, and interpretation. Source and method triangulation techniques were used to ensure data validity, so that the results of this study are expected to provide in-depth insights into the contribution of Islamic religious education in shaping a generation that is both religious and has a strong national spirit.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Integration of National Values in Islamic Religious Education

A. Development of a Curriculum Based on National Values

The results show that the Islamic religious education curriculum in the schools studied has attempted to integrate national values, such as unity, justice and tolerance. Most teachers stated that they tried to relate the teaching materials to relevant national contexts, such as the history of the nation, the struggle of heroes, and the principles of Pancasila. In an interview with Mr. Ahmad, an Islamic religious education teacher, he stated:

"We often include national values in class discussions, such as the importance of national unity reflected in the history of the independence struggle and Islamic religious values that do not contradict the spirit of nationality."

In addition, the curriculum also emphasizes the importance of understanding cultural and religious diversity as part of national character education. This is in accordance with Santika's (2022) view that an effective educational curriculum is one that is able to integrate universal values such as nationality with diverse local content.

The integration of national values in the Islamic religious education curriculum aims to shape the character of students who are not only religious but also nationalist. According to research by Zuliana et al (2024), a curriculum based on national values can strengthen love for the country and increase students' understanding of the importance of unity in the midst of diversity. In this context, teaching materials should not only focus on religious aspects, but also on how religious teachings can strengthen national values, which are an integral part of national character education.

In an interview with Mrs. Siti, one of the school principals, she explained that:

"We often hold activities such as cultural simulations and interactive discussions that discuss national values, such as how tolerance between religious communities can strengthen a sense of national unity."

This discussion is reinforced by the research of Aladdin & Ps (2019), which revealed that a religious education curriculum designed with national values can create a generation that is well integrated in a broader social context. The research asserts that this kind of curriculum not only emphasizes aspects of spirituality, but also strengthens students' understanding of the nation's noble values. It aims to form individuals who are able to understand and internalize national values in their daily lives. Thus, the curriculum plays an important role in creating awareness of the importance of national unity and integrity. In addition, a national values-oriented curriculum also supports the development of a more holistic student character. This is in line with efforts to create a generation that is able to contribute positively in various aspects of community life. Mulianah (2024) also emphasizes that the integration of national values in religious education helps strengthen social relations between individuals and creates strong solidarity. Thus, this curriculum plays a role in strengthening national identity while building a solid foundation for the future of the nation.

A. Teaching Methods that Support the National Spirit

The results show that teachers use various teaching methods to strengthen the spirit of nationalism in learning Islamic religious education. The most frequently applied methods are discussion, hands-on practice, and collaborative activities. In an interview with Mr. Muhammad, an Islamic religious education teacher, he stated:

"I use the group discussion method to discuss issues related to nationalism, such as tolerance among religious communities and the importance of unity in cultural diversity. This helps students understand national values more deeply."

The discussion method is in line with the views of Santoso et al (2023) who mentioned that the discussion method is able to encourage students' active participation in developing an understanding of social and national issues, including national values. In addition, this method facilitates interaction between students which makes learning more contextual and relevant to their daily lives. Teaching methods that use hands-on practice and collaborative activities have also proven effective in strengthening students' national spirit. In an interview with Ms. Lisa, a teacher who often conducts hands-on practices such as role simulations related to national culture, she stated:

"I organize activities such as discussion simulations related to efforts to maintain the integrity of the nation and how national values are applied in everyday life, so that students can better understand and apply these concepts."

This discussion is supported by research by Rahman (2019) which states that hands-on practice-based learning methods can improve students' understanding of national values, because students are directly involved in situations that require the application of these values in a real context. Collaborative activities are also one of the techniques applied by teachers to strengthen national spirit. According to Wulandari's (2020) research, collaborative activities that involve students in various group projects can help them develop awareness of the importance of cooperation in creating an inclusive environment and respecting diversity. In this context, collaborative activities involving discussions and group activities can strengthen national values such as solidarity and tolerance. This is in line with the goal of education to form individuals who are able to coexist with people from diverse backgrounds. In addition, practice-based learning allows students to directly experience the impact of applying national values in daily life. Thus, the learning process is not only theoretical, but also contains deep experiences. Rahman (2019) added that this method helps students develop social skills that are important in maintaining the integrity of the nation. Therefore, learning approaches that integrate national values through collaboration and hands-on practice are highly relevant in creating a socially and nationally integrated generation.

B. The Role of School Activities in Instilling National Values

The results show that various school activities such as flag ceremonies, seminars and training related to national values contribute significantly to instilling the spirit of nationalism among students. In an interview with Mr. Firdaus, a school principal, he

stated:

"We routinely hold a flag ceremony every Monday which not only emphasizes the importance of discipline, but also reminds students of the meaning of nationalism and respect for state symbols such as the flag and coat of arms."

In addition, seminars presenting speakers on the topic of nationalism and nationalism have also proven effective. In an interview with Mrs. Rina, one of the seminar supervising teachers, she said:

"We often invite resource persons from various backgrounds, including academics and community leaders, to discuss national values that are relevant to students' lives. This activity encourages students to think critically and actively participate in efforts to maintain national unity."

Activities such as flag ceremonies, seminars and training held at schools play an important role in instilling national values. According to research by Istiqomah et al (2023), such activities provide space for students to understand and explore the values of nationalism, which are the basis for unifying the nation. Such activities not only increase students' understanding of the nation's history and culture but also teach them to appreciate and maintain diversity in the midst of national unity. In addition, training activities aimed at raising awareness of the importance of national values also strengthen students' sense of responsibility for the common good. This is in accordance with the opinion of Aprilia & Nawawi (2023) who stated that training that integrates national values can strengthen the character of students who have a spirit of unity and mutual respect. In this context, students are taught to be able to work together with others in facing challenges that test the national spirit. Furthermore, these activities provide opportunities for students to apply national values in real-life situations, thus enriching their experience in building social solidarity. Thus, ceremonies, seminars and trainings are not only formal learning events, but also a medium to internalize the noble values of the nation as a whole. These activities help create a generation that is able to contribute positively to society and maintain the integrity of the nation.

In this context, school activities such as seminars and trainings do not only focus on theoretical learning, but also provide hands-on experiences that help students understand how national values are applied in everyday life. This was also reinforced by an interview with Ms. Dini, one of the students participating in the training, who stated:

"Training like this provides new insights on how to maintain the integrity of the nation through respecting differences and maintaining solidarity among fellow students."

1. The Role of Teachers and Students in the Formation of the Spirit of Nationhood

A. Teacher's Role in National Values Integration

The results show that teachers have a very important role in instilling national values through various learning strategies that are contextual and relevant to students' needs. In an interview with Mr. Arif, an Islamic religious education teacher, he stated:

“As an educator, I try to integrate national values in every learning session, either through discussions, collaborative activities, or the application of hands-on practices that are in accordance with the context of nationalism.”

The teachers involved in this study applied various methods such as project-based learning, interactive discussions, and simulations that connect religious values with the spirit of nationalism. These methods help students to understand how values such as unity, tolerance and justice can be applied in a national context. The learning strategies applied by teachers are in line with research conducted by Hartanto (2023), which states that project-based learning methods can increase students' awareness of national values. In project-based learning, students are not only taught about religious aspects, but also how to apply these values in strengthening a sense of nationalism. Through this method, students are invited to have in-depth discussions on social issues and how they can contribute to building a more inclusive nation. In addition, simulations applied in learning help students understand how to apply national values in real situations that require cooperation and joint problem solving. These methods encourage students to think critically and enrich their experience in internalizing national values. Thus, integrated learning between religion and nationalism can create individuals who not only understand spiritual aspects, but also have a strong commitment to diversity and national unity.

In addition, interactive discussions are also an effective method in instilling the spirit of nationalism. Discussions that involve students in discussing national issues strengthen their understanding of the importance of values such as diversity, tolerance and unity in maintaining the integrity of the nation. In this context, an interview with Ms. Siti, a teacher who uses the discussion method, revealed:

“Interactive discussions allow students to explore their thoughts on nationality and see how religious values can strengthen a sense of unity amidst diversity.”

The hands-on application method is also seen as effective by teachers in linking religious values with national spirit. This is in line with research by Usman & Yahdi (2024) who emphasized that hands-on practices such as simulations or role plays can provide real experiences for students in understanding the meaning of nationality integrated with religious teachings.

B. Students' Perception of National Values in Islamic Religious Education

The results show that most students understand and internalize the national values taught through Islamic religious education. In an interview with one of the students, Fadhil, he stated:

"Islamic religious education provides a strong understanding of the importance of maintaining national diversity and unity. We are taught to understand how religious values such as tolerance, justice and ukhuwah can strengthen the spirit of nationalism in daily life."

Most students also revealed that learning that involves practical examples and discussions related to social situations that require national spirit greatly helps them understand the relevance of these values outside the school environment. Students like Nia added:

"We are not only taught theory, but also how to deal with social situations in society that require national spirit, such as cooperation in social activities or maintaining the integrity of the nation when facing differences of opinion."

This study supports the research by Zain et al (2024) which states that religious education based on national values can strengthen students' character in facing various social challenges. Learning methods that provide real-life experiences help students understand how religious teachings can be applied in the context of nationalism, such as maintaining tolerance and justice between religious communities.

In addition, research by Mursidin (2019) states that students' perceptions of national values in Islamic religious education will be stronger if it is associated with real practices and discussions that discuss social issues related to the spirit of nationalism. As expressed by Fadhil, learning does not only stop at theoretical knowledge, but involves direct application that strengthens students' understanding of the importance of maintaining diversity in the spirit of national unity. This method helps students to better understand how national values such as tolerance, solidarity and justice are applied in a real context. In addition, discussions that connect hands-on practice with social issues create space for deeper reflection. Amahoru & Ahyani (2023) also emphasize the importance of creating an inclusive learning environment, where students can interact actively and be open to various views. Thus, learning based on real practices and discussions will enrich students' insights on national spirit rooted in noble values. This approach encourages students to not only understand concepts, but also have the skills to face complex social challenges in society.

In an interview with Ibu Siti, a teacher, she emphasized that:

"We try to link the learning of national values with real experiences such as visits to history museums or dialogues with community leaders, which give students additional insights into how to maintain the national spirit."

This shows that Islamic religious education that integrates national values is not only limited to the classroom, but also includes extracurricular activities that strengthen students' understanding of the importance of maintaining the integrity of the nation through the values taught.

C. Challenges and Potential in the Learning Process

The results show that the learning process of national values is faced with some significant challenges. One of the main challenges expressed by Mr. Wahyu, an Islamic religious education teacher, is the limited time allocated to teach national values:

“In one lesson hour, we have to cover a variety of topics, including religion and nationality, which makes it difficult for us to go into maximum depth.”

Limited materials are also another challenge faced by teachers. According to Ms. Ani, another teacher,

“We often lack references or materials that support contextualized learning of national values, so we have to look for other alternatives that can enrich the learning.”

This study is in line with research by Nuraini (2019), which states that time and material limitations are the main obstacles in learning national values. However, efforts to overcome these challenges can be made through the development of a more flexible and integrative curriculum, which is able to accommodate national values in more depth. In addition to the challenges, there is also great potential in strengthening the spirit of nationalism through collaboration between teachers, students and the community. This collaboration can enrich students' learning experience by presenting different perspectives, thus strengthening the understanding of national values. Through a more inclusive approach, various elements of society can participate in developing nationality-based education. Another potential that can be maximized is the use of educational technology to convey national values in a more interactive and interesting way. In this context, integration between formal and informal education is also an effective solution in overcoming time and material limitations. Thus, strengthening the spirit of nationalism can be achieved holistically, covering various aspects of life involving all components of society. This is as expressed by Mr. Agus in the interview:

“Cooperation with parents and the community is very helpful in enriching the learning of national values. Students can see how the community supports and contributes to the spirit of nationalism.”

The potential of this collaboration is also supported by research by Saumantri et al (2023), which states that learning national values will be more effective if it involves the wider community, such as the community and the surrounding environment, so that students can better understand the actual context of these values in everyday life. In this context, collaboration between teachers, students and the community not only improves students' understanding, but also enriches the learning experience that involves various perspectives in understanding national values holistically

CONCLUSION

The integration of national values in Islamic religious education covers various aspects, such as curriculum development that instills values such as unity, tolerance and justice. The national values-based curriculum aims to shape students' religious and nationalist character, which is supported through contextual and relevant teaching methods. Methods such as group discussions, hands-on practice and collaborative activities help deepen students' understanding of national values in everyday life. School activities, such as flag ceremonies and seminars, also play an important role in instilling the national spirit by engaging students in hands-on experiences that reinforce their understanding. Teachers have a central role in integrating national values through various learning strategies, including interactive discussions and simulations. Students, in turn, demonstrate a strong understanding of national values, especially when learning involves practical examples and social reflection. Challenges such as time constraints and support for innovative learning methods can be overcome through continuously refined approaches. Overall, the integration of national values in Islamic religious education proved effective in creating a generation with a deep sense of nationalism and commitment to diversity.

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