Soft skills of educators in Islamic education

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Abstract
Soft skills are personal strengths related to non-technical aspects, such as the ability to communicate, socialize, collaborate, and control emotions. Soft skills include individual skills in building relationships with others (interpersonal skills) as well as the ability to manage oneself (intrapersonal skills). This study aims to explore the role of soft skills in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning and strategies for developing them in the context of Islamic education. The method used is a qualitative approach with a library research type, where data is collected from various secondary sources such as books, articles, journals, and related magazines. Data analysis was carried out by considering the soft skills required in PAI learning based on previous research findings, while also linking various learning media that can support the development of students' soft skills. The results of the analysis indicate that effective media include audiovisual technology, media that support material understanding, and the active role of teachers and parents as facilitators in the learning process. Thus, the combination of appropriate media and the support of a conducive learning environment are important factors in optimally developing students' soft skills.
Keywords: soft skills, Islamic Religious Education, skills, communication, critical thinking.

The changing times in the world of education are an unavoidable reality that requires an appropriate response. History shows that education continues to evolve over time, adapting to social dynamics, technology, and societal needs. Therefore, efforts to improve the quality of education are crucial to ensure the younger generation is able to face global challenges and contribute to national development.

One important step in advancing education is to refine the national education system to keep pace with current developments. An adaptive education system emphasizes not only the transfer of knowledge but also the development of character, critical thinking, creativity, and essential social skills for students.

Research conducted by Harvard University, the Carnegie Foundation, and the Stanford Research Center in 2010 showed that educational success is not solely determined by technical abilities (hard skills). Today, educational success also depends heavily on an individual's ability to self-manage and interact with others, known as soft skills (Iskandarsyah & Abdul Fattah Nasution, 2024). This finding provides an important foundation for modern education to emphasize the development of soft skills in a balanced manner with hard skills.

In general, soft skills can be defined as a person's interpersonal skills and self-management skills, which contribute to optimal performance. Soft skills are important not only in academic settings but also in social and professional life, as they determine how well a person adapts to their environment and effectively collaborates with others.

In the context of teacher competency, intrapersonal skills are reflected in personality competency, while interpersonal skills are reflected in social competency. Examples of intrapersonal skills include honesty, responsibility, tolerance, respect for others, cooperation, fairness, decision-making, problem-solving, change management, stress management, time management, self-transformation, and tolerance (Sarpandi, 2022).

Meanwhile, interpersonal skills encompass negotiation, presentation, mediation, leadership, effective communication with others, and empathy. These two skills complement each other, as intrapersonal skills form a person's internal foundation, while interpersonal skills enable individuals to express and apply these abilities in social interactions.

In Indonesia, current education tends to focus on cognitive aspects, often neglecting affective and psychomotor aspects. As a result, many students possess high academic intelligence but lack behaviors that reflect moral values, such as discipline, honesty, creativity, and responsibility.

Various discourses on character education have begun to emerge as a solution to these problems. Character education is believed to be able to shape a well-rounded personality while instilling essential moral values in everyday life. In this context, character

education and soft skills development are closely related, as character reflects how soft skills are applied in practice.

In the era of globalization, developing soft skills has become crucial for human resource success. The modern workplace demands individuals not only possess technical skills, but also the ability to adapt, communicate, lead, and collaborate effectively in cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary teams.

Strengthening students' soft skills can be achieved through various educational strategies, including project-based learning, group discussions, simulations, and the use of technology and audiovisual media. These strategies are designed to develop social, communication, leadership, and critical thinking skills that will be useful throughout students' lives.

The roles of teachers and parents are also crucial in developing soft skills. Teachers act as facilitators and role models, while parents support character building through the instilling of positive values at home. Collaboration between schools and families ensures consistent and sustainable development of students' soft skills.

Thus, developing soft skills in education is not merely complementary, but a key component that must be balanced with mastery of hard skills. Systematic efforts to integrate character education and soft skills can create a young generation that is intelligent, creative, responsible, and ready to face global challenges (Arif Amanda et al., 2020).

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with library research, focusing on understanding the concept, development, and implementation of soft skills in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) based on a literature review. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allowed researchers to explore the phenomenon in depth, understand the educational context, and analyze the relationship between soft skills theory, character education, and existing educational practices. Library research was used as the primary data collection method, given the conceptual nature of this study and its reliance on secondary sources.

The data sources for this research comprise a variety of relevant literature, including books, scientific articles, national and international journals, theses, educational magazines, and official documents related to Islamic Religious Education and soft skills development. Sources were selected based on relevance, credibility, and currency, particularly research published within the last ten years to ensure the data used aligns with contemporary educational developments.

Data collection techniques were conducted through documentation studies and in-depth reading of each literature. Researchers recorded relevant information regarding the definition of soft skills, types of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, the role of teachers and parents in soft skills development, and learning strategies and media that support soft skills development in students. Furthermore, this study

also identified challenges and solutions in implementing soft skills in Islamic Religious Education environments.

The collected data was then analyzed using content analysis techniques. The analysis was conducted systematically through several stages: organizing the data based on main themes, reducing the data to eliminate irrelevant information, categorizing the data according to soft skills, character education, and learning media, and interpreting the data to identify patterns, relationships, and meanings within the existing literature. This analysis not only emphasized descriptive aspects but also linked findings from various sources to provide a comprehensive understanding of soft skills development in Islamic Religious Education.

Data validity was maintained through source triangulation, which involves comparing information from various sources to ensure consistency and accuracy. Furthermore, researchers considered author credibility, year of publication, and publisher reputation to ensure data quality. The analysis is expected to provide a clear picture of soft skills development strategies, the role of learning media, and the contribution of teachers and parents in shaping the character of outstanding students.

Thus, this research method enables researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of soft skills in the context of Islamic Religious Education in a systematic, logical, and scientific manner, while also being the basis for recommendations for developing relevant and applicable educational strategies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Definition and scope of soft skills in Islamic education

Etymologically, the term "soft skills" comes from the English words "soft" and "skills." The word "soft" has several meanings, including soft, pliable, weak, gentle, smooth, tender, and easy. Meanwhile, the word "skills" refers to abilities or skills. Therefore, simply put, soft skills can be understood as soft or subtle abilities, which are so abstract that they are difficult to perceive through the human senses (Yulianti et al., 2023).

Soft skills are personal strengths related to non-technical aspects, such as communication, socializing, and self-control. These skills encompass various components and indicators that are important to understand, as they represent affective abilities that individuals possess beyond formal technical mastery in a specific field. Soft skills help individuals gain acceptance in social and professional environments, while also having a significant impact on individual success and the development of a balanced personality alongside hard skills.

In short, soft skills can be defined as non-cognitive abilities that help someone understand their psychological state, manage their speech, thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors according to societal norms, and communicate and interact effectively within their environment (Sarpandi, 2022). These skills are an important foundation for shaping character and improving one's quality of life, both academically and socially.

Education observers argue that the current implementation of national education exhibits various weaknesses. This is evident not only in the lack of improvement in students' intelligence and skills, but also in the moral degradation that impacts the formation of character and national identity in the younger generation. The overemphasis on hard skills has resulted in education focusing more on technical abilities than on strengthening values and soft skills.

This condition is one of the main causes of the low quality of students holistically. Therefore, an educational strategy is needed that integrates technical abilities and strengthens soft skills. This way, the quality of students as an educational output can be significantly and equally improved. The basic assumption of this thinking is that the greater a student's mastery of soft skills, the better their mastery of hard skills will be (Rachman & Sinthiya, 2022).

The ultimate goal is to produce complete Indonesians, possessing high intellectual abilities, robust skills, and grounded in strong moral values, including Islamic moral values. This aims to align educational outcomes with the goals of national education while also preparing the younger generation to face global challenges with strong character.

The concept of soft skills is essentially a developmental development of emotional intelligence. Soft skills can be understood as an individual's ability to manage themselves internally (intrapersonal skills) and interact with others (interpersonal skills), thus becoming a person capable of achieving optimal performance.

According to Berthal, soft skills are personal and interpersonal behaviors that develop and maximize human performance. Meanwhile, Ikhsan and Aryanti define soft skills as invisible abilities that are essential for achieving individual success. Thus, soft skills are abstract yet crucial for a person's success in various aspects of life (Nuryanto & Badaruddin, 2019).

Facing rapid technological developments and change, today's generation requires several key soft skills to adapt. These skills are essential for facing 21st-century challenges and optimizing individual potential in various social, academic, and professional contexts.

First, communication skills are the ability to convey opinions, ideas, knowledge, and concepts to others through various means, whether verbally, in writing, or visually. Effective communication skills are fundamental to building interpersonal relationships and conveying information clearly and effectively.

Second, critical thinking skills are the ability to analyze problems, find solutions, and make appropriate decisions when faced with various situations. These skills are essential for individuals to objectively assess information and make rational decisions in both everyday life and the workplace.

Third, creative thinking skills include the ability to generate new ideas and create innovative solutions. Creativity not only drives innovation but also helps individuals find new approaches to problem-solving. Fourth, collaboration skills are the ability to work

together, adapt, synergize, be responsible, and respect differences among team members, thus creating a harmonious and productive work environment (Mahmudah, 2023).

Soft Skills in Islamic Religious Education

As time goes by, the world of education faces unique challenges related to the needs of each student in the learning process. In the 21st century, students are required to possess skills relevant to global demands, including critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and effective communication. To achieve these goals, education needs to integrate various complementary approaches, including philosophy, cognitive psychology, and education itself.

The philosophical approach to education emphasizes standards of thinking and logical foundations for understanding learning concepts. This approach helps students develop systematic, critical, and reflective thinking. Meanwhile, the cognitive psychology approach emphasizes understanding students' behavior and thought processes, allowing teachers to tailor learning strategies to their individual characteristics and mental abilities. These two approaches, when combined with educational principles, form a comprehensive learning framework.

The application of soft skills in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning can be achieved through various strategies. One such strategy is the discussion method, which has the potential to enhance students' critical thinking skills. In discussions, students are expected to solve problems by utilizing their own experience and knowledge, enabling them to not rely solely on the opinions of their peers but also to express their views verbally and systematically.

In addition to critical thinking, students' creativity also needs to be developed in a structured manner. It's important to understand the difference between aptitude-related and non-aptitude-related creativity. Aptitude-related creativity requires students to make sound decisions when facing problems and generate new, relevant ideas. Non-aptitude-related creativity, on the other hand, relates to emotional and motivational aspects, such as imagination, initiative, independent thinking, and curiosity, which drive innovation.

Soft skills generally consist of two main aspects: an individual's ability to interact socially (interpersonal skills) and self-management (intrapersonal skills). Both aspects are equally important in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning to develop a balanced and competent student character.

Interpersonal skills in the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) encompass good interpersonal skills, such as avoiding hurting others' feelings, avoiding hostility, fostering tolerance, and maintaining unity among students. These skills help create a harmonious learning environment conducive to character development.

On the other hand, intrapersonal skills relate to an individual's ability to understand and manage themselves. Examples of these skills include self-awareness, goal-focus, self-

confidence, concentration, and the ability to make appropriate decisions in various situations.

Developing these two types of soft skills simultaneously enables students to be better prepared for the challenges of learning and social interactions. Students with strong soft skills are better able to manage emotions, resolve conflicts, and collaborate effectively with peers.

Furthermore, the application of soft skills in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) also encourages students to instill moral and ethical values consistent with Islamic teachings. This not only supports student personality development but also fosters responsible, tolerant, and empathetic character traits.

Learning strategies that focus on developing soft skills can include group projects, discussions, simulations, and the use of interactive technology. These methods provide students with the opportunity to experiment, express ideas, and learn from real-life experiences.

Teachers play a crucial role as facilitators and role models in the development of soft skills. Teachers not only deliver material but also provide examples of how interpersonal and intrapersonal skills are applied in everyday life. Parents also play a crucial role in supporting this process by instilling positive values at home.

Thus, developing soft skills in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is an integral part of 21st-century education. With the right strategies, students will not only master academic material but also develop strong social, emotional, and character skills, thus preparing them to face the challenges of the modern world effectively and ethically (Yulianti et al., 2023).

Soft Skill Development in Islamic Education

According to the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language, the word "development" comes from the word "kembang," which means to open up, increase, and achieve perfection in personal, intellectual, and knowledge aspects. Development can be defined as a process, method, or action to gradually and systematically increase abilities, directed toward a desired goal. In the context of education, development is an important foundation for shaping the overall quality of students.

In terms of terminology, development refers to efforts to enhance theoretical, technical, conceptual, and moral abilities through education and training. This process involves logical and systematic learning design, with a framework that organizes learning activities to ensure outcomes align with established objectives (Iskandarsyah & Abdul Fattah Nasution, 2024).

A person's soft skills can be measured by their efforts to develop them. Soft skills will not develop optimally without the support of hard skills, and vice versa. Soft skills emerge when an individual discovers their true self and has a strong motivation to improve themselves and change their lifestyle for the better.

Soft skills are closely related to the balance of various abilities, as they encompass

character and personality traits that are formed internally. Soft skills attributes include values, motivation, behavior, character, habits, and attitudes, which vary from person to person depending on factors such as habits, ways of thinking, speaking, attitudes, and actions (Zahraini & Musbir, 2015; Mawardi, 2017).

Developing soft skills for teachers is crucial, as they play a vital role in guiding students and serving as role models. One way to achieve this is through teacher development, which aims to improve educators' skills and professional qualifications, thus furthering their professional growth.

Additionally, teachers can attend subject teacher meetings to discuss the concepts, meaning, and function of education and find solutions to existing deficiencies. This activity helps teachers carry out their duties more effectively and improves their competency.

Taking courses is also an important step for teachers in deepening their knowledge in their respective areas of expertise. Courses provide opportunities for teachers to update their knowledge, improve their skills, and change certain attitudes that support professional development (Nuryanto & Badaruddin, 2019).

In addition to formal training, teachers can improve their professionalism through mass or electronic media. Both print and electronic media provide new insights relevant to educational developments. Independent learning is also crucial, with teachers reading and selecting topics appropriate to their school's needs to adapt to the demands of modern education (Yuniendel, 2018).

In the context of developing students' soft skills, the role of teachers as role models is crucial. Teachers serve as visual aids for students to observe and imitate, particularly in interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. Parents also play a similar role in informal education, supporting the development of children's soft skills.

Research shows that the role of teachers and parents in developing interpersonal skills has a positive impact. The use of visual and motivational media, such as animations, prophetic stories, or online educational content, can strengthen students' moral values and character (Zulfikar, 2021).

Soft skills, particularly interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, can be developed through practical activities, such as competitions. For example, in Quran recitation competitions, instructors who focus solely on memorization often neglect the values of sportsmanship and introspection. Students who lose may not learn to accept defeat gracefully, even though values such as courage, sportsmanship, and a fighting spirit are crucial for developing.

Learning media is a highly strategic tool in developing soft skills. It can create targeted communication, stimulate student skills, and enhance the learning experience. In Islamic Religious Education (PAI), media are divided into visual, audio, and audiovisual media, each with specific functions to support effective learning (Nuryanto & Badaruddin, 2019).

The use of media in Islamic Religious

Education (PAI) learning must be systematic, tailored to student characteristics and needs. Combining various types of media has been shown to increase learning effectiveness and help students develop essential skills, both interpersonal and intrapersonal (Iskandarsyah & Abdul Fattah Nasution, 2024; Fitriyah et al., 2023). With the right strategy, learning media can become a key tool in developing competent and balanced soft skills in students.

The Role of Islamic Religious Education in Developing Soft Skills

Islamic education plays a crucial role in developing an individual's soft skills. This role encompasses the alignment of Islamic ethical, moral, and spiritual values with the interpersonal skills essential for both personal and professional life. Through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachings, students are guided to understand the importance of behaving in accordance with moral values and interacting positively with others, allowing soft skills to develop alongside character development.

One of the primary contributions of Islamic Religious Education is the development of effective communication skills. By teaching the principles of politeness, respect for others, and tactful speech, Islamic Religious Education encourages students to recognize the importance of clear, polite, and empathetic communication. These communication skills form the foundation for harmonious and productive interactions in various social and academic contexts (Lusyana, 2024).

Beyond communication, Islamic

Religious Education (PAI) also plays a significant role in developing teamwork skills. The concepts of ukhuwah (brotherhood) and mutual cooperation taught in Islam serve as a foundation for students to understand the importance of working together and supporting each other in achieving common goals. Through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, the inclusive attitudes and collaborative skills needed in a complex society can be continuously cultivated (Granada, 2020).

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) also contributes to the development of ethically based leadership skills. Students are taught that leadership is not just about decision-making, but also about serving and benefiting others. Islamic leadership values, such as justice, trustworthiness, and responsibility, serve as the foundation for developing leaders with integrity and trustworthiness (Lusyana, 2024).

Furthermore, Islamic Religious Education supports the development of empathy and tolerance. By understanding Islamic teachings that emphasize universal values, students are encouraged to appreciate differences and empathize with the experiences and perspectives of others. These soft skills enable students to work effectively in multicultural environments and contribute to a harmonious society.

The role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) extends beyond the individual to the social level. Integrating Islamic values into the educational process helps shape a society grounded in ethics and morality. Thus, PAI provides a foundation for cooperation, solidarity,

and harmony in community life, enabling the character values developed by students to be transmitted to their communities.

Overall, understanding the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in developing soft skills emphasizes that religious education not only provides religious insight but also shapes individuals with strong character and essential interpersonal skills. Thus, students are not only prepared to face academic challenges but also able to adapt socially and professionally in the modern era (Yuliharti, 2019).

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion, it can be concluded that soft skills development is a crucial aspect of 21st-century education, relying not only on mastery of hard skills but also on interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. Soft skills include communication, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, empathy, tolerance, and ethical leadership, all of which contribute to the development of an individual's character and personality.

Islamic Religious Education plays a strategic role in developing students' soft skills, as it integrates Islamic moral, ethical, and spiritual values into the learning process. Through Islamic teachings, students learn to respect others, cooperate, empathize, be tolerant, and become just and responsible leaders. This makes Islamic Religious Education not only a means of mastering religious material but also a medium for character development and social skills

necessary for real life.

Furthermore, soft skills development can be supported by teachers and parents as role models, and through the use of appropriate learning media, including visual, audio, and audiovisual materials. This strategy helps students understand social and moral values in a practical way, allowing soft skills to be applied in everyday interactions and real-life situations.

Thus, effective education must integrate the development of soft skills with hard skills, leveraging the roles of Islamic Education (PAI), teachers, parents, and learning media. This approach ensures that students are not only academically intelligent but also possess mature personalities, strong social skills, and character grounded in Islamic moral values, thus preparing them to face the challenges of life in the modern era.

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