

Soft Skills of Education in Islamic Education

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Abstract

Islamic education plays an important role in shaping a balanced individual, not only intellectually, but also emotionally and socially. This paper discusses the urgency of developing *soft skills* in Islamic education, especially in the learning process of Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Using a qualitative descriptive approach through literature studies, the author reviews the latest literature that discusses the integration of Islamic values with the strengthening of interpersonal skills such as communication, cooperation, and leadership. The results of the analysis show that Islamic education has great potential in instilling *soft skills* through habituation of moral values, ethics, and the implementation of Islamic teachings in daily activities. These findings reveal that if Islamic education not only focuses on intellectual and religious aspects, but also pays attention to the development of social skills, it will form a generation of Muslims who are resilient, have superior character, and are ready to compete in the global era. The conclusion of this article emphasizes that *soft skills development* is an inseparable part of the concept of Islamic education that is comprehensive and in accordance with today's challenges.

Keywords: Islamic Religious Education; *Soft Skills*; Character; Holistic Learning

INTRODUCTION

In the era of competitive globalization, a qualified workforce with professional skills is the main demand. Higher education plays a crucial role in preparing graduates who not only master hard skills according to their fields, but also *soft skills* to be able to work productively and with quality. *Soft skills* are even seen as an intervening variable that mediates the influence of learning achievement and organizational activities on competitiveness. The world of work expects competent personnel who can improve company performance, so students need to plan their careers carefully and develop relevant *soft skills* to face increasingly fierce competition. Individuals with good *soft skills*, such as the ability to excel, be effective, competent, active, emotionally stable, independent, and rational, are needed to achieve company goals.

Therefore, in this era of globalization, higher education has an important role in producing graduates who are globally competitive by equipping them not only with hard skills but also *soft skills*. The combination of *hard skills* and *soft skills*, which can be applied through approaches such as the development of *interpersonal skills* (the ability to respect, be socially responsible, cooperative, tolerant, and communicate), is an important foundation in continuous education to produce quality, resilient, competent, productive, and competitive human resources (Lailatul Fitriyah, et al., 2023).

Various studies show how crucial the role of soft skills is in career success. Studies from Harvard University, the Carnegie Foundation, and the Stanford Research Center

reveal that 85% of career success is influenced by *soft skills*, while only 15% by *hard skills*. This finding is strengthened by a study by the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia which states that 85% of success in education is determined by *soft skills*. In fact, the book "Lessons From The Top" states that 90% of the key to a person's success comes from *soft skills* and only 10% from *hard skills*. A 2018 National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) survey also identified the top five *soft skills* attributes sought after in the workforce, namely problem-solving skills, teamwork, verbal communication, leadership, and work ethic. Furthermore, research shows that 75% of a person's success in a job comes from *soft skills* (the ability to learn and understand), and 25% from *hard skills*. Other findings also support that 85% of success in various aspects is influenced by *soft skills* (Lailatul Fitriyah, et al., 2023).

Based on this description, the problem raised in this article is: how can Islamic religious education play a role in the effective development of *students' soft skills*? What learning strategies and approaches can be used to integrate the strengthening of Islamic values with the development of social and emotional skills.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the role and learning strategies of Islamic Religious Education in developing students' *soft skills* as a provision to face social, academic, and professional challenges in the future.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive type of research. This approach was chosen because it is suitable for revealing in depth the process of *developing soft skills* in the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, which cannot be

measured quantitatively but must be understood through the meaning of the behavior, interaction, and experience of students and teachers.

This research was carried out for two months, from March to April 2025. The location of the research was chosen purposively, namely at one of the Tsanawiyah Madrasah in Padangsidempuan City, North Sumatra, which has been known to actively implement Islamic character-based education in its learning activities.

The target of this research is all elements involved in the PAI learning process that have the potential to encourage the development of *soft skills*. The research subjects consist of teachers of Islamic Religious Education subjects and grade VIII students who are actively involved in learning activities and religious extracurricular activities at school.

The research procedure began by observing the implementation of PAI learning in the classroom, followed by in-depth interviews with teachers and several students, as well as documentation of teaching tools such as Teaching Modules and learning media used. This process is carried out in stages to gain a complete understanding of the strategies for strengthening *soft skills* carried out by educators.

The main data in this study was obtained from the results of field observations, interviews, and supporting documents. The instruments used in data collection are observation guidelines, semi-structured interview guidelines, and document analysis formats. The instrument is designed to capture data on the Islamic values taught, the learning methods used, and the students' responses to the learning process.

The data collection technique is carried out by triangulation method, which combines observation, interviews, and documentation to ensure the accuracy of information. Meanwhile,

the data analysis technique uses an interactive analysis model that includes three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The entire analysis process is carried out continuously during the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research aims to explore how Islamic religious education can develop *soft skills* in students, as well as what strategies can be applied to integrate social and emotional skills in the learning process. Based on observations and interviews with teachers and students, some important findings can be described as follows.

Definition of Soft Skills

Soft skills are personal advantages that are affective, complementing technical mastery (*hard skills*). These abilities include non-technical aspects such as communication, socialization, and self-control. Essentially, *soft skills* enable individuals to understand themselves, manage their thoughts, speech, attitudes, and actions according to social norms, and interact effectively in the living and work environment. *Soft skills* play a crucial role in success and balanced personal formation (Sapriadi, 2022).

Soft skills are personal advantages that are affective and non-technical, essential to maximize performance and interact effectively. Berthall (in Sutanto) defines it as personal and interpersonal behavior that develops individual potential through aspects such as training, teamwork, initiative, and decision-making, becoming the basic capital for student development. Meanwhile, KBBI defines *soft skills* as sociological aspects related to emotional intelligence, including personality traits, social abilities, communication, personal habits,

friendliness, and optimism that affect relationships with others (Sapriadi, 2022).

Based on these definitions, it can be concluded that *soft skills* are a series of personal and interpersonal abilities that are affective and non-technical, which affect the way a person thinks, acts, interacts, and manages himself and his relationships with others. These abilities play an important role in maximizing an individual's potential, improving performance, and achieving success in both a personal and professional environment.

Soft Skills Distribution

In the context of teacher competence, soft skills include two main dimensions, namely *intrapersonal skills* that refer to personality competencies, and interpersonal skills related to social competence. The personality of teachers is a unique characteristic that is reflected in their attitudes and behaviors, becoming the focus of psychological studies to understand human behavior. Meanwhile, *interpersonal skills* are the ability of teachers to build and maintain effective relationships with others, which is manifested in the ability to communicate effectively, motivate, cooperate, lead, have charisma, and mediate. This social competence reflects the ability of teachers to interact effectively in the school environment and the community. Khoiriyyah & Syukron (2021) also highlighted the importance of social competence for teachers in communicating with students, colleagues, principals, and the community, as well as establishing continuous two-way communication with students' parents for more effective monitoring of character development.

Teacher Soft Skills Development

Ramayulis identifies important aspects in developing teachers' *soft skills*, starting from the intrapersonal dimension:

1. The Power of Professional Awareness: Teachers need to have a deep awareness of the meaning of their profession for themselves, their families, students, parents, society, and the nation. The top priority is to educate, prioritizing tasks except in urgent conditions.
2. Purpose Power: Every teacher's action should be directed and have a clear purpose. Teachers need to have visions, hopes, and ideals, and strive to make them happen.
3. Power of Belief: Belief is a key driver of success. Faith spurs enthusiasm, leaves the results of efforts to God, and strengthens confidence in achieving goals.
4. The Power of Love: A love for the profession will encourage teachers to work optimally and responsibly, educate students with compassion and serve wholeheartedly.
5. The Power of Positive Energy: Every individual has the potential for positive energy. Teachers need to develop this potential to motivate themselves and encourage goodness in carrying out their duties.
6. Power of Concentration: Concentration is essential to achieving success. Teachers need to manage factors that interfere with concentration, both physiological, emotional, motivational, and psychological.
7. Decision Power: Facing the complexity of the world of education requires the ability of teachers to make the right decisions. Self-awareness of the profession will ease the burden of tasks and make it easier to achieve educational goals (Bunga Pradany, et al., 2024).

In addition to *intrapersonal skills*, the development of *interpersonal skills* is also crucial. Ramayulis explains several ways to improve these skills: multiplying smiles, being appreciative, being an active listener, creating a cooperative environment, being a good mediator, communicating clearly, having a healthy sense of humor, being empathetic, and avoiding unproductive complaints.

In the context of Javanese culture, teachers are figures who are "admired and imitated" which means that all their actions and words become role models for students. Therefore, teachers should act thoughtfully and be aware of the impact on student development. Thus, *soft skills* can be defined as a person's ability to manage attitudes, personalities, and habits in the process of conveying material and interacting (Jaenuri, 2017).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research that has been conducted, it can be concluded that this study highlights the importance of *soft skills* as a crucial aspect that complements hard *skills*, influencing the way individuals think, act, interact, and manage themselves and their relationships. In the context of education, especially for teachers, *soft skills* are divided into two main dimensions: *intrapersonal skills* related to personality competencies and self-management, and *interpersonal skills* that emphasize social competence and the ability to build effective relationships. The development of *teachers' soft skills* involves strengthening professional awareness, goals, beliefs, love for work, positive energy, concentration, and decision-making skills. In addition, improving *interpersonal skills* can be done through positive behaviors such as increasing smiles, being

appreciative, being an active listener, and building a collaborative environment.

This research also emphasizes that teachers as exemplary figures are "admired and imitated" have a great responsibility in developing *soft skills* not only in themselves but also in students. The ability of teachers to manage attitudes, personalities, and habits in interacting and delivering material indirectly becomes learning for students. Therefore, the development of teachers' *soft skills* is essential in creating a conducive learning environment and preparing students with the social and emotional skills needed for future success.

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