



Community-Based Strategies in Islamic Religious Education (PAI): Fostering Youth Religious Character Formation through Majelis Taklim

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Abstract

Adolescents today face serious challenges to their religious identity due to globalization, cultural shifts, and the influx of values that often contradict Islamic teachings. This study addresses the gap in research on non-formal Islamic education by examining how Majelis Taklim can contribute to fostering youth religious character. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation with adolescent participants, instructors, and community members at Majelis Taklim Miftahussalam in Kedung Jaya, Tanah Sareal, Bogor City. The findings reveal that learning strategies applied in this setting include interactive lectures and discussions, the wetonan method, practical demonstrations, provision of relevant materials, exemplary role modeling by ustadz, the integration of social media for da'wah, regular evaluations, and collaboration with families. These strategies have proven effective in strengthening adolescents' religious character, as reflected in increased prayer discipline, Qur'an reading and memorization, respectful communication, and greater responsibility in learning, suggesting that community-based Islamic education can complement formal schooling in addressing contemporary challenges..

Keywords: Islamic Religious Education; Learning Strategies; Religious Character; Non-Formal Education; Majelis Taklim

Abstrak

Remaja masa kini menghadapi tantangan serius terhadap identitas religius mereka akibat globalisasi, pergeseran budaya, serta masuknya nilai-nilai yang sering kali bertentangan dengan ajaran Islam. Penelitian ini berupaya mengisi kekosongan kajian tentang pendidikan Islam nonformal dengan menelaah bagaimana Majelis Taklim dapat berkontribusi dalam menumbuhkan karakter religius pemuda. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif studi kasus, data dikumpulkan melalui

observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi terhadap remaja peserta, instruktur, serta anggota komunitas di Majelis Taklim Miftabussalam, Kedung Jaya, Tanah Sareal, Kota Bogor. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi pembelajaran yang diterapkan meliputi ceramah interaktif dan diskusi, metode wetonan, demonstrasi praktik, penyediaan materi yang relevan, keteladanan ustadz, integrasi media sosial sebagai sarana dakwah, evaluasi berkala, serta kerja sama dengan keluarga. Strategi-strategi tersebut terbukti efektif dalam memperkuat karakter religius remaja, yang tercermin dari meningkatnya kedisiplinan shalat, kemampuan membaca dan menghafal Al-Qur'an, komunikasi yang santun, sikap hormat kepada orang tua dan guru, serta tanggung jawab yang lebih besar dalam belajar. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan Islam berbasis komunitas dapat melengkapi pendidikan formal dalam menghadapi tantangan kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Agama Islam; Strategi Pembelajaran; Karakter Religius; Pendidikan Nonformal; Majelis Taklim

Introduction

Adolescents in Indonesia are facing increasing challenges to their religious identity due to globalization, cultural transformation, and the pervasive influence of digital media that often contradicts Islamic values. This condition is alarming, as youth are expected to be the guardians of religion and the nation's future, yet cases of juvenile delinquency, violence, bullying, promiscuity, and online gambling continue to rise (Yolanda et al., 2024; Revanda, 2024; Kautsar, 2024). These issues highlight the urgency of strengthening religious character through Islamic Religious Education (PAI), both in formal and non-formal settings.

In addition to formal schooling, non-formal religious learning institutions, such as majelis taklim, play a significant role in shaping adolescents' religious identity and moral behavior. These community-based settings provide flexible, practice-oriented approaches that allow learners to engage directly with religious texts, rituals, and social activities in a more contextualized environment. By offering interactive discussions, mentorship, and real-life applications of Islamic teachings, majelis taklim complement formal PAI instruction and address gaps in students' understanding and practice of faith. Recognizing the influence of these non-formal institutions is essential, particularly in countering the negative impacts of globalization and digital culture on youth religiosity.

Previous studies have explored PAI learning strategies within schools. Azizah (2023) identified the use of expository methods to enhance students' worship practices, while Lestari and 'Izzah (2021) highlighted innovations such as Qur'an recitation, congregational prayers, and extracurricular activities in fostering religious character. Similarly, Mulyana

et al. (2022) examined inquiry-based, cooperative, and affective strategies in high schools to instill noble character. While these studies demonstrate the importance of strategy in formal education, research on PAI learning in non-formal institutions such as majelis taklim remains underexplored, despite their crucial role as community-based centers for religious learning and moral formation (Saridudin, 2021; Fauzi, 2022).

The gap in existing scholarship lies in the limited attention given to non-formal Islamic education, where learning is more flexible, contextual, and accessible to diverse social groups. Majelis taklim, in particular, not only function as places for religious instruction but also as communal spaces where character formation occurs through habituation, role modeling, and religious-social interaction (Pitri, 2021). Investigating how such institutions apply learning strategies is essential to complement and strengthen the role of formal schooling in addressing contemporary challenges to adolescent religious identity.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the learning strategies of PAI at Majelis Taklim Miftahussalam in Kedung Jaya, Tanah Sareal, Bogor City. Specifically, the research explores (1) the types of learning strategies used to foster adolescents' religious character, (2) the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing their implementation, and (3) the impacts of these strategies on adolescents' religious development.

This paper argues that community-based PAI strategies, when systematically applied, are effective in cultivating adolescents' religious values. The study not only contributes to academic discourse by addressing the gap in non-formal Islamic education research but also provides practical insights for majelis taklim leaders and policymakers to design more effective, systematic, and contextual approaches to nurturing youth religious character in the era of globalization.

In addition, the development of Islamic education outside formal institutions has become increasingly significant in the 21st century. Rapid technological change and the diversification of youth culture demand new pedagogical models that are adaptive and responsive to contemporary realities. Non-formal institutions such as majelis taklim offer a learning environment rooted in spirituality and community engagement, providing a counterbalance to secular and individualistic tendencies in modern education.

Furthermore, the integration of local wisdom and cultural values into religious education within majelis taklim enhances its relevance to everyday

life. The contextual approach allows learners to relate Islamic teachings to real-life challenges, such as social responsibility, environmental care, and digital ethics, thus reinforcing the holistic nature of Islamic education.

Another essential factor is the role of teachers and community leaders as moral exemplars. Their sincerity, consistency, and spiritual integrity greatly influence adolescents' attitudes and behavior. In this sense, learning in majelis taklim is not merely cognitive but also affective and behavioral, emphasizing transformation rather than information.

At the same time, the involvement of parents and peers plays a vital role in sustaining religious learning beyond the majelis environment. Collaborative participation between families, educators, and community institutions creates a social ecosystem that nurtures continuous moral growth among adolescents.

Therefore, strengthening PAI learning strategies in non-formal contexts like Majelis Taklim Miftahussalam is not only a pedagogical necessity but also a social movement aimed at revitalizing faith and character in the younger generation. This holistic effort aligns with national education goals that emphasize the integration of knowledge, faith, and morality in shaping a dignified and resilient Muslim society.

Method

This study was conducted at Majelis Taklim Miftahussalam, located in Kedung Jaya, Tanah Sareal, Bogor City, from January to May 2025. A qualitative field research design with a case study approach was employed to explore the learning strategies of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in fostering adolescents' religious character. The case study approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth and contextualized investigation of educational practices within a specific community setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Data collection involved three main techniques:

1. Observation, to capture learning processes and participant behavior in natural settings;
2. Interviews, conducted with key informants using semi-structured guides to gain insights into strategies, challenges, and outcomes;
3. Documentation, including institutional archives and activity records, to complement and validate observational and interview data.

The participants were selected through purposive sampling based on relevance to the research focus, consisting of: (1) the Head of Majelis Taklim,

(2) instructors, and (3) adolescent participants. Such selection ensured that data were gathered from diverse perspectives directly linked to the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2015).

To ensure data validity, triangulation was applied by cross-checking data from multiple sources and methods. The data analysis followed a descriptive qualitative procedure, including data reduction, categorization, interpretation, and drawing conclusions based on emerging patterns (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2019).

This methodological framework was chosen to provide a comprehensive understanding of the strategies employed at Majelis Taklim Miftahussalam and their impact on adolescent religious character development, while aligning with recent advances in qualitative research (Nowell et al., 2017; Tracy, 2020).

Furthermore, the research process emphasized ethical considerations to ensure credibility and respect for participants. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was strictly maintained throughout the study. This ethical rigor aligns with the principles of qualitative inquiry, which prioritize trust, transparency, and participant welfare (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001).

Data collection was conducted in a naturalistic manner, where the researcher immersed herself in the majelis environment to understand the context, interactions, and nuances of learning. This prolonged engagement allowed for authentic and contextual insights, enhancing the depth of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The researcher also employed reflexivity as part of the methodological process. By maintaining reflective field notes and journaling experiences, potential biases were identified and mitigated. Reflexivity ensured that the interpretation of data was grounded in participants' realities rather than researcher assumptions (Berger, 2015).

In addition, member checking was applied during data verification. Key informants were asked to review and confirm the accuracy of the interpreted data to strengthen validity and trustworthiness. This practice reinforces the participatory nature of qualitative inquiry and ensures the reliability of conclusions (Birt et al., 2016).

Data organization and coding were facilitated using thematic analysis. Transcripts from interviews and observations were categorized into themes related to instructional methods, moral reinforcement, and community engagement. This approach helped uncover the underlying

pedagogical patterns that shape the formation of adolescents' religious character (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

Finally, the contextual nature of this study provides not only empirical evidence but also methodological innovation in examining Islamic education practices in non-formal settings. By integrating reflexivity, triangulation, and thematic analysis, this research offers a holistic framework that can serve as a reference for future studies in Islamic educational research.

Result And Discussion

The Islamic Education (PAI) teaching strategies at Majelis Taklim Miftahussalam in Kedung Jaya, Tanah Sareal, Bogor City, demonstrate a systematic effort to foster adolescents' religious character. Based on direct observations, the learning process combines teacher-centered approaches, such as lectures and demonstrations, with student-centered approaches, including discussions and Q&A sessions. According to participant testimony, this variation prevents monotony and encourages active involvement among adolescents. These findings suggest that the integration of multiple methods aligns with Killen's adaptive learning theory, which highlights the need for flexible pedagogical practices (Siregar, 2021; Khoirunnisa & Al Amin, 2024).

In addition to varied teaching methods, the active involvement of instructors and facilitators in mentoring and guiding adolescents further enhances the learning experience. Observations indicate that teachers not only deliver content but also provide personal feedback, monitor students' progress in memorization and recitation, and encourage reflection on moral and ethical lessons derived from the texts. This mentorship fosters a supportive learning environment where adolescents feel motivated to internalize religious values and apply them in daily life, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical implementation.

Instructional materials play a central role in supporting character formation. Interviews revealed that the curriculum covers Qur'an studies, tahsin, tahfidz, Arabic language, and classical Islamic texts such as Safinatun Najah and Aqidatul Awam. This is consistent with previous research indicating that the use of authentic Islamic sources strengthens students' spiritual identity (Fauzi, 2022; Hasanah & Subandi, 2023). Documentation confirmed that these materials are adjusted to the adolescents' comprehension level, ensuring relevance and accessibility (Purnawanto, 2023).

Teaching methods observed included the wetonan method, interactive lectures, halaqah circles, and practical demonstrations. For example, lessons on ablution (wudu) were taught through direct practice. These methods reflect empirical findings from other studies that emphasize the effectiveness of experiential learning in Islamic education (Lestari & 'Izzah, 2021; Mulyana et al., 2022). One youth participant noted that "the ustadz often asks questions and gives motivational advice," suggesting that the combination of instruction and moral encouragement contributes to shaping positive behaviors.

Role modeling emerged as a crucial strategy. Based on observations, the ustadz demonstrated discipline, simplicity, and social concern, which adolescents imitated in their daily lives. This finding supports Suhada and Maulida (2024), who argue that exemplary behavior is one of the most powerful strategies in character education. According to participant testimony, adolescents reported increased prayer discipline, improved Qur'an recitation, and greater obedience to parents, indicating that role modeling translated directly into behavioral change.

The integration of digital media was another key strategy. Documentation and interviews confirmed that ustadz used WhatsApp to share Islamic content, reminders, and short da'wah videos. These findings suggest that transforming social media from a source of distraction into an instrument of da'wah can reinforce adolescents' religious awareness (Alhazzani, 2020; Yusoff et al., 2022). This aligns with recent studies showing that digital Islamic education can positively influence youth religiosity when managed appropriately (Syahrul & Abdullah, 2023).

In terms of evaluation, the majelis conducted periodic assessments through observation, informal tests, and behavioral monitoring, involving both educators and parents. This triangulated evaluation system is consistent with character education frameworks that emphasize continuous feedback from multiple stakeholders (Hidayat & Firmansyah, 2021). According to one student, this collaborative monitoring strengthened their sense of responsibility and discipline in religious learning.

Finally, collaboration between the majelis, families, and community was evident. Observations showed that parents were actively involved in reinforcing learning outcomes at home. These findings align with the view that family and community partnerships enhance the sustainability of adolescent character formation (Darni et al., 2024; Pitri, 2021).

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Majelis Taklim Miftahussalam employs a holistic, community-based Islamic education strategy that combines varied instructional methods, authentic materials, role modeling, digital integration, evaluation, and collaboration. These strategies not only align with but also expand upon previous studies, providing evidence that non-formal Islamic education can effectively complement formal schooling in cultivating adolescents' religious values in the era of globalization.

In addition, the findings reveal that spiritual atmosphere plays a significant role in supporting learning success. The majelis environment, filled with Qur'anic recitations, congregational prayers, and moral advice, fosters a sacred learning climate that inspires emotional attachment to religious values. This finding supports Rahman (2023), who emphasized that affective engagement is essential in sustaining faith-based learning motivation.

Another emerging dimension is peer interaction among adolescents. Group learning activities, such as Qur'an memorization circles and collaborative discussions, encourage positive competition and mutual support. According to participants, this social learning context enhances motivation and reduces behavioral problems. This is consistent with Bandura's social learning theory, which posits that learning occurs through observation, imitation, and social reinforcement (Bandura, 1986).

Furthermore, the study found that gender-sensitive approaches were subtly implemented. Female adolescents were given specific sessions focusing on modesty, self-esteem, and women's role in Islam, guided by female mentors. This inclusivity ensures that both male and female participants receive tailored moral and spiritual guidance in accordance with Islamic values.

The integration of community service activities also became an integral part of learning. Adolescents participated in mosque cleaning, charity events, and Ramadan programs. These practices embody the spirit of *amal shaleh* (righteous deeds), transforming abstract religious teachings into tangible moral actions, as highlighted by Aulia and Fitria (2024).

Motivational reinforcement was observed as another pedagogical feature. The ustadz often provided real-life stories of prophets, scholars, and contemporary figures to inspire perseverance and sincerity. This narrative approach strengthens the emotional connection between learners and the moral ideals being taught (Nasution, 2022).

In addition, the study identified that the majelis implemented reflective practices at the end of each session. Learners were encouraged to share insights, personal experiences, and intentions for self-improvement. Such reflection promotes metacognitive awareness and aligns with Islamic pedagogical traditions of muhasabah (self-evaluation).

Another noteworthy aspect is the inclusive participation of differently-abled learners. The majelis welcomed all adolescents regardless of cognitive or social differences, demonstrating an inclusive educational ethos consistent with Islamic principles of equality and compassion (Aminah, 2023).

Parental testimonies also emphasized behavioral transformation at home. Many reported observable changes such as increased respect for elders, reduced use of social media for entertainment, and improved prayer consistency. These testimonies affirm the external validity of PAI learning strategies practiced in the majelis.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings support constructivist and humanistic learning paradigms. Learners construct meaning from experience and social interaction rather than passive reception. In Islamic terms, this resonates with the concept of tarbiyah ruhiyah—spiritual cultivation through lived experience and moral engagement (Husni, 2024).

Overall, these additional insights underscore that Majelis Taklim Miftahussalam functions not only as a site of instruction but also as a transformative space that integrates faith, community, and practice. The systematic combination of cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions in its learning strategies makes it a vital model for contemporary non-formal Islamic education.

Conclusion

This study found that the Islamic Education (PAI) teaching strategies implemented at Majelis Taklim Miftahussalam—such as lectures combined with discussions and Q&A sessions, the wetonan method, practical demonstrations, the use of relevant and level-appropriate materials, role modeling by ustadz, digital integration through social media, periodic evaluations, and family collaboration—proved effective in fostering adolescents' religious character. Based on observations and participant testimonies, these strategies enhanced prayer discipline, Qur'an reading and memorization skills, polite communication, respect toward parents and

teachers, and increased responsibility in learning. The adolescents also expressed joy and gratitude, highlighting the majelis as a meaningful environment for spiritual growth. In addition, the consistent implementation of these strategies helped adolescents internalize Islamic values not only as ritual practices but also as daily behavioral habits. The combination of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains within learning activities created a balanced framework for holistic character formation. This dynamic interaction between teacher guidance, peer influence, and family reinforcement ensured that learning outcomes extended beyond the classroom, contributing to the cultivation of moral integrity, emotional stability, and social empathy among the youth community at large.

The findings confirm and expand previous studies on Islamic education strategies by demonstrating the effectiveness of integrating classical methods (e.g., wetonan and halaqah) with contemporary approaches such as digital da'wah and family-community collaboration. This research contributes to the discourse on non-formal Islamic education by showing that adaptive and holistic strategies can effectively counteract the challenges of the digital era and negative social environments, while simultaneously strengthening adolescents' religious identity. Furthermore, it underscores the importance of pedagogical flexibility in responding to generational changes and technological advancement. The successful integration of digital media for moral reinforcement indicates that Islamic education can evolve without losing its spiritual essence. By bridging traditional wisdom with modern communication tools, the majelis model illustrates how religious institutions can remain relevant, inclusive, and transformative in shaping youth religiosity. Such an integrative framework also reflects the vision of lifelong learning in Islam, where education is not confined to formal institutions but is embedded in continuous communal engagement and ethical nurturing.

This study is limited to a single case within Majelis Taklim Miftahussalam and involves a relatively small number of participants, making generalization difficult. Variations in gender, age, and socio-economic background were not explored in depth. Therefore, further research with broader samples and comparative contexts is recommended to

provide a more comprehensive understanding of effective Islamic education strategies in fostering youth religiosity. Future inquiries may benefit from longitudinal approaches to examine the sustainability of character transformation over time. Comparative studies between formal and non-formal institutions could also highlight contextual strengths and limitations of each learning environment. Additionally, interdisciplinary research that combines perspectives from psychology, communication, and digital pedagogy would enrich understanding of how faith-based education can address modern challenges while maintaining its ethical core. Despite its limitations, this study provides a valuable foundation for scholars and practitioners to design inclusive, adaptive, and community-oriented Islamic education programs that nurture both personal piety and social responsibility among adolescents in the contemporary era.

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