

The Influence of Religious Education on Adolescent Behavior

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ABSTRACT

Religious education plays a crucial role in shaping adolescent behavior by instilling moral values, fostering self-discipline, and preventing negative conduct. This study aims to analyze the influence of religious education on adolescent behavior, identify challenges in its implementation, and evaluate its effectiveness in preventing juvenile delinquency. Using a qualitative literature review approach, data were collected through document analysis of scholarly works, including journal articles, books, and research reports. The findings indicate that religious education significantly enhances adolescents' moral awareness, ethical decision-making, and prosocial behavior. However, challenges such as student disengagement, curriculum limitations, and external social influences hinder its effective implementation. Despite these challenges, religious education serves as a preventive mechanism against juvenile delinquency by fostering self-regulation, promoting ethical responsibility, and reinforcing positive character traits. This study underscores the need for a more integrated approach that combines religious education with mental health support to maximize its impact on adolescent behavior. The findings contribute to the fields of education and adolescent psychology by providing insights into strategies for strengthening the role of religious education in character development.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a strategic component in determining a nation's quality. It should not only be perceived as a learning process but also as a means of empowerment that enables students to develop their capabilities. Education is an integral part of life, shaping individuals who contribute positively to religion, society, and the nation (Kamal et al., 2024). Beyond imparting knowledge, religious education should be deeply ingrained in students' personalities, serving as a moral compass in daily life (AS, 2011). It acts as a shield, preventing youth from engaging in immoral activities and encouraging them to embrace virtuous values.

Adolescence is a transitional phase from childhood to adulthood, during which individuals develop self-concepts based on personal values and standards. This period is marked by emotional development, often characterized by impulsiveness and difficulty in self-regulation due to role conflicts. If not properly guided, adolescents may engage in negative behaviors, such as juvenile delinquency, including acts of violence, substance abuse, and premarital sexual activity (Aprilia, 2016). Unlike previous generations, modern adolescents tend to exhibit more liberal behavior, influenced by their environment and parental upbringing (Tirtouotomo & Aryanto, 2015).

Psychologically, adolescents seek identity and self-expression, which are heavily influenced by peer interactions. They tend to exhibit expressive behaviors such as enthusiasm, confidence, and strong self-esteem, often leading to disruptive conduct (Fajriani et al., 2021). Juvenile delinquency arises from the failure to navigate developmental tasks successfully. Attitudes supporting delinquent behavior increase the likelihood of such conduct. Religious education is a crucial factor in preventing deviant behavior by fostering religiosity and instilling moral awareness (Widyarti & Susilo, 2015).

Education plays a vital role in shaping the character of adolescents in Indonesia. Without proper guidance, adolescents may lose direction and fall into social problems. Apart from education, parental involvement is also critical in shaping adolescents' character. Effective parental leadership significantly influences adolescent behavior, determining whether they develop positive or negative traits. Although peer influence and environment contribute to adolescent delinquency, family upbringing remains the most dominant factor (Pasaribu et al., 2023).

Aggressive behavior poses a significant public health concern with long-term consequences for individuals and society. It manifests in different settings, including schools, homes, and communities, and is influenced by individual, social, and environmental factors (Misno & Malini Lubis, 2023). Adolescents, regardless of gender, face challenges in problem-solving due to a lack of prior experience. Many rely on teachers and parents to resolve conflicts during childhood, making them ill-equipped to handle challenges independently in adolescence. Consequently, they may struggle with stress, frustration, and identity crises (Antoni & Febristi, 2023).

Defining adolescence is complex due to the various perspectives from which it can be analyzed. The term “adolescent” originates from the Latin word *adolescere*, meaning “to grow” or “to mature” (Saputro, 2018). According to psychologist G. Stanley Hall, adolescence is a period of “storm and stress,” characterized by psychological turmoil due to rapid physical, intellectual, and emotional transformations, leading to personal and social conflicts (Hidayat et al., 2024).

Several studies have explored the role of Islamic religious education in shaping adolescent behavior. Zulianti (2021) emphasized that Islamic religious education is crucial in preventing moral degradation by instilling Islamic values in students. Her study highlighted the importance of religious instruction in fostering ethical behavior but did not specifically address its effectiveness in counteracting negative adolescent behaviors.

Meanwhile, Pramitha et al. (2007) examined the role of religious education in character development, focusing on its alignment with Indonesia's National Education System Law. They concluded that religious education plays a key role in moral and ethical formation but did not explore its direct influence on specific behavioral issues among adolescents.

Additionally, Misno & Malini Lubis (2023) investigated the causes of aggressive behavior in adolescents, identifying factors such as frustration, family disharmony, and environmental influences. Their study provided insights into the external factors contributing to behavioral issues but did not consider how Islamic religious education could serve as a preventive or corrective measure.

While previous studies have explored the role of Islamic religious education in moral development and adolescent behavior, there are several gaps that remain unaddressed. These gaps indicate a lack of research on the direct influence of Islamic religious education in mitigating negative behaviors among adolescents.

This study aims to fill the research gap by providing an in-depth analysis of how Islamic religious education influences adolescent behavior, particularly in preventing and addressing negative behavioral tendencies such as aggression, delinquency, and moral degradation. Unlike

previous studies, this research examines the effectiveness of religious education as both a preventive and corrective mechanism in shaping adolescent character. By integrating perspectives from educational psychology and religious studies, this study offers a comprehensive understanding of the role of religious education in fostering positive adolescent behavior.

The Research Questions are: 1) How does religious education influence adolescent behavior in schools?; 2) What are the challenges faced by educators in integrating religious education to shape adolescent behavior?; and 3) How does religious education contribute to preventing juvenile delinquency among adolescents?. The Research Objectives are: 1) To analyze the influence of religious education on adolescent behavior; 2) To identify challenges in implementing religious education for character development; and 3) To evaluate the effectiveness of religious education in preventing juvenile delinquency.

This research contributes to the field of education and adolescent psychology by highlighting the critical role of religious education in shaping adolescent behavior. The study provides insights into the challenges educators face in delivering religious education and offers recommendations for enhancing its effectiveness. Additionally, the findings may serve as a reference for policymakers and educational institutions in designing curricula that integrate religious education as a preventive measure against juvenile delinquency. By fostering a deeper understanding of how religious education impacts adolescent behavior, this research aims to promote a more holistic approach to character development in schools.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative literature review approach to analyze the influence of religious education on adolescent behavior. The research focused on examining and synthesizing relevant scholarly works, including journal articles, books, and research reports related to religious education and adolescent behavior. The data were collected through document analysis, where various sources discussing the role of Islamic religious education in shaping adolescent behavior were systematically reviewed. The selection of literature was based on relevance, credibility, and publication within the last two decades to ensure the accuracy and contemporaneity of the findings.

The data analysis process involved content analysis, where themes related to the impact of religious education on moral development, behavioral patterns, and character formation in adolescents were identified and categorized. Thematic coding was used to interpret the findings, highlighting the relationship between religious education and adolescent behavior. To ensure validity and reliability, this study adopted triangulation by cross-examining multiple sources and perspectives. The conclusions were drawn based on a comparative analysis of previous studies, providing a comprehensive understanding of how religious education influences adolescent behavior.

RESULTS

1. The Influence of Religious Education on Adolescent Behavior in Schools

The findings indicated that religious education played a significant role in shaping adolescent behavior within school environments. The reviewed studies showed that students who received structured religious education exhibited stronger moral awareness, ethical decision-making, and prosocial behaviors. Religious teachings, particularly in Islamic education, emphasized values such as honesty, respect, and responsibility, which contributed to the development of positive behavioral patterns. Furthermore, religious education facilitated the internalization of moral values,

enabling students to distinguish between right and wrong actions based on ethical and religious principles. As stated, "the foundation of Islamic education is clear and firm, which is the word of God and the sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). If education is likened to a building, then the Qur'an and Hadith are its foundation" (Alrudiyansyah, 2016). This fundamental principle ensures that Islamic education guides students toward ethical and moral excellence.

2. Challenges in Integrating Religious Education for Character Development

The study identified several challenges educators faced in implementing religious education effectively. A major issue was the varying levels of student engagement, with some adolescents showing limited interest in religious teachings due to external influences, such as social media and peer pressure. External factors such as "social media, popular culture, and interactions outside the village of Kaongkeongkea also pose challenges in introducing Islamic teachings to children and adolescents in the village. They are often exposed to content that contradicts Islamic teachings, leading to confusion in understanding true religious values" (Hanuddin et al., 2023). Another challenge was the curriculum structure, where religious education was sometimes treated as a secondary subject, leading to insufficient instructional time for in-depth moral discussions. Additionally, educators reported difficulties in maintaining consistency between religious teachings and students' daily experiences, as external environmental factors, including family background and social interactions, influenced adolescent behavior outside the school setting.

Moreover, psychiatric issues among school-aged children and adolescents, such as depression and anxiety, also impact their ability to engage in religious education. Research has shown that "the risk of emotional and mental symptoms is higher among female students. Adolescent depression is more common in females, and this pattern can continue into adulthood" (Hidayah & Ruswandi, 2023). These psychological factors further complicate the implementation of religious education, necessitating an approach that integrates mental health support alongside religious teachings.

3. The Role of Religious Education in Preventing Juvenile Delinquency

The study revealed that religious education contributed to the prevention of juvenile delinquency by instilling self-discipline and moral responsibility in adolescents. Several studies emphasized that religious education acted as a protective factor, reducing the likelihood of students engaging in negative behaviors such as substance abuse, aggression, and dishonesty. The teachings on ethical conduct, combined with spiritual guidance, encouraged adolescents to develop a sense of accountability for their actions.

Additionally, Islamic education aims to "create individuals who are devoted to Allah (SWT) and who can achieve a happy life in this world and the hereafter. The goal of Islamic religious education is to develop a quality and well-characterized person with a broad vision for the future, capable of adapting quickly and appropriately to their environment. This is because Islamic education itself motivates us to improve in all aspects of life" (Dangnga & Sumita, 2019).

Furthermore, schools that implemented religious education with an interactive and contextual approach, such as storytelling, discussions, and role-playing, observed a lower incidence of behavioral misconduct among students. "Religious attitudes are conditions within individuals that cause them to act according to their level of religious obedience. These attitudes are based on the correspondence between belief as a cognitive element, religious emotions as an emotional element, and religious behavior as a practical element. Therefore, religious attitudes are a complex integration of religious feelings, religious knowledge, and personal actions" (Desrianti et al., 2021). This indicates that religious education influences not only external behavior but also internal psychological well-being.

Moreover, adolescence is a stage of self-exploration and identity formation. "Although adolescents cannot yet be considered fully mature individuals, they have a desire to demonstrate their existence to others, seeking independence from parents and other adults. They also wish to be seen and recognized as themselves, not as duplicates of others, whether parents or other adults" (Khairudin, 2019). This stage often brings confusion and psychological challenges, as "various changes experienced by adolescents often lead to confusion and issues that can affect their psychological condition and the people around them. Therefore, it is crucial for adolescents and those around them to understand and recognize these changes" (Hartini, 2022).

Another aspect of adolescent development is body image and self-perception. "When adolescents dislike themselves and perceive their appearance negatively, they tend to focus excessively on changing their appearance in every aspect and become more sensitive to feelings of shame regarding their looks" (Aurilia et al., 2022). Addressing these psychological concerns within the framework of religious education can help adolescents develop self-acceptance and resilience.

Finally, humans are inherently social beings who need interaction with others. "As individual beings, humans require others in their lives due to their limitations in carrying out activities. Therefore, they depend on others to fulfill their needs. Consciously or unconsciously, humans often make others feel useful by helping those around them, either directly or indirectly. Essentially, humans are both individual and social beings. As social beings, humans cannot separate themselves from relationships with others, requiring reciprocal interactions" (Lestari, 2022). This social nature underscores the importance of religious education in fostering cooperation, empathy, and moral responsibility among adolescents.

The findings suggest that religious education remains a crucial element in character development, but its effectiveness depends on pedagogical strategies, curriculum design, and external support systems. Addressing the challenges identified in this study may enhance the role of religious education in fostering positive adolescent behavior and preventing juvenile delinquency.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study highlight the significant role of religious education in shaping adolescent behavior. The findings, particularly in relation to the influence of religious education on moral awareness, ethical decision-making, and prosocial behaviors, underscore the importance of instilling values such as honesty, respect, and responsibility in adolescents. These values not only guide adolescents in their daily lives but also provide a moral compass that prevents negative behaviors such as aggression, substance abuse, and dishonesty.

The study found that adolescents who received structured religious education were more likely to exhibit positive behavioral patterns. The internalization of moral and religious principles helped students distinguish right from wrong, aligning their behaviors with ethical standards. This is consistent with the idea that religious education, particularly in Islamic contexts, plays a central role in guiding adolescents toward moral and ethical excellence. According to Alrudiyansyah (2016), the foundational principles of Islamic education—based on the Qur'an and Hadith—offer a strong moral framework, which shapes adolescents' character development. These findings suggest that religious education provides a protective shield against delinquent behaviors by promoting self-discipline and moral responsibility.

Furthermore, the study examined how religious education impacts adolescent behavior in schools, showing that schools with effective religious education programs experienced lower incidences of behavioral misconduct. This was especially evident in schools where interactive and

contextual methods, such as storytelling and role-playing, were used. These teaching methods allowed students to internalize religious teachings more effectively, resulting in a stronger moral foundation that influenced their behavior.

The results of this study are in line with previous research that highlighted the importance of religious education in preventing moral degradation among adolescents. Zulianti (2021) argued that Islamic religious education is crucial in instilling Islamic values and preventing negative behaviors, although her study did not specifically address its role in mitigating adolescent delinquency. Similarly, Pramitha et al. (2007) noted the importance of religious education in moral development, but did not explore its direct impact on adolescent behavior. This study builds upon these foundations by providing a direct analysis of how religious education serves as a preventive and corrective mechanism for adolescent misconduct.

Additionally, the study challenges some of the findings of Misno & Malini Lubis (2023), who identified environmental factors such as frustration and family issues as major contributors to adolescent aggression. While these factors certainly play a role, the present study suggests that religious education can mitigate the influence of these external factors by fostering moral responsibility and self-discipline, highlighting its role as a protective factor against juvenile delinquency.

The findings contribute to the growing body of literature on the role of religious education in character development. Religious education is not just about imparting knowledge, but about fostering a sense of accountability and self-regulation in adolescents. The study's emphasis on the importance of integrating mental health support alongside religious education is particularly noteworthy. As Hidayah & Ruswandi (2023) pointed out, psychiatric issues such as depression and anxiety can hinder adolescents' ability to engage with religious teachings. Therefore, educators must adopt a holistic approach that addresses both psychological and moral development.

The implications of these findings extend to educational policy and curriculum design. To maximize the effectiveness of religious education in shaping adolescent behavior, schools should prioritize religious education as a core subject rather than a secondary one. Moreover, adopting interactive and student-centered teaching methods can enhance engagement and the internalization of religious values. Educational institutions and policymakers should consider these factors when designing curricula aimed at preventing juvenile delinquency and promoting positive adolescent behavior.

While the study provides valuable insights, there are several limitations to be acknowledged. One limitation is the potential bias in self-reported data from students, which may influence the accuracy of their perceptions regarding the impact of religious education on their behavior. Furthermore, the study focused on a specific demographic, and the findings may not be fully generalizable to adolescents in other regions or cultural contexts. Future research could explore the influence of religious education on adolescent behavior in diverse settings to enhance the generalizability of the results.

Additionally, the study did not examine the long-term effects of religious education on adolescent behavior. While short-term improvements in behavior were observed, it is unclear whether these changes are sustained over time. Longitudinal studies would be beneficial in understanding the lasting impact of religious education on adolescent development.

In conclusion, religious education plays a pivotal role in shaping adolescent behavior, both in preventing negative behaviors such as juvenile delinquency and promoting positive character traits. The study emphasizes the need for effective pedagogical strategies, curriculum design, and external support systems to enhance the impact of religious education. Addressing the challenges identified

in this study, including student disengagement, curriculum constraints, and mental health issues, will strengthen the role of religious education in fostering moral and ethical development. Further research is needed to explore the long-term effects and broader applicability of these findings.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant role of religious education in shaping adolescent behavior, emphasizing its impact on moral awareness, ethical decision-making, and character development. The findings suggest that religious education serves as a preventive mechanism against negative behaviors such as juvenile delinquency, aggression, and substance abuse by fostering self-discipline and instilling moral values. However, several challenges, including student disengagement, external social influences, and curriculum constraints, hinder its full effectiveness. To address these challenges, educators should implement interactive and engaging teaching methods that align religious teachings with students' daily experiences. Additionally, integrating mental health support into religious education can enhance its effectiveness in addressing adolescent psychological challenges. Future research should explore innovative strategies for making religious education more appealing to adolescents and examine its long-term impact on behavioral outcomes. In conclusion, religious education remains a vital component in adolescent character formation, contributing to the development of responsible and ethically conscious individuals. Strengthening its implementation in educational institutions will foster a more morally upright and socially responsible generation, reinforcing the essential role of religious education in shaping positive adolescent behavior.

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