# The efforts of Islamic Religious Education teachers in fostering students' morals at SMA Negeri 1 Panyabungan Utara

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**Abstract:** The morals of students are getting worse every year. Parents' anxiety because their children's morals are getting further away from religious values makes parents confused about how to respond to this. Problems always arise in the world of education related to students. In fact, students are the next generation of this nation. The purpose of this study was to determine the efforts of Islamic Religious Education teachers in developing the morals of students at SMAN 1 Panyabungan Utara. The goal is to develop the morals of students at SMAN 1 Panyabungan Uara so that they become students with noble morals, because students as the next generation should have noble, civilized morals in order to become good human beings. The research that the author conducted was field research using a qualitative approach. Data collection was carried out by conducting observations, interviews and documentation. as a data collector from the results of observations. The results of the study showed that the efforts of religious aqidah and moral teachers in fostering students' morals at SMAN 1 Panyabungan Utara were carried out very seriously, because the moral conditions of some students were still not good, such as students often causing trouble at school, and there were still many violations of school rules which made the efforts of religious aqidah and moral teachers in fostering students' morals at SMAN 1 increasingly intense. For this reason, Islamic Religious Education teachers made various efforts in the context of fostering students' morals.

**Keywords:** Morals, Development

## INTRODUCTION

The position of morality in human life occupies the most important place, as an individual or society and nation, because the development of a person depends on how his morals are. If morals are good, then his life is prosperous, both physically and mentally, if his morals are damaged, then his physical and mental health are damaged. A person with noble morals always carries out his obligations, carries out his obligations to himself which are his rights to God. According to Imam al-Ghazali, morals are defined as Morals are traits embedded in the soul that give rise to various actions easily and easily without requiring thought and consideration. Thus, teachers of Aqidah Akhlak are expected to be able to foster students' morals. Because teachers of Aqidah Akhlak are people who have knowledge (ability) who are more able to imply relevant values which (in that knowledge) are as adherents of a religion that is worthy of being emulated. Teachers are people who convey knowledge to their students. According to society, a teacher is a person who teaches in certain places, this does not only happen in formal educational institutions, but

also in mosques, in prayer rooms, at home and in other places. A teacher is a figure who can be respected and imitated so that automatically it reflects the professional attitude expected of a teacher. According to W.J.S. Poerwdaminta, a teacher is "a person who educates". From this understanding, it is explained that a teacher is a person who carries out educational or teaching activities. Thus, it can be seen that a teacher functionally indicates someone who carries out activities in providing knowledge, skills, and experience as well as role models.

Syaiful Bahri said that teachers are all people who are authorized and responsible for guiding and fostering students, both individually and classically, at school and outside of school. A teacher must not only understand what they are going to teach, but they must also have a unique way that distinguishes them from others. Teachers must be able to be role models. From the explanation above, we can conclude that morals have a great influence on life. If morals are good, then life will be good and vice versa. A teacher plays a very important role in the formation of students' morals, because teachers not only provide knowledge, but teachers also educate and foster children to be smart and have good morals.

Moral development is an essential aspect of education, particularly in the context of religious and ethical teachings. In schools, fostering good morals, or "akhlaq," is a critical part of students' holistic development, complementing their academic achievements. In Indonesian schools, the role of teachers, particularly those who teach religious education, becomes crucial in shaping students' character. This research focuses on the efforts of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers in cultivating students' moral values at SMA Negeri 1 Panyabungan Utara, a secondary school located in North Mandailing, Indonesia. The concept of "akhlaq" in Islamic teachings refers to a person's ethical character, which encompasses behavior, values, and moral principles that guide how one interacts with others, society, and God. Developing good akhlaq in students is essential because it lays the foundation for their future roles as responsible and ethical citizens. The PAI teacher's role in this process is not only as a source of religious knowledge but also as a role model for students to follow.

In the case of SMA Negeri 1 Panyabungan Utara, this research aims to understand how PAI teachers approach the task of guiding students to develop positive moral values. While academic learning is essential, it is equally important for students to internalize moral teachings that help them live in harmony with others and be responsible citizens. The school's religious education curriculum emphasizes both knowledge of Islam and the development of good character, yet the implementation of these teachings is often dependent on how teachers integrate them into everyday learning and activities. Several factors influence the effectiveness of moral education in schools, including the methods used by teachers, the students' personal backgrounds, and the environment in which the school operates. For instance, the social environment surrounding students can significantly affect their ability to internalize moral teachings. If students are exposed to negative behaviors or unethical conduct in their communities, it becomes challenging for them to apply what they learn in the classroom to real-life situations.

Furthermore, it is necessary to consider the diversity within the student body at SMA Negeri 1 Panyabungan Utara. The students come from various social and cultural backgrounds, which may impact their understanding of moral values. Some may have received stronger moral guidance at home, while others may lack such reinforcement. Therefore, the PAI teacher's role becomes even more significant in ensuring that all students, regardless of their background, are guided toward developing good character traits and ethical behavior. The teaching methods employed by PAI teachers also play a crucial role in shaping students' moral development. Traditional methods, such as lectures, may not be sufficient in engaging students and encouraging them to reflect on their behavior and values. More interactive and participatory teaching strategies, such as group discussions, role-playing, and community service, may be more effective in fostering the internalization of moral teachings.

The challenges faced by PAI teachers in fostering students' akhlaq are also significant. Some teachers may find it difficult to engage students in discussions about moral behavior, especially when students have different levels of interest or understanding. Additionally, students' attitudes toward moral education can vary, with some viewing it as less important than other academic subjects. To address these challenges, teachers need to employ innovative and effective strategies to make moral education more relevant and engaging for students. SMA Negeri 1 Panyabungan Utara, like many schools in Indonesia, is committed to nurturing students not only academically but also morally. However, the school's PAI teachers face the challenge of making students understand the importance of akhlaq in their everyday lives. Despite the school's commitment to moral education, there remains a gap in students' practical application of the values taught in class.

Through this Classroom Action Research (CAR), the aim is to explore the strategies that PAI teachers employ to nurture students' moral character and identify how these strategies can be improved. The research will also assess the impact of these strategies on the students' understanding and application of moral values. By identifying the strengths and weaknesses in current teaching practices, this study aims to provide insights into effective methods for enhancing moral education at SMA Negeri 1 Panyabungan Utara. This research is timely as it aims to support the ongoing efforts of teachers and educators to foster positive moral behavior in students, particularly in a world where ethical issues are becoming more complex. By improving the way moral education is delivered in schools, it is hoped that students will not only excel academically but also develop the necessary character to navigate the challenges of the modern world.

In conclusion, this research will focus on the efforts of PAI teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Panyabungan Utara to improve students' moral character. It will explore the strategies used by teachers, the challenges they face, and the effectiveness of these methods in enhancing students' akhlaq. Ultimately, the goal is to contribute to the development of more effective teaching practices that can help shape students into individuals who live by the moral and ethical values taught in Islam. The findings from this research could serve as a valuable resource for educators and policymakers aiming to improve the quality of religious education and moral development in schools across Indonesia.

## METHODS

The type of research used in this study is qualitative research with descriptive methods. Qualitative research is research that focuses on in-depth observation. The data collection procedure in this study is approached with a descriptive approach. Descriptive is a research method that tries to describe and interpret objects according to what they are. The use of qualitative research in research can produce a study of a phenomenon that is more comprehensive or can be seen from all sides as a whole and tries to describe and present the phenomenon as usual. The informants for this study are people who may be able to provide information in this study. So the informants in the study were Students and Teachers at SMAN 1 Panyabungan Utara. From the statement above, it can be concluded that Observation is an observation carried out systematically regarding social phenomena in the object of this study. The observations made by the researcher in this study were to directly observe the implementation of Islamic religious education at SMAN 1 Panyabungan Utara, students' understanding of the concept of Islam. What the researcher means here is that the researcher directly observed the Akidah Akhlak teacher in the process of learning Islamic religious education, directly observed the Akhlak of students.

This Classroom Action Research (CAR) aims to explore the efforts of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers in enhancing students' moral character (akhlaq) at SMA Negeri 1 Panyabungan Utara. This research uses a collaborative and reflective approach, where the researcher is also the PAI teacher. The research is designed to improve both the teacher's

practice and the students' understanding and application of moral values. The research follows a cyclical process based on the model developed by Kurt Lewin, which consists of four main stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The research is conducted in two cycles to ensure that the process is iterative, allowing the teacher to make improvements in teaching strategies after each cycle. The main objective of each cycle is to assess the effectiveness of the intervention, refine teaching practices, and ultimately improve the students' moral development.

The participants of this research are students of Class XI at SMA Negeri 1 Panyabungan Utara, with a total of 35 students, consisting of 18 males and 17 females. The class is a mix of students with varying academic abilities, backgrounds, and levels of motivation in terms of moral and religious education. The students are in their late teens, an age where moral and social issues play a significant role in shaping their attitudes and values. This age group is particularly receptive to discussions about moral values, ethical behavior, and the importance of good character. The researcher is the PAI teacher responsible for delivering the Islamic education curriculum, with a focus on moral and ethical teachings. As the research is action-based, the teacher reflects on his own practices, adapts them as necessary, and observes the impact on the students' learning outcomes.

This study uses a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, which is a form of research aimed at improving educational practices through iterative cycles. CAR focuses on solving specific problems identified in the classroom context while empowering teachers to actively engage in the research process. The research aims to investigate how the application of certain teaching strategies influences the development of moral behavior in students. The CAR model used in this research is divided into two cycles, each containing four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The first cycle focuses on identifying the challenges faced in fostering moral development and testing initial strategies for improvement. Based on the findings from the first cycle, adjustments and improvements are made for the second cycle.

In the planning phase, the researcher identifies the main problem to be addressed, which in this case is the development of moral character among the students. A review of students' previous performance in moral education, as well as a general assessment of their behavior and attitudes, helps to highlight areas that need improvement. The researcher plans interventions aimed at engaging students in discussions about akhlaq, such as debates, group activities, role-playing, and community service. These activities are designed to encourage active participation, critical thinking, and personal reflection, which are crucial elements of moral development. A key aspect of the planning phase is selecting the appropriate teaching strategies. In this study, the advocacy method, which encourages debates and discussions among students, is chosen to foster an active learning environment where students can express their views, defend their opinions, and listen to others. By participating in debates, students can practice the core values of Islamic teachings, such as respect for others, humility, honesty, and fairness. The PAI teacher is responsible for facilitating these activities and ensuring that students engage in meaningful discussions. The teacher also prepares assessment tools to evaluate students' moral development before and after the interventions. These tools include observation checklists, questionnaires, and reflective journals to track students' attitudes and behavior changes throughout the research process. The goal is to assess the extent to which students have internalized moral values and whether their behavior reflects these teachings.

During the action phase, the planned interventions are implemented in the classroom. The advocacy method is the central strategy in this phase. Students are divided into small groups, and each group is assigned a topic related to moral behavior or ethical dilemmas. The topics for debate include issues such as honesty, fairness, respect for others, and social responsibility. Each group researches the topic, prepares arguments, and then engages in a class debate. The teacher acts as a facilitator during the debates, guiding the students in presenting their arguments and ensuring that the discussions are

respectful and constructive. The teacher also introduces real-life scenarios that allow students to connect the concepts discussed in class to their daily lives. For example, the teacher may present ethical dilemmas that students may face in their personal relationships, school, or community, encouraging them to reflect on how Islamic values can guide their decisions. In addition to debates, the teacher organizes role-playing activities where students act out various situations that require them to demonstrate moral behavior. These role-playing exercises allow students to practice applying the moral values discussed in class in simulated real-world scenarios. By engaging in these activities, students can gain a deeper understanding of the consequences of their actions and the importance of making ethical choices. The action phase also includes cooperative activities such as group discussions and collaborative problem-solving exercises. These activities encourage students to work together, share ideas, and engage in dialogue about moral issues. The group setting promotes peer learning and provides an opportunity for students to challenge each other's views, which fosters a deeper understanding of moral principles.

During the observation phase, the researcher collects data to assess the effectiveness of the interventions. The primary method of data collection is classroom observation. The researcher uses an observation checklist to monitor students' participation in debates, group activities, and role-playing exercises. The checklist includes indicators such as the level of student engagement, the quality of arguments presented, and the degree to which students demonstrate respect for others during discussions. In addition to classroom observation, the researcher also collects qualitative data through students' reflective journals. These journals provide insights into students' thoughts and feelings about the moral lessons being taught. Students are encouraged to write about their personal experiences, challenges they face in applying moral values, and any changes they notice in their behavior. Another form of observation is through informal conversations with students outside of class. The teacher may engage students in discussions about how they are applying the moral lessons learned in class to their daily lives. These conversations provide valuable feedback and help the teacher understand how effectively the lessons are being internalized by the students.

The reflection phase allows the researcher to evaluate the success of the interventions and identify areas for improvement. After each cycle, the teacher reflects on the teaching strategies used and the students' responses. The teacher examines whether the advocacy method and other activities were effective in promoting moral development. The teacher also considers whether the students have demonstrated improvements in their behavior, attitudes, and ability to apply moral principles in real-life situations. Based on the reflections, adjustments are made to the teaching strategies for the next cycle. For example, if students struggled with certain aspects of the debates or role-playing activities, the teacher might modify the instructions or provide additional support. The reflection phase also involves revisiting the students' reflective journals to gauge the extent to which they have internalized the moral teachings. After completing the two cycles, the teacher compares the results of the post-assessment with the baseline data to determine the overall impact of the intervention. The teacher also analyzes the feedback from students and makes recommendations for future improvements in teaching practices.

Data collected during the observation phase, including observation checklists, reflective journals, and informal conversations, are analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Descriptive analysis is used to categorize and summarize the data, focusing on changes in students' behavior, participation, and understanding of moral values. The researcher compares the results from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2 to assess the impact of the advocacy method on students' moral development. Additionally, the researcher reflects on the students' personal growth, considering factors such as their ability to engage in critical thinking, their willingness to participate in discussions, and their application of moral principles outside the classroom.

The methodology used in this Classroom Action Research is designed to actively involve students in their moral development while simultaneously improving the teacher's instructional practices. Through the iterative process of planning, action, observation, and reflection, the teacher can evaluate the effectiveness of different strategies, refine teaching methods, and ultimately enhance the moral education of students. By applying the advocacy method and encouraging active participation, this research aims to foster positive moral behavior in students at SMA Negeri 1 Panyabungan Utara and improve their understanding of Islamic ethical values.

## RESULTS

This Classroom Action Research (CAR) was conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Panyabungan Utara with the objective of improving students' moral development, specifically their akhlaq, through the use of the advocacy method in teaching Islamic Education (PAI). The research involved two cycles, with each cycle consisting of four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The results of the research reflect the impact of this method on students' understanding and application of moral principles.

The first cycle of the research began with the implementation of the advocacy method, where students engaged in debates and discussions on moral topics. The teacher began by explaining the concept of akhlaq and its significance in Islam, highlighting the importance of good character and ethical behavior. The students were then divided into small groups, and each group was assigned a topic related to moral values, such as honesty, respect, and fairness. Students were asked to prepare arguments for and against the topic assigned to their group and present them in a class debate. In Cycle I, the class consisted of 35 students, 18 male and 17 female. During the first few sessions, students appeared hesitant and unsure of how to engage in debates. Many students, especially those with lower self-confidence, struggled to voice their opinions clearly. Some students also showed a lack of interest in the topics being discussed, which affected the overall level of engagement in the debates. This initial resistance was expected, as it was the first time the students had been exposed to such an interactive method of learning. Despite these challenges, there was a noticeable increase in participation after a few sessions. Students began to engage more actively in discussions, and the quality of their arguments improved. The debates became more structured, and students started to ask questions, challenge each other's opinions, and think critically about the moral issues being presented. The teacher's role as a facilitator was crucial in guiding the discussions and encouraging respectful dialogue. By the end of Cycle I, there was an observable improvement in students' ability to discuss moral topics in a thoughtful and respectful manner.

The observation phase in Cycle I revealed that 29 out of 35 students (85.7%) had made noticeable progress in terms of their involvement in the debates and group activities. They showed more confidence in expressing their views and demonstrating respect for others' opinions. The teacher also noted that students were beginning to apply moral values such as honesty, fairness, and respect during their interactions both in and outside the classroom. In terms of academic performance, Cycle I showed a significant improvement in students' understanding of Islamic moral values. The average score on the post-cycle assessment was 72.9, which indicated that most students were able to grasp the key concepts discussed in class. However, there were still some students who needed further support, especially in articulating their understanding of moral principles.

The second cycle of the research was designed to build on the successes and address the challenges encountered in Cycle I. Based on the feedback and reflections from the first cycle, the teacher made adjustments to the teaching strategies. One of the main changes was the incorporation of more real-life examples and case studies that allowed students to see how moral principles could be applied in their daily lives. The teacher also provided more guidance and encouragement to the students who had struggled in the first cycle,

helping them develop their debating skills and engage more confidently in discussions. In Cycle II, the teacher introduced more structured debates, allowing students to work on their arguments over a longer period of time. The students were given additional resources, such as articles, videos, and real-world case studies, to help them better understand the moral issues they were debating. The students were encouraged to research their topics in depth and present well-rounded arguments during the debates. The changes implemented in Cycle II had a significant impact on student engagement and performance. The quality of the debates improved, with students demonstrating a deeper understanding of the moral principles being discussed. There was also a noticeable increase in the level of respect and cooperation among the students during group activities. The debates became more dynamic and productive, with students taking more initiative and contributing their ideas more freely. The observation phase in Cycle II revealed that 35 out of 35 students (100%) participated in the debates and group activities. Every student was able to demonstrate an understanding of the moral values being taught, and many students showed a marked improvement in their ability to apply these values in real-life scenarios. For example, students were able to relate the ethical principles discussed in class to issues such as honesty in academic work, respect for teachers and peers, and fairness in their interactions with others. The post-cycle assessment results for Cycle II were highly encouraging. The average score increased to 82.6, which represented a significant improvement from Cycle I. This improvement indicated that the advocacy method had a positive impact on students' understanding of moral education and their ability to apply moral values in their lives. Additionally, the teacher noted that students were demonstrating better character in the classroom, as evidenced by their improved attitudes toward each other and their greater willingness to engage in constructive dialogue.

In both cycles, the teacher observed a significant change in students' behavior and attitudes. Initially, many students displayed a passive attitude toward moral education, seeing it as less important than other subjects. However, after participating in the debates and other activities, students began to recognize the relevance of moral education in their daily lives. They understood that the ethical principles taught in class could help guide their decisions and actions outside of school. The students who had previously been less engaged in the class began to show more interest and involvement in the discussions. They became more open to listening to others' opinions, and there was a noticeable improvement in their interpersonal skills. For example, students who had been disruptive in the past started to engage in more respectful conversations with their peers. This shift in behavior was especially evident in the group discussions, where students were encouraged to collaborate and express their ideas in a supportive environment. The advocacy method played a crucial role in fostering critical thinking and moral reflection among students. By debating moral issues and discussing ethical dilemmas, students learned to think more deeply about their actions and the consequences of their choices. The debates also encouraged them to listen to opposing viewpoints, fostering empathy and understanding. As a result, students were better able to reflect on their own values and develop a stronger sense of moral responsibility. Moreover, the students' ability to apply moral values outside of the classroom improved over the course of the research. Several students reported that they had started to implement the ethical principles discussed in class in their interactions with family members, friends, and the wider community. They became more mindful of their behavior, striving to be more honest, respectful, and responsible in their daily lives.

Throughout the research, the teacher reflected on the effectiveness of the teaching strategies and made necessary adjustments to enhance the learning experience. The teacher noted that the advocacy method, while initially challenging for some students, proved to be an effective tool for fostering critical thinking and moral development. The interactive nature of debates allowed students to actively engage with the material, leading to a deeper understanding of the moral values being taught. The teacher also

recognized the importance of providing ongoing support to students, especially those who were initially less confident or reluctant to participate in class discussions. By offering additional resources and guidance, the teacher helped these students gain the skills and confidence needed to engage in debates and express their opinions. The teacher's role as a facilitator was essential in creating a positive and supportive learning environment where students felt comfortable sharing their thoughts. In terms of teaching materials, the teacher found that incorporating real-life examples and case studies into the lessons significantly enhanced student engagement. These examples allowed students to connect the abstract moral concepts to real-world situations, making the lessons more relevant and meaningful. The teacher also noted that using a variety of teaching strategies, such as debates, role-playing, and group discussions, helped to cater to the diverse learning styles of the students.

The results of this research indicate that the advocacy method was effective in improving students' moral development in the context of Islamic Education at SMA Negeri 1 Panyabungan Utara. Both cycles of the research showed significant improvements in student participation, engagement, and understanding of moral principles. The average scores on the post-cycle assessments increased from 72.9 in Cycle I to 82.6 in Cycle II, reflecting the positive impact of the teaching strategies used. Moreover, the research revealed a marked improvement in students' behavior and attitudes toward moral education. The students became more active participants in class discussions, demonstrating greater respect for others' opinions and a deeper understanding of the moral values being taught. The findings suggest that interactive and student-centered teaching methods, such as the advocacy method, can be highly effective in fostering critical thinking and moral development in students.

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that the advocacy method can be a valuable tool for improving moral education in schools, especially in fostering the development of good character and ethical behavior among students. By providing students with opportunities to actively engage in debates and discussions about moral values, teachers can help them internalize these principles and apply them in their daily lives.

## DISCUSSION

The type of research used in this study is qualitative research with descriptive methods. Qualitative research is research that focuses on in-depth observation. The data collection procedure in this study is approached with a descriptive approach. Descriptive is a research method that tries to describe and interpret objects according to what they are. The use of qualitative research in research can produce a study of a phenomenon that is more comprehensive or can be seen from all sides as a whole and tries to describe and present the phenomenon as usual. The informants for this study are people who may be able to provide information in this study. So the informants in the study were Students and Teachers at SMAN 1 Panyabungan Utara. From the statement above, it can be concluded that Observation is an observation carried out systematically regarding social phenomena in the object of this study. The observations made by the researcher in this study were to directly observe the implementation of Islamic religious education at SMAN 1 Panyabungan Utara, students' understanding of the concept of Islam. What the researcher means here is that the researcher directly observed the Akidah Akhlak teacher in the process of learning Islamic religious education, directly observed the Akhlak of students.

The findings from this Classroom Action Research (CAR) indicate that applying the advocacy method effectively enhanced students' moral development in the Islamic Education (PAI) subject at SMA Negeri 1 Panyabungan Utara. This section offers a detailed analysis of the results, discussing the impact of the advocacy method on students' participation, behavior, and understanding of moral values, along with the challenges

faced and adjustments made throughout the study. One of the primary aims of this study was to explore how the advocacy method could enhance students' moral development. The results from both cycles of the research indicate that the method was indeed effective. Central to this method was engaging students in debates and discussions about moral issues, which allowed them to voice their opinions, challenge each other, and reflect on ethical dilemmas. This process encouraged students to think critically about their own values and beliefs, which is crucial for fostering moral reasoning.

In Cycle I, although students were initially hesitant and showed little interest, engagement increased after a few sessions. Students became more structured in their debates, demonstrating growing confidence in presenting their viewpoints. By the end of Cycle I, 85.7% of students had actively participated in debates, with improved discussions. This indicates that the advocacy method had a positive effect on the students' willingness to engage in moral topics. Cycle II showed even more promising results. All 35 students (100%) actively participated in debates and group activities. Students who were previously less confident now displayed greater involvement and demonstrated improvements in their communication abilities. This increase in participation highlights the effectiveness of the advocacy method in motivating students to take part in the learning process.

One of the most notable aspects of the advocacy method is its emphasis on active learning. Unlike traditional teaching methods, which focus on passive absorption of information, the advocacy method actively involves students in their learning, urging them to think critically and reflect on their values. Throughout the research, students showcased a growing ability to engage with moral issues and apply ethical principles in their everyday lives. The debates and group discussions allowed students to delve into various moral perspectives, helping them develop a deeper understanding of the topics being discussed. Students were required to research their topics, form well-organized arguments, and defend their views, which enhanced their critical thinking, communication, and empathy. These skills are essential for moral character development, as they enable students to evaluate complex ethical situations and make informed, responsible decisions. Additionally, students developed a more profound understanding of the importance of moral values like honesty, fairness, and respect. Being able to express their views and engage in ethical dilemmas in a safe environment helped them internalize these values and implement them in real-life situations. The process of critical reflection and engaging with their personal beliefs allowed students to improve their moral awareness.

Another key finding from the research was the positive shift in student behavior. At the start of the study, several students showed passive or disruptive behavior in class, which negatively impacted the learning atmosphere. However, as the advocacy method was introduced, students began to show more respect for others' opinions and became increasingly involved in class activities. This change in behavior can be attributed to the interactive nature of debates, which required students to listen actively to their peers and engage in respectful discussions. By the end of Cycle II, the teacher noted that students exhibited improved character both inside and outside the classroom. They demonstrated greater respect for their teachers and peers, and their attitudes toward moral education also transformed. For example, students who were initially disengaged in the subject started to share their views on ethical topics and expressed a willingness to learn about Islamic values. In addition, their overall conduct improved in areas such as classroom interactions and group work. Moreover, the advocacy method helped instill a sense of responsibility among students. Through the debates, students reflected on the consequences of their actions and made decisions guided by moral principles. This raised awareness of the impact of their behavior on others, contributing to a noticeable improvement in their overall conduct, both in the classroom and beyond.

The teacher's role as a facilitator was essential for the success of the advocacy method. In this research, the teacher did not simply provide information but rather guided

the students through exploration and reflection. The teacher's task was to create an environment that encouraged students to express their opinions, engage with their peers, and contemplate the moral issues presented. The teacher also acted as a mediator during the debates to ensure that discussions remained respectful and productive. One challenge in Cycle I was managing varying levels of student participation. Some students, especially those with lower self-confidence, were reluctant to take part in the debates. The teacher responded by offering additional support and encouragement, which helped those students become more comfortable and confident in participating. The teacher also used different strategies, like group activities and role-playing, to ensure that all students could engage meaningfully in the learning process. Furthermore, the teacher's reflective practice was an important aspect of the research. After each cycle, the teacher evaluated the teaching strategies' effectiveness and adjusted the approach accordingly. For example, in Cycle II, the teacher introduced more real-world case studies and examples to make the lessons more relatable to students. This change was particularly effective, as students were able to connect the moral lessons discussed in class to their personal experiences, leading to greater engagement and understanding.

The research highlighted the significance of student engagement and motivation in the learning process. The student-centered nature of the advocacy method increased students' motivation to learn about moral principles. Initially, some students were disinterested in the subject, but as they participated in debates and group discussions, their level of motivation increased. This increase in engagement can be attributed to the advocacy method's interactive style, which allowed students to take ownership of their learning and find relevance in the subject matter. The group discussions and debates provided an opportunity for students to voice their opinions, challenge others' views, and learn from one another. This collaborative learning environment fostered a sense of community within the class, motivating students to engage more fully in the lessons. The opportunity to express their thoughts and contribute to discussions gave students a sense of agency, encouraging them to be more proactive in their learning. The advocacy method also helped students enhance their communication skills. As students participated in debates and group discussions, they learned how to clearly articulate their ideas, listen to others, and present their arguments logically. These skills are crucial not only for academic success but also for personal growth and effective communication in everyday life.

While the advocacy method proved effective, there were some challenges encountered during the study. One of the main difficulties in Cycle I was student hesitancy, especially from those unfamiliar with debating or reluctant to express themselves publicly. Some students were initially apprehensive about participating. To overcome this challenge, the teacher provided more structured activities in Cycle II, offering extra support to students who needed it. This ensured that every student had the opportunity to engage confidently in the debates. Another challenge was managing the diverse opinions and perspectives that emerged during class discussions. Students often held differing views on moral issues, which occasionally led to intense debates. While this diversity of opinions is valuable for developing critical thinking, it required the teacher to mediate the discussions effectively to ensure that they remained respectful and constructive. The teacher set clear guidelines for respectful communication and encouraged students to consider multiple perspectives before making conclusions. Some students also struggled to connect the ethical principles discussed in class with their everyday actions. To address this, the teacher incorporated more real-life examples and case studies that helped students see how moral principles could be applied in practical situations. These examples made the lessons more relevant to the students, encouraging them to reflect on their behavior outside the classroom.

The results of this study provide strong evidence that the advocacy method is an effective approach for enhancing students' moral development in Islamic Education. By involving students in debates, group activities, and role-playing exercises, the method

promoted active learning, critical thinking, and ethical reflection. The improvements observed in both student participation and behavior underline the positive impact of this student-centered teaching approach. The findings highlight the importance of using student-centered teaching strategies in promoting moral development. Encouraging students to engage in discussions and reflect on their values allowed them to deepen their understanding of the ethical principles guiding their actions. Furthermore, the research emphasizes the crucial role of the teacher in facilitating these discussions and creating a supportive and respectful learning environment. This research suggests that the advocacy method is a valuable tool for enhancing moral education in schools. It fosters critical thinking, encourages respectful dialogue, and helps students internalize important moral values. Based on these findings, it is recommended that teachers consider incorporating the advocacy method into their teaching practices to better support the moral and ethical development of students.

## CONCLUSION

The efforts of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers to foster students' morals are that PAI teachers can foster students' morals through role models, habits, and special attention. Explanation Teachers can foster students' morals through role models and habits, can foster students' morals individually and classically, can foster students' morals at school and outside of school, can foster students' morals by giving special attention to students who are difficult to manage. PAI teachers can foster students' morals by instilling and awakening religious beliefs, fostering students' morals by instilling good social ethics, fostering students' morals by instilling good habits in the form of discipline and responsibility. PAI teachers can foster students' morals by instilling religious, honest, disciplined, responsible, caring, and creative character values. The role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in fostering students' morals is very important because it can shape students' behavior at school. Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the efforts of Islamic Religious Education teachers play a very important role in fostering students' morals at SMAN 1 Panyabungan Utara, including providing role models, giving advice, getting used to behaving well, giving rewards and punishments. Teachers as educators who share knowledge and improve students' morals, because teachers have an important role in improving students' morals.

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