

Research Article

Improving Student Religious Behavior in Southern Thailand: The Important Role of Teachers in the Context of Islamic Education

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Abstract

This research aims to identify, analyze, and present the crucial role of teachers in enhancing students' religious behavior at Solihuddin School, South Thailand, enriched with Islamic values perspective. The study employs a qualitative approach to explore and describe the conditions at Solihuddin School, South Thailand. Data collection involves interviews, observations, and documentary studies, with the researcher ensuring data validity through triangulation. Data analysis emphasizes steps such as data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Findings indicate challenges in students' religious practices, including reluctance to participate in religious activities and behaviors not in line with Islamic norms. To address this, teachers at Solihuddin School, South Thailand, regularly monitor students to ensure adherence to religious practices and guide them towards behaviors aligned with Islamic values. Teachers deserve respect for their crucial role in imparting knowledge, nurturing spiritual wisdom, and leading the community spiritually. They are valued for their significant contribution to guiding individuals towards understanding and practicing religion appropriately. As influential figures in students' character development, teachers have a significant actor to instill positive moral and spiritual values during the educational process.

Keywords: Teachers, Behavior, Religious, Students, Islamic



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INTRODUCTION

Religious behavior describes an important focus on shaping and influencing religious attitudes, values, and practices in an educational environment. Through education, each individual gains an understanding of religious teachings, moral values, and practical skills to properly practice religion. Religious schools, religious institutions, and religious education curricula became a means of teaching and encouraging religious behavior in daily life.

Behavior related to religion is a basic construction that is very crucial in building civilization in society because religion acts as a guide to achieve global goals, so that religion remains an irreplaceable element in social life (Azis, 2019: 203). Religious values can be a source of inspiration to create justice, peace, and solidarity in an individual and community in society. Through religious practice, individuals can develop empathy, a sense of social responsibility, and a commitment to the common good. However, it is important to remember that in a pluralistic society, diversity of beliefs and religions must be respected and treated fairly. While religion can be a solid foundation in building civilization, it is also important to ensure that religious freedom is maintained and that there is no discrimination or intolerance against individuals or groups based on their religious beliefs.

This kind of phenomenon can be observed in the country of Thailand, which is rich in cultural heritage and religious traditions. The country presents a fascinating example of how religious practices have shaped the nation's identity. Thailand is known by several names such as Muangthai, Muangthai Risabdah, or Siam, also often referred to as the "land of white elephants". The country is in northern Malaysia and is often illustrated as a flower that stalks with blooms. Thailand is also known as an "independent country" because it is a country in Southeast Asia that has never been colonized by other countries, including from western powers. For this reason, Thailand has greater freedom in determining its course as a modern country compared to various other countries, especially in the Southeast Asian region (Rahman & Muliati, 2020: 23).

Unlike Indonesia which has a large Muslim population, the majority of Thailand's population adheres to Theravada Buddhism, where Buddhism is the official state religion. However, a small number of others embraced Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Sikhism. According to a report by The Royal Islamic

Strategic Studies Centre (RISSC) entitled *The Muslim 500*, specifically about the Muslim population in Thailand in 2022 as many as 3,769,199 people or around 5.4% of the total population in the country. Most of the Muslim population in Thailand in particular resides in the tip or southernmost part of the country, such as Pattani, Narathiwat, Yala, and Songkhla provinces.

The Muslim population in Thailand is not as fortunate as the Muslim population in Indonesia, because there are many means of da'wah such as mosques supported by the government. Imam, Khatib, Muezzin, and the management of the Mosque Prosperity Council (DKM) are no exception, which also receive attention from the government. Not to mention, information facilities such as radio or television that provide the best time to convey Islamic teachings in Indonesia. This is quite different from Muslims in Thailand who still face limitations in various accesses, especially means of da'wah and religious education. This is certainly a challenge for the development and understanding of Islam in Thailand, especially in the south.

In line with this, quite a lot of schools in Southern Thailand have not received maximum attention and support from the government both in the context of curriculum development, training for teachers, and providing educational resources and facilities. Disparities in access and quality of education in schools further deepen educational inequalities for the Southern Thailand region, which will certainly have a direct impact on students. Simply put, schools will face various difficulties to provide the best education, including teachers will experience obstacles in delivering lessons and improving students' religious behavior.

It is hoped that this study can identify, analyze, and present the important role of teachers in improving students' religious behavior at Solihuddin School, Southern Thailand which is enriched with the point of view of Islamic values.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study used a qualitative approach, a study that describes the results in the form of a narrative, then makes an analysis to be presented according to the conditions at the research location, precisely Solihuddin School, Southern Thailand. Meanwhile, in data collection, the techniques used by researchers include interviews, observations, and documentation studies. In this study, researchers examined the validity of the data using credibility tests or internal validity specifically triangulation.

In this study, researchers applied a data analysis procedure using an approach

proposed by Miles and Huberman. This approach emphasizes that qualitative data analysis through the steps of data collection, data reduction, data presentation (data display), and conclusion drawing or verification.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Solihuddin School, a school located in Chana District, Songkhla Province, Southern Thailand, plays a central role in the implementation of religious education in the region. In addition to providing learning facilities that cover academic and non-academic realms, Solihuddin School provides teaching that is closely related to Islam. Teaching in this school begins with the subjects of the Qur'an and is supported by other Islamic subjects such as Arabic, Hadith, Jurisprudence, Morals, and so on. Through this optimal religious education, Solihuddin School aims to form students who not only have knowledge about Islam, but are able to implement the values of the religion in everyday life. Thus, this school is not only a place to convey information, but a place to form a strong and deeply rooted religious behavior in its students.

Based on interviews conducted by researchers at Solihuddin School, Southern Thailand, several findings were found related to students' religious behavior. Among them, there are students who experience reluctance to participate in religious practices at school, such as praying, reading the Qur'an, and other religious practices. In addition, there are also students who show behavior that is not in accordance with religious norms, such as incongruity in gender practices or behavior that does not conform to expectations based on their gender.

In this case, one of the keys to improving students' religious behavior is the teacher's efforts in creating an inspiring learning environment and inviting students to actively engage in religious practice. Teachers act as role models who provide direction and inspiration for students in living religious values, practicing worship, and internalizing deeply held moral teachings in daily life. Through the Qur'an, Allah *Subhanahu wa Ta'ala* gives instructions to all humans to try to emulate the Prophet *Sallallahu Alaihi wa Sallam*. This includes teachers and students as elements in the school, says Allah *Subhanahu wa Ta'ala*:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

It means: *"Indeed, there has been in the Messenger of Allah a good example for you (that is) for those who hope for (the mercy) of Allah and (the coming) of the Day of Judgment and who remember Allah a lot."* (QS. Al-Ahzab 33: Verse 21).

In addition, teachers must play an extra role in providing a deep understanding of religious values through thorough and in-depth teaching of Islamic religious teachings, as well as providing positive encouragement to do so in daily activities. With the presence of consistent and directed teacher efforts, it is expected that students can form strong and sustainable religious behavior. According to Hamalik, skills in managing learning are needed by teachers, in addition to having good social skills and personality. Skills in managing the learning process are often referred to as professional skills. Teachers need to try to improve these various skills in order to provide the best learning for students (Sari & Lisnawati, 2021).

Through observations made by researchers at Solihuddin School, Southern Thailand, every morning teachers are responsible for paying attention to students during joint prayers, with the intention of knowing whether there are students who are late taking ablution water, joking, or disorderly before the prayer begins, as well as ensuring that each student carries a prayer mat and adheres to the expected religious behavior practices.

According to Muhammad Abdullah Ad-Duweisy, in his work, teachers are a priority in the world of education who have responsibilities and tasks that are not light to improve students' intellectual intelligence but must also instill the values of faith and good morals (Karimi, 2020: 17). This is in line with Prof. Azyumardi Azra, the Islamic perspective related to teachers is a noble profession so that education becomes one of the central themes of Islam. The role of a teacher is not only limited to transferring the knowledge he has to students, but includes efforts to shape the morals and personality of students to become more mature, have mature intelligence in spiritual, intellectual, and emotional aspects, and be able to be responsible. In this case, teachers have the main responsibility in providing direction, guidance, and coaching to students, as well as supporting their growth and maximizing their abilities (Abdurrohman et al., 2023: 156).

Law Number 14 of 2005, the role and function of a teacher has a close relationship with the progress of education and the development of students. Teachers as professionals function not only to shape the dignity of the profession, but also to encourage recognition of the importance of the role of teachers in learning, which then has an impact on improving the quality of national education. The role and function of teachers are integral elements in the education system. Teachers who function to

educate, teach, guide, and train, starting from their role as educators and leaders. In addition, teachers have the role of being facilitators in learning, carrying out administrative tasks, acting as innovators and managers to provide motivation, create fun learning dynamics, evaluate student progress, and act as supervisors in the learning process (Salsabila & Nisa, 2022: 11).

The roles and functions of the teacher are inseparable entities. Teachers have responsibilities and functions that include educating, teaching, guiding, and training learners. Each of these functions has a different focus: educating aims to develop moral and personality aspects of learners, guiding focuses on religious norms and daily life, teaching aims to convey subject matter and knowledge, while training aims to develop life skills (Sopian, 2016: 90).

In Islam, the position of teacher has a very noble degree as Islam glorifies science. According to Prof. Dr. Maemunah Sa'diyah, Islam respects teachers as individuals who have extensive knowledge by calling them recipients of prophetic inheritance. The teacher in Islam is considered a figure who fears Allah and is an example for the people. This shows that the honor of a teacher depends not only on the knowledge he has, but also on his faith and morality. The same thing according to Abdul Fattah Abu Ghuddah translated by Abu Husamuddin (2019: 17), teachers in the provisions of the Qur'an are associated with the Prophet *Sallallahu Alaihi wa Sallam* as educators for all humans and humanity, even with illiteracy and desert environments.

Teachers deserve a noble position because they are the successors and guardians of science, as well as the spiritual leaders of the people. Teachers are respected for their very important role in guiding devotees towards spiritual awareness and correct religious practice. As a figure who exerts a great influence in the development and character building of students, teachers have a great responsibility in ensuring the inculcation of positive moral and spiritual values in education. Words of Allah *Subhanahu wa Ta'ala*:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ تَفَسَّحُوا فِي الْمَجَالِسِ فَافْسَحُوا يَفْسَحِ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۚ وَإِذَا قِيلَ انشُرُوا فَا
نْشُرُوا يَرْفَعِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ
وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ ۚ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ

It means: "O believers! When it is said to you, Give space in assemblies, then be spacious, surely Allah will give space for you. And when it is said, Stand ye up, then stand up, surely Allah will lift up (the degree of) believers among you and those who are given some degree of knowledge. And Allah knows what you do." (QS. Al-Mujadila 58: Verse 11)

Based on the Qur'anic verse above, although it does not directly discuss the teacher, it strengthens the important role of the teacher in noble Islam in line with religious teachings, including the commandments conveyed by the Prophet *Sallallahu Alaihi wa Sallam* as a spiritual leader and guide of the people, the teacher is known as an intermediary through which the teachings and instructions of the Prophet *Sallallahu Alaihi wa Sallam* delivered to Muslims thoroughly. Therefore, obedience to teachers is part of obedience to the commands of Allah *Subhanahu wa Ta'ala* and the Prophet *Sallallahu Alaihi wa Sallam*. This noble position underlines the important role of teachers in realizing the character and behavior of students in accordance with the teachings of Islam.

CONCLUSION

Based on some of the previous explanations, it can be concluded that the role of the teacher in Islam is full of glory and as a figure who not only brings knowledge, but has a role as a faith builder and moral guide. In the Islamic perspective, teachers are respected for their great responsibility in guiding devotees towards true spiritual awareness as well as ensuring religious practices that are in accordance with Islamic teachings. Solihuddin School, Southern Thailand is an example of many schools in southern Thailand that religious behavior is important to be instilled by a teacher to his students in an effort to create individuals who have strong faith and behavior in accordance with Islamic religious values.

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