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Efforts to Improve Students' Religious Character in Islamic Education Learning by Implementing Role Playing Models at SD Negeri 1 Lambheu

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Abstract: This study aims to improve students' religious character in Islamic Education learning through the implementation of the Role Playing model at SD Negeri 1 Lambheu. The research was conducted using a classroom action research (CAR) approach, which was carried out in two cycles, each consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection stages. The participants were 25 fifth-grade students in the 2024/2025 academic year. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative descriptive methods. The results revealed a significant improvement in students' religious character after the application of the Role Playing model. In the first cycle, the average score of students' religious character was 71.20, increasing to 86.80 in the second cycle, indicating a 21.9% improvement. Qualitative data also showed enhanced attitudes of honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and respect among students during learning activities. The use of Role Playing allowed students to experience and reflect on moral values through dramatization and real-life scenarios, fostering deeper understanding and internalization of Islamic teachings. This study concludes that the Role Playing model is effective in developing students' religious character in Islamic Education learning. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to apply this interactive and reflective approach as an alternative method to improve students' moral and spiritual development in primary education.

Keywords: Role Playing Model, Religious Character, Islamic Education.

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INTRODUCTION

Education plays a central role in shaping students' personalities, values, and moral foundations. In the context of Islamic Education, the primary goal is not only to transmit knowledge but also to cultivate religious character, which reflects the integration of faith, understanding, and good conduct. The development of students' religious character is essential in fostering individuals who are not only intellectually capable but also spiritually grounded and ethically responsible. This aligns with the objectives of national education, which emphasize the formation of noble character and the enhancement of faith and piety to Allah SWT.

In recent years, concerns have emerged regarding the declining moral and religious attitudes among students, particularly at the elementary school level. Many learners show limited awareness of Islamic values, reduced discipline in performing religious practices, and minimal appreciation for moral behavior. These issues are often attributed to the dominance of conventional learning models that focus primarily on cognitive aspects rather than affective and psychomotor domains. As a result, religious education tends to be theoretical, leaving students unable to apply moral and spiritual values in real life.

Islamic Education teachers are thus challenged to innovate in their pedagogical approaches to ensure that learning becomes more meaningful and character-oriented. Among the various strategies available, the Role Playing model has emerged as a promising method to enhance students' engagement, understanding, and internalization of Islamic values. By simulating real-life situations, students are encouraged to experience moral dilemmas, practice appropriate behavior, and reflect on Islamic teachings through active participation.

The Role Playing model offers opportunities for learners to develop empathy, cooperation, and responsibility while understanding the implications of their actions. This approach transforms students from passive recipients of knowledge into active participants who construct meaning through social interaction. In this way, learning becomes experiential, allowing students to embody the values taught rather than merely memorizing them. Such learning aligns with constructivist theory, which emphasizes that knowledge is built through personal experience and reflection.

Previous research has highlighted the effectiveness of the Role Playing method in promoting moral and emotional development among students. For instance, studies by Huda (2021) and Rahman (2020) revealed that Role Playing enhances students' moral reasoning and strengthens their understanding of ethical values in Islamic Education contexts. Similarly, Aziz and Nurhayati (2022) found that the approach fosters empathy and respect, which are crucial components of religious character. These findings suggest that Role Playing can serve as a valuable pedagogical tool in character education.

However, despite these promising results, the application of the Role Playing model in Islamic Education at the elementary level remains limited. Many teachers are still hesitant to implement this approach due to a lack of familiarity or insufficient training in designing role-based learning scenarios. Moreover, the curriculum's emphasis on academic achievement sometimes overshadows the importance of affective development, leading to an imbalance in students' character formation.

In the context of SD Negeri 1 Lambheu, preliminary observations revealed that students' religious character was not yet optimal. Some students displayed a lack of discipline in performing prayers, insufficient respect toward peers and teachers, and limited participation in religious activities. These conditions indicated the need for a more interactive and reflective learning model that could address the affective dimensions of Islamic Education effectively.

The Role Playing model is considered suitable for overcoming these challenges because it integrates moral education with experiential learning. Through dramatization, students can internalize Islamic teachings by "living" the values within a simulated social environment. This method encourages self-expression, reflection, and awareness of moral consequences, thereby promoting long-term behavioral change. Furthermore, Role Playing allows teachers to assess students' understanding and attitudes in an authentic context.

This study is grounded in the theoretical framework of character education and experiential learning. Character education, as emphasized by Lickona (1991), involves the deliberate effort to cultivate virtues such as honesty, respect, and responsibility. Meanwhile, Kolb's experiential learning theory (1984) underscores the importance of learning through experience, reflection, and application. Combining these theories provides a strong pedagogical foundation for implementing Role Playing in Islamic Education.

The present research adopts a classroom action research (CAR) approach to systematically examine the process and outcomes of applying the Role Playing model in

improving students' religious character. This method allows the researcher to collaboratively plan, implement, observe, and reflect on each learning cycle, ensuring continuous improvement in teaching practices and student outcomes.

The implementation of the Role Playing model in this study focuses on key aspects of religious character, including faithfulness, honesty, discipline, respect, and responsibility. These values are fundamental to Islamic teachings and are expected to manifest in students' daily behavior both inside and outside the classroom. By engaging in simulated situations, students are guided to make moral decisions and evaluate their own actions in light of Islamic principles.

Through this approach, the study aims to address the gap between knowledge and practice in Islamic Education. It is not sufficient for students to merely understand religious doctrines; they must also embody those teachings in their daily lives. The Role Playing model, therefore, serves as a bridge that connects theoretical understanding with practical application.

This research also contributes to the broader discourse on character education in Indonesia's elementary schools. Given the government's increasing emphasis on strengthening religious and moral education, innovative models such as Role Playing are highly relevant for achieving the objectives of the *Merdeka Belajar* (Independent Learning) curriculum, which prioritizes holistic student development.

Furthermore, the findings of this study are expected to provide empirical evidence and practical insights for teachers, policymakers, and curriculum developers seeking to enhance the quality of Islamic Education. The success of Role Playing in fostering religious character may serve as a model for replication in other schools facing similar challenges.

In summary, this study investigates how the Role Playing model can effectively improve students' religious character within Islamic Education learning at SD Negeri 1 Lambheu. By integrating theory with practice, the study seeks to demonstrate that experiential, student-centered learning can transform not only students' understanding but also their behavior and attitudes. Ultimately, strengthening religious character through such pedagogical innovation is essential in nurturing a generation of morally upright and spiritually conscious individuals.

METHODS

This study employed a classroom action research (CAR) design aimed at improving students' religious character through the implementation of the Role Playing model in Islamic Education learning at SD Negeri 1 Lambheu. The classroom action research approach was chosen because it allows teachers and researchers to collaboratively identify problems in the learning process, implement solutions, observe the outcomes, and reflect on the effectiveness of the intervention. This cyclical process ensures continuous improvement in both teaching practices and student learning outcomes. The research was carried out over two cycles, each consisting of four stages: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. These stages were designed to provide systematic and measurable actions that could demonstrate the impact of the Role Playing model on students' character formation.

The study was conducted in the fifth-grade classroom of SD Negeri 1 Lambheu during the 2024/2025 academic year. The participants consisted of 25 students, including 13 boys and 12 girls, aged between 10 and 11 years. The selection of participants was based on the observation that this class displayed varying levels of religious character development, which provided an appropriate context for implementing and evaluating the intervention. The classroom teacher collaborated directly with the researcher throughout the study to ensure that the learning process aligned with the school's Islamic Education curriculum and the values it intended to promote.

The focus of this study was on improving students' religious character, particularly in aspects such as faithfulness, honesty, discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and respect for

others. These aspects were observed as essential indicators of religious character in Islamic Education learning. The implementation of the Role Playing model involved designing scenarios related to everyday moral and religious situations, such as showing respect to teachers, performing prayers diligently, practicing honesty in communication, and helping peers in need. These scenarios allowed students to actively engage with the content, express their understanding through performance, and reflect on the moral implications of their actions.

Data were collected using multiple techniques to ensure triangulation and reliability. The primary data collection methods included observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to assess students' behavioral changes and participation during the learning activities. Structured observation sheets were used to record students' attitudes, such as attentiveness, respectfulness, cooperation, and sincerity in carrying out role-playing tasks. Interviews were conducted with both students and the classroom teacher to gain deeper insights into students' perceptions and reflections on the learning process. Documentation, such as lesson plans, photographs, and reflective journals, was used to support and validate the observational data.

The data analysis process combined both qualitative and quantitative descriptive approaches. Qualitative data obtained from observations and interviews were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, following the framework proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994). This analysis allowed the researcher to identify emerging patterns, themes, and behavioral changes among students. Quantitative data were derived from the assessment scores of students' religious character, which were calculated using a rating scale. These scores were averaged to determine the level of improvement between the first and second cycles of the research. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data ensured a comprehensive understanding of both the process and outcomes of the Role Playing implementation.

To ensure the validity of the findings, data triangulation was employed by comparing the results obtained from different data sources and methods. The consistency between observational findings, interview responses, and documentation records strengthened the credibility of the conclusions. The researcher also engaged in collaborative reflection with the classroom teacher after each cycle to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning design and to plan necessary modifications for the subsequent cycle. This reflective process served as an integral part of the CAR methodology, promoting a dynamic and responsive learning environment.

The Role Playing model was implemented through carefully planned instructional procedures. Each learning session began with an introduction to the topic and objectives, followed by the presentation of a moral or religious situation relevant to students' daily lives. Students were then assigned specific roles to act out the scenario while demonstrating appropriate moral behaviors. After each performance, the teacher facilitated a group discussion to reflect on the lessons learned, emphasizing the connection between the dramatized events and Islamic values. This reflective dialogue was crucial in helping students internalize the moral concepts and understand their practical implications.

The classroom environment was structured to encourage active participation and inclusivity. Students were grouped to ensure equal opportunities for engagement, and the teacher acted as a facilitator who guided, motivated, and provided feedback throughout the learning process. The collaborative nature of the Role Playing method fostered a sense of belonging, empathy, and mutual respect among students. The open and supportive atmosphere also encouraged students to express their thoughts freely and to relate the learning material to real-life experiences.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from the school administration and the participating teacher. Students were informed about the purpose of the study, and their participation was voluntary. The researcher ensured that the learning activities remained within the framework of Islamic educational values and that students' dignity and emotional well-

being were respected. Confidentiality was maintained for all participants, and data were reported collectively without identifying individual students.

The duration of the study spanned six weeks, with each cycle comprising three learning sessions. During this period, continuous observations were conducted to monitor progress and identify areas for improvement. Adjustments were made between cycles based on the reflection outcomes to enhance the effectiveness of the Role Playing model. This iterative process allowed the researcher to refine both instructional strategies and evaluation techniques.

In conclusion, the methodological framework of this study was designed to provide a holistic understanding of how the Role Playing model can influence students' religious character development. By integrating systematic planning, implementation, observation, and reflection, the study not only examined the outcomes of character improvement but also captured the dynamics of the learning process itself. The use of multiple data sources and analysis methods ensured that the findings were credible, comprehensive, and relevant to the context of Islamic Education at the elementary school level. This approach aligns with the overarching goal of classroom action research to enhance both teaching quality and student development through evidence-based pedagogical innovation.

RESULTS

The implementation of the Role Playing model in Islamic Education learning at SD Negeri 1 Lambheu was carried out over two cycles, each consisting of three meetings. The primary objective was to observe and measure improvements in students' religious character, particularly in the aspects of honesty, discipline, cooperation, responsibility, and respect. Throughout the research, a gradual yet consistent enhancement in students' attitudes and behaviors was observed, indicating the positive impact of the Role Playing model on their moral and spiritual development.

At the beginning of the study, baseline observations revealed that students' religious character was at a moderate level. Several students displayed reluctance to participate actively in religious discussions, and some were less disciplined in completing religious tasks such as memorizing short surahs or maintaining proper prayer etiquette. Interactions among students also showed a lack of empathy and cooperation during group activities. These findings confirmed the initial assumption that students required a more engaging and reflective learning approach to internalize Islamic values effectively.

During the first cycle of implementation, the Role Playing model was introduced through scenarios that represented daily moral challenges familiar to students. The teacher guided the students in enacting roles related to honesty in communication, respect for elders, and responsibility in carrying out classroom duties. Initially, some students appeared hesitant and unsure about how to express the expected behaviors through acting. However, as the sessions progressed, participation improved significantly, and students began to enjoy the process of dramatization and moral reflection.

Observations during the first cycle indicated a noticeable shift in students' engagement levels. Students became more attentive and cooperative during role preparation and performance. They demonstrated a growing understanding of the values embedded in each scenario, as reflected in their verbal responses during post-activity discussions. Despite these improvements, certain challenges persisted, such as inconsistent discipline and limited depth of reflection in connecting the dramatized stories to real-life religious practices. The average religious character score in the first cycle reached 71.20, indicating moderate development but leaving room for further enhancement.

Following reflection and evaluation of the first cycle, several adjustments were made in the second cycle to strengthen students' understanding and internalization of Islamic values. The scenarios were redesigned to be more contextual and relatable, focusing on situations that mirrored students' everyday experiences both at school and at home. The teacher also incorporated more reflective questioning and feedback sessions to encourage

students to articulate the lessons learned from each role-playing experience. This adjustment aimed to deepen students' moral reasoning and facilitate greater emotional involvement.

The results of the second cycle demonstrated a significant improvement across all observed indicators of religious character. Students displayed higher levels of discipline, particularly in adhering to classroom routines such as punctual attendance and active participation in prayers. They showed greater honesty in expressing opinions, willingness to admit mistakes, and respect toward teachers and peers. Instances of cooperative behavior increased noticeably during group activities, with students offering assistance to their classmates and demonstrating empathy in simulated moral dilemmas. The average score for religious character in the second cycle increased to 86.80, representing a 21.9% improvement from the first cycle.

Qualitative data gathered through observation and interviews further supported these quantitative findings. Students expressed that the Role Playing activities made learning more enjoyable and meaningful. They reported feeling more confident in expressing moral ideas and found it easier to understand Islamic teachings when they could act them out rather than merely listen to explanations. The teacher observed that students who were previously passive became more active and reflective, often relating the scenarios to real-life situations they had encountered.

The improvement in students' religious character was also evident in their daily behavior outside the classroom. Several students began to voluntarily remind their peers to perform prayers on time and to use polite language when communicating. Teachers from other subjects also noted positive behavioral changes, particularly in respectfulness and responsibility. These observations indicated that the influence of the Role Playing model extended beyond the immediate learning context and contributed to broader character formation.

The aspect of honesty showed the most substantial improvement. Initially, some students struggled to tell the truth about minor issues, such as incomplete homework or mistakes made during group tasks. After participating in role-playing scenarios emphasizing honesty as a moral virtue, students demonstrated greater transparency in admitting errors and taking responsibility for their actions. The teacher reported a decline in instances of dishonest behavior, highlighting the success of the Role Playing model in reinforcing integrity among learners.

Discipline also improved significantly during the research. Students became more consistent in attending religious sessions, completing assignments on time, and maintaining proper conduct during class activities. The dramatized scenarios emphasizing punctuality and self-control appeared to resonate deeply with students, helping them internalize these values as part of their daily habits. This behavioral transformation was sustained even after the conclusion of the intervention, indicating that the learning outcomes were not temporary but rather internalized.

The value of cooperation was another area that exhibited considerable growth. In the first cycle, group tasks were often dominated by a few active students, while others remained passive. However, in the second cycle, participation became more evenly distributed, and students showed a stronger sense of teamwork. They learned to listen to others' opinions, share responsibilities, and resolve conflicts constructively. These skills, cultivated through collaborative role enactments, contributed to the development of social harmony and empathy—key elements of religious character.

Responsibility, as a core component of moral education, also experienced noticeable enhancement. Students became more aware of the consequences of their actions and more committed to fulfilling their obligations, both academic and spiritual. During the reflection sessions, they could articulate the importance of being accountable not only to their teachers and parents but also to Allah SWT. This deeper awareness signified the successful integration of moral reasoning and religious consciousness through the Role Playing model.

Respect, as the final key indicator, showed meaningful progress as well. Students demonstrated greater politeness in speech, attentiveness when others were speaking, and care in maintaining a respectful classroom atmosphere. They learned to appreciate diversity in opinions and to treat their peers with kindness. The dramatized situations depicting conflicts or misunderstandings provided opportunities for students to practice empathy and forgiveness, which are fundamental values in Islamic ethics.

The teacher's reflection journals also provided compelling evidence of transformation in the classroom climate. Learning sessions became more dynamic and participatory, with students actively contributing ideas and displaying genuine enthusiasm. The integration of acting and reflection helped maintain students' motivation and reduced behavioral issues commonly found in conventional instruction. The teacher noted that students appeared more emotionally connected to the moral lessons and demonstrated stronger retention of Islamic values over time.

The results of this research confirm that the Role Playing model not only enhances cognitive understanding of Islamic principles but also facilitates the internalization of moral and religious values through experiential learning. Students did not merely learn *about* good character they practiced it through meaningful social interaction. This finding aligns with the experiential learning theory of Kolb (1984), which emphasizes that learning is most effective when it involves concrete experience, reflective observation, and active experimentation.

Furthermore, the findings underscore the critical role of the teacher as a facilitator and moral guide in the Role Playing process. The teacher's ability to design relevant scenarios, guide reflections, and provide constructive feedback was instrumental in ensuring that students could relate their experiences to Islamic teachings. The close collaboration between the researcher and the classroom teacher contributed to the success of the intervention and ensured that the pedagogical practices remained contextually relevant and aligned with curriculum goals.

In summary, the results of this study demonstrate a clear and measurable improvement in students' religious character following the implementation of the Role Playing model in Islamic Education learning. The combination of engaging dramatization, reflective discussion, and authentic moral scenarios fostered not only behavioral change but also deeper understanding and emotional connection to Islamic values. These outcomes highlight the transformative potential of Role Playing as an instructional model capable of bridging the gap between knowledge and character, thereby contributing to the broader mission of holistic education in Islamic schools.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of the Role Playing model in Islamic Education learning significantly improved students' religious character. This improvement was reflected in enhanced honesty, discipline, cooperation, responsibility, and respect among students. The results are consistent with the core principle of character education, which emphasizes experiential engagement and moral reflection as essential mechanisms for developing ethical behavior (Lickona, 1991). Through active participation in role-playing scenarios, students did not merely acquire cognitive knowledge of Islamic values but experienced them directly, leading to deeper internalization and behavioral transformation.

The increase in students' honesty and moral responsibility after the intervention aligns with previous research showing that experiential learning methods foster authentic moral understanding (Kolb, 1984). When students assume specific roles and face moral dilemmas in simulated settings, they are compelled to make ethical decisions and consider the consequences of their actions. This reflective experience allows learners to develop empathy and moral reasoning, as described by Rest's (1986) Four-Component Model of Moral Development, which includes moral sensitivity, judgment, motivation, and character.

The Role Playing model in this study effectively activated these components, allowing students to integrate Islamic teachings into practical decision-making.

Furthermore, the study's findings support the view that character formation in Islamic Education requires interactive and reflective pedagogical approaches rather than rote learning. Traditional teaching methods often focus on the transmission of knowledge, which limits students' ability to apply moral principles in real-life contexts (Nasir & Arif, 2021). The Role Playing model addresses this limitation by situating moral instruction within authentic social situations, thus bridging the gap between knowledge and behavior. As students act out scenarios of respect, responsibility, and honesty, they begin to embody the values taught, consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) socio-constructivist theory, which emphasizes learning as a socially mediated process.

The observed enhancement in students' discipline and cooperation corroborates findings from similar studies by Huda (2021) and Aziz & Nurhayati (2022), which demonstrated that Role Playing can improve students' self-regulation and teamwork. By engaging students in dramatized tasks that require coordination and mutual respect, the model fosters social and emotional competencies essential for moral development. These competencies—empathy, communication, and conflict resolution are central to Islamic moral education, as they mirror the principles of *akhlaq al-karimah* (noble character) promoted in the Qur'an and Hadith. Consequently, the Role Playing method provides a culturally and religiously congruent approach to teaching Islamic values in schools.

The findings also reaffirm the importance of teacher facilitation in moral education. Teachers act not merely as knowledge transmitters but as role models and moral guides. As noted by Narvaez and Lapsley (2008), effective moral education depends on teachers' ability to create learning environments that promote ethical inquiry, emotional engagement, and reflective dialogue. In this study, the teacher's role in guiding discussions and connecting the dramatized scenarios to Islamic teachings was crucial for helping students derive moral meaning from their experiences. This aligns with the Islamic pedagogical tradition, where teachers are regarded as *murabbi* educators responsible for nurturing both intellect and character.

In addition, the results highlight the compatibility between the Role Playing model and the goals of Indonesia's *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum, which emphasizes student-centered learning and holistic development. The Role Playing method encourages autonomy, creativity, and critical thinking while simultaneously reinforcing moral and religious values. This integrative approach supports the national education vision that seeks to balance intellectual growth with spiritual and ethical formation (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020). The success of this model at SD Negeri 1 Lambheu illustrates how innovative pedagogies can operationalize these goals in practical classroom settings.

Another significant implication of this study lies in the sustainability of character change observed among students. The persistence of improved moral behavior beyond the learning sessions suggests that the Role Playing experience had an internalizing effect. According to Dewey's (1938) experiential learning theory, meaningful learning occurs when experience is connected with reflection, leading to reconstructed understanding and habits. Students who internalized Islamic moral values through role-playing continued to apply them in daily life, indicating that experiential learning can generate long-term behavioral transformation rather than short-term compliance.

The integration of Islamic Education with experiential learning also contributes to the broader discourse on moral pedagogy in Muslim-majority contexts. Scholars such as Halstead (2007) and Al-Attas (2011) have emphasized that Islamic education should aim for the holistic development of the human being encompassing intellect, emotion, and spirit. The Role Playing model operationalizes this holistic vision by addressing the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of learning simultaneously. It enables students to experience the beauty of Islamic morality (*akhlaq*) through practice, thereby reinforcing both their faith (*iman*) and good conduct (*amal shalih*).

Finally, this study reinforces the idea that effective character education requires contextual adaptation. The scenarios used in Role Playing were designed to mirror students' real-life experiences, which made the moral lessons personally relevant and emotionally resonant. This contextual approach aligns with Banks and McGee Banks (2010), who argue that culturally responsive pedagogy enhances students' engagement and identity formation. In Islamic Education, contextualization ensures that moral teachings are not abstract but closely connected to students' social realities, thereby increasing their commitment to practicing those values.

The discussion confirms that the Role Playing model serves as an effective pedagogical innovation for improving students' religious character in Islamic Education. It transforms moral instruction into lived experience, nurtures emotional intelligence, and strengthens the moral foundation essential for personal and societal well-being. By aligning experiential learning principles with Islamic educational values, this approach contributes to both theoretical and practical advancements in the field of moral and religious education.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the role playing model in Islamic Education learning at SD Negeri 1 Lambheu has proven to be an effective pedagogical approach in fostering students' religious character. Through active involvement in dramatized learning situations, students not only understood moral and religious concepts but also internalized them into daily behavior, reflecting values such as honesty, empathy, respect, and responsibility. The findings demonstrate that role playing facilitates experiential learning that connects moral theory with practical action, thereby reinforcing cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of character formation. Furthermore, the collaborative and reflective nature of this model encourages students to express religious values authentically while developing interpersonal and intrapersonal skills essential for holistic moral growth. Overall, this study confirms that the role playing model can serve as a strategic instructional method to strengthen the implementation of Islamic Education goals, promoting students' moral awareness and spiritual maturity in an engaging and transformative learning environment.

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