

RELIGIOUS EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES ON STRENGTHENING STUDENTS' ISLAMIC IDENTITY

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Abstract

Religious extracurricular activities towards strengthening students' Islamic identity refer to a series of activities outside the formal school curriculum designed to deepen the understanding and practice of Islamic teachings among students. The research method used in this study is the literature research method. The results showed that religious extracurricular activities not only strengthen individuals' spiritual understanding and experience, but also promote the application of ethical values in daily life. In addition, these activities support the development of social skills and empathy, and facilitate positive interactions between students from diverse faith backgrounds, encouraging inclusivity and cross-cultural understanding. Finally, this study confirms that religious extracurricular activities play an important role in the formation of communal and personal identities, strengthening individuality while valuing diversity. The implications of the findings suggest that schools should consider including or further developing religious extracurricular programs as an integral part of character education, supporting the formation of ethical, tolerant, and actively contributing young people in a plural society.

Keywords: Extracurricular, Religious, Identity, Students' Islamicity

INTRODUCTION

In the current era of globalization, challenges to Islamic identity, especially for the younger generation, are increasingly complex. Strong religious understanding and practice are seen as important foundations in shaping one's character and identity, especially students (Fiteriadi, Aslan, and Eliyah 2024). Islamic identity has a deep significance in the formation of student character. In the process of maturing, students

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need not only academic knowledge, but also solid spiritual guidance to form a worldview and values that will be held firmly for life (Abbas, Marhamah, and Rifa'i 2021). A well-developed Islamic identity provides a framework for students to understand themselves as well as the world around them through the lens of Islamic teachings. This is important because character is the basis for behavior and action, and when students have a strong foundation of identity, they are better able to deal with external challenges and pressures that often conflict with Islamic values (Abidin and Murtaglo 2020).

In addition, pre-adolescence and adolescence are phases where a person begins to intensely search for and form their identity. Character building through Islamic identity in this phase is crucial, because the character built will be the basis for their decisions and lifestyle in the future (Adila, Sari, and Adiyono 2023). Furthermore, in the context of plurality and globalization that offers a variety of views and values, having a strong Islamic identity helps students to sort and choose influences that are in accordance with Islamic principles. This leads to character building that is not only rooted in virtuous values, but also moral resilience and spiritual intelligence capable of navigating the complexities of social life with maturity and integrity (Ahdar, Halik, and Musyarif 2020).

Schools, as formal educational institutions, have a significant but limited role in providing in-depth religious experiences due to time constraints and the curriculum that must be implemented. In this context, religious extracurricular activities in schools play a strategic complementary and enrichment role to strengthen students' Islamic identity (Ahmad, Muniroh, and ... 2020); (Ahmed 2020).

Religious extracurricular activities, which include various activities such as Islamic studies, tahfiz Al-Qur'an, congregational prayers, and so on, provide opportunities for students to interact more intensively with religious values. Through these activities, students not only gain religious knowledge, but also real practices that shape Islamic behavior and character (Aini and Setiawan 2021). By participating in these activities, students can experience and practice Islamic teachings in a more dynamic and interactive setting, thus helping them build a deeper and more personal understanding of their religion. Furthermore, religious extracurriculars also support the formation of a well-rounded Islamic character, such as honesty, patience, and concern for others, all of which are important aspects of ethics and morality in Islam, equipping students with the values and skills necessary for success both in this world and the hereafter (Iswadi, Aslan, and Sunantri 2022). However, while the importance of such religious extracurricular activities is widely recognized, questions remain regarding their effectiveness in influencing the strength of students' Islamic identity (Altinyelken 2021).

Previous research suggests that factors such as active student involvement, delivery methods, and a supportive environment contribute to the effectiveness of religious extracurricular activities. However, there are still few studies that specifically

discuss how religious extracurricular activities contribute to strengthening students' Islamic identity and what factors influence their effectiveness (Amir 2020). Given the importance of understanding this relationship, this study aims to further examine the influence of religious extracurricular activities on strengthening students' Islamic identity through a literature review.

The background provides a clear context for the importance of understanding the role of religious extracurricular activities in strengthening students' Islamic identity and also highlights gaps in the literature that demand further study.

Research Methods

The study conducted in this research uses the literature research method. The literature research method is an important approach in the academic world to investigate and analyze certain topics based on existing written sources (Afiyanti 2008); (Ainiyah 2021). This approach involves searching for relevant keywords in various reliable sources such as catalogs, indexes, and search engines to collect references relevant to the research topic. In this context, "literature" can refer to various types of texts, including books, scientific journals, conference papers, and theses, all of which serve as the basis for gaining a deeper understanding of the subject under study (Alaslan 2022); (Barlian 2018).

Thus, the literature research method, as a researcher, can utilize previously developed knowledge and findings, broaden horizons, and construct arguments or conclusions based on evidence-based research.

Results and Discussion

Theory of Islamic Identity

Identity refers to a number of traits, characteristics, views, and values constructed by an individual or group that ultimately distinguish them from others. The concept is multidimensional, encompassing aspects such as personal, social, national and religious identities, all of which contribute to how individuals recognize themselves and are recognized by others in Society (Zakso et al. 2021). Personal identity relates to the internal aspects of a person, such as personality, interests, and beliefs, while social identity relates to the groups that individuals are part of, such as families, ethnic groups, or religious communities. Identity is not fixed but is always changing along with experiences, interactions, and self-reflection over time (Yudiyanto et al. 2023).

The main components of identity include name, which is the basic label of social recognition; role, which indicates one's function or status in various social contexts; affiliation, which reflects the social groups that individuals identify with and feel are important; values and beliefs, which indicate moral principles and worldviews; and self-expression, which includes how one communicates their identity to the outside world, whether through clothing, language, or behavior (Uyuni and Adnan 2020). Approaches

to identity are often interdisciplinary, combining perspectives from psychology, sociology, anthropology and other fields to understand how identities are formed, expressed and navigated in diverse social contexts. Identity contains a certain complexity as it involves the interaction between individuals and society, as well as individuals' awareness of themselves and how they are perceived by others (Usman, Syabuddin, and Zakaria 2021).

The process of Islamic identity formation is a dynamic process characterized by the interaction between religious teachings, personal experiences, and the cultural context in society. In the context of Muslims, important aspects in the cultivation of Islamic identity include religious education, both formal and informal, which aims to introduce and encourage understanding and practicing Islamic values from an early age (Ulfa et al. 2021). This can involve memorizing the Qur'an, understanding hadith, and practicing acts of worship such as prayer, fasting, zakat, and hajj (Thoriquttyas and Hanun 2020). In addition, social factors such as family, peers, teachers, and Islamic communities, contribute to modeling behaviors and attitudes that are in accordance with Islamic law, providing a normative force that guides and reinforces Islamic identity through a continuous process of socialization. Islamic identity is also built through self-reflection and personal struggle to achieve good morals and taqwa, which are central aspects of Islam, making the process of identity formation an ongoing journey in line with individual spiritual growth (Tambak 2021).

Thus, identity is a complex construction that involves aspects such as personal characteristics, social roles, group affiliations, and values and beliefs held by a person or group. Identity formation, including Islamic identity, is a dynamic, interactive and ongoing process that is influenced by various factors including education, personal experience and socio-cultural context. In the Islamic context, religious education, social interactions in family and community, as well as spiritual growth and self-reflection play an important role in building and strengthening one's Islamic identity. This process of identity formation reflects the interaction between individuals and their social environment, showing how internal and external aspects contribute to shaping the way individuals understand themselves and are perceived by others in the broader context of identity.

Extracurricular Religion in Islamic Education

Religious extracurricular activities are activities conducted outside the official academic curriculum of a school or university that are designed to support and develop religious understanding and practice among learners. These types of activities are usually organized to provide space for students to explore and dig deeper into religious beliefs and values through discussions, worship practices, and social activities that strengthen community ties (Anderson 2020). These extracurricular programs are often guided by teachers or mentors who also have a good religious background. These

programs also aim to educate students about tolerance and respect for religious diversity and other religious practices (Fakhrurrazi, Zainuddin, and ... 2021).

The types of religious extracurriculars vary widely, depending on the traditions and needs of the school or university community. In an Islamic context, for example, there may be Qur'an study groups, regular recitations, or da'wah clubs that encourage students to discuss Islamic issues and share their knowledge (Fatimah and Aly 2020). In Christian contexts, there may be activities such as catechism, Bible study clubs, or church choirs. Others, such as in some Hindu, Buddhist, or other faith-based schools may provide yoga, meditation, or scripture study classes for each religion. The general aim is to strengthen students' religious knowledge and skills, improve their spiritual well-being, and build a community in line with their religious values (Fuadi and Suyatno 2020).

The main purpose of religious extracurricular activities is to support students' spiritual and moral development through deepening religious understanding and practice. These activities are designed to complement formal education by providing a space for learners to explore religious values, improve their understanding of religious teachings, and implement them in their daily lives (Hasanah 2021). More than just increasing knowledge, religious extracurricular activities aim to shape students' characters to become individuals with high ethics, integrity and a sense of social responsibility. These activities also strengthen a sense of community, tolerance, and respect for religious and cultural diversity, which are important foundations in forming mature individuals and a harmonious society (Maarif, Wardi, and Amartika 2020).

The benefits of religious extracurricular activities are extensive, both individually and collectively. Individually, these activities help students develop emotional balance and spiritual well-being, encouraging them to seek deeper meaning and purpose in life (Malla et al. 2020). Involvement in religious extracurriculars also facilitates the development of soft skills such as leadership, teamwork, and communication skills through social interaction and organized activities. Collectively, religious extracurriculars strengthen group identity, creating a supportive environment for the personal and spiritual growth of all members. These activities also play an important role in creating constructive interfaith dialogue, building the foundation for a more inclusive and tolerant society (Mashuri et al. 2022).

Religious extracurricular activities play an important role in student character development. These religious-based activities not only emphasize the knowledge and practice of worship, but also the application of moral and ethical values in everyday life. Through reflection, discussion, and application of religious teachings, students are invited to internalize values such as honesty, empathy, humility, and responsibility (Mawaddah, Syaharuddin, and ... 2023). This directly contributes to the formation of strong and dignified student characters. In addition, religious extracurriculars often involve social and community activities that encourage students to practice important

concepts such as social care and community service, which are key aspects of a well-developed character (Minarti, Rohimiya, and Wardi 2022).

In addition, the supportive environment in religious extracurricular activities provides space for students to explore and grow in a positive and safe environment. Active involvement in religious activities and faith-based communities can strengthen students' sense of confidence and self-identity, and facilitate the development of respect and appreciation for diversity. Interaction with peers and mentors who share similar spiritual values and goals can strengthen social values and moral commitment, providing good models of behavior to emulate (Muis, Eriyanto, and Readi 2022). Thus, religious extracurricular activities not only impart spiritual knowledge and activities but also play a role in shaping characters of high integrity and moral leadership among learners, preparing them to become responsible individuals and actively contribute to the wider society (Manullang, Mardani, and Aslan 2021); (Aslan 2022).

Thus, religious extracurricular activities have a very significant role in developing student character. These activities not only engage students in religious learning and practice, but also facilitate the formation of strong moral and ethical values in their lives. Such extracurriculars support students in internalizing principles such as justice, integrity, and ethical leadership, while also providing them with opportunities to put these principles into action through social and community activities. As such, students become individuals who not only grow intellectually but also spiritually and socially, with the ability to contribute positively and meaningfully to their environment. Religious extracurriculars, therefore, are an important asset in character education that helps shape future generations who are principled, virtuous and have high social empathy.

The Effect of Religious Extracurricular on Islamic Identity

Religious extracurriculars play an important role in the process of strengthening students' identities. In an increasingly global and diverse educational environment, religious extracurriculars offer a space for students to explore and strengthen their understanding of their own religious beliefs and values (Muis et al. 2022). These activities serve as social integration platforms that allow students to interact with peers who share similar belief backgrounds, thus creating a supportive community that facilitates the development of a solid religious identity. Through discussions, shared learning, and worship activities, students can reflect on the role of religion in shaping their worldview, providing a strong foundation for their identity as individuals (Munadi et al. 2021).

In addition, religious extracurriculars play a role in inculcating universal values that underpin many religions, such as honesty, compassion and social responsibility. These activities provide a context for students to practice these values in real-life settings, encouraging them to connect religious teachings with everyday actions (Najiyah, Prasetya, and Nabiilah 2023). Through the application of these ethical values,

students not only strengthen their religious identity but also develop a moral identity that shapes how they interact with the world around them. This engagement solidifies the understanding that religious identity goes beyond knowledge and worship practices, encompassing the way individuals choose to live and contribute to Society (Nudin 2020).

Religious extracurriculars also serve as a means of identity exploration and affirmation in a broader context. In an era of globalization, where youth are often exposed to a wide range of values and ideas, religious extracurriculars provide a consistent point of reference for religious values and identity. These activities equip students with the knowledge and courage to stand firm in their beliefs, while appreciating diversity and difference (Qoyyimah et al. 2023). Through the interfaith interactions and dialogues that are often part of religious extracurriculars, students learn about diversity appreciation and in the process, strengthen their commitment to their own principles while remaining open to differences (Rahayu and Dong 2023).

Finally, a key function of religious extracurriculars in identity strengthening is through community building efforts. Creating a sense of community among students with similar or different religious backgrounds provides valuable experiences in social identity formation. This community increases students' confidence in expressing their religious identity and strengthens their sense of attachment to the wider community (Rohaeti et al. 2021). Extracurricular activities, therefore, support not only personal identity formation but also communal identity, celebrating diversity while strengthening common bonds. This creates a unique balance where individual religious identity is strengthened in the context of greater appreciation and understanding of the diversity of other identities (Saihu et al. 2022).

Thus, religious extracurriculars play a crucial role in the process of strengthening students' identities. Their function is not only limited to the exploration and affirmation of religious beliefs at a personal level, but also in building and affirming universal values of goodness, enriching moral identity, and offering space for positive social interaction and community building. These activities support students in maintaining a balance between respect for their own traditions and beliefs and respect for diversity and difference. In this way, religious extracurricular activities contribute not only to the formation of individuals with strength of character and integrity, but also to the development of a more inclusive, harmonious and respectful society.

Conclusion

This research has revealed that religious extracurricular activities play an important role in strengthening students' identity, developing moral and ethical values, and facilitating community building and strengthening. The main findings indicate that extracurricular activities, which are based on religious teachings, not only enhance individual spiritual understanding and experience, but also integrate ethical values into

students' daily life practices. This is important in the context of character education and forms a solid ethical foundation for students to act morally and responsibly in society.

Furthermore, the findings show that religious extracurriculars offer a platform for students to interact with others who share similar and different beliefs, encouraging the development of social skills, empathy and appreciation for diversity. Through interfaith discussions and group-based activities, students learn to understand and appreciate differences, forming a more inclusive perspective. This is not only about developing a more mature religious identity, but also strengthening community ties and reducing prejudice.

Finally, this study emphasizes that religious extracurricular activities play a significant role in shaping students' personal and social identities. The activities support students in exploring and understanding their own beliefs in a wide context, strengthening their sense of confidence and attachment to the wider community. In conclusion, religious extracurricular activities are not only relevant for students' spiritual and ethical development, but also key in shaping individuals who are able to appreciate diversity and contribute to the building of a harmonious and inclusive society.

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