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Strengthening Religious Education at An-Nizam Private Middle School, Medan

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A B S T R A C T

This research aims to analyze the strengthening of worship education at An-Nizam Private Junior High School in Medan, focusing on the role of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers and the factors that support or hinder its implementation. The background of this study stems from the importance of shaping students' religious character amid modernization and the moral challenges faced by adolescents. Using a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method, data were collected through observations of religious activities, interviews with teachers, students, and school leaders, as well as documentation of the programs being implemented. The findings reveal that the school has carried out various structured worship programs, such as congregational Dhuha and Dhuhr prayers, Qur'an literacy sessions, Friday prayers for male students, Monday and Thursday voluntary fasting, Mabit (overnight spiritual enrichment), Qur'an memorization reinforcement (murajaah), and religious mentoring. In conclusion, worship education at the school has been implemented effectively due to the strong role of teachers and a supportive environment, although internal challenges from students still require further attention.

1. Introduction

Strengthening religious education in junior high schools is very important today due to its strong connection with the moral, spiritual, and social development of students. This strengthening can be achieved by deepening students' understanding of religious values, implementing religious activities, and developing students' character through spiritual aspects. In addition, this effort can be supported by integrating religious values into the curriculum, providing relevant teacher training, and organizing sustainable religious activities (Nahar, 2024) .

Worship is a spiritual activity performed by every Muslim as a form of devotion and obedience to Allah (SWT). The Qur'an provides clear guidance on how to properly carry out acts of worship. Therefore, understanding the concept of worship education in the Qur'an is essential so that Muslims can perform their worship in

accordance with Allah's commands (Haris, 2023). Worship in Islam also serves as a means of self-purification and spiritual cleansing. The Qur'an emphasizes the importance of being free from sin and wrongdoing. By understanding the concept of worship education in the Qur'an, Muslims can strive to purify themselves from bad deeds and draw closer to Allah SWT (Feriawan, 2024). As stated in the words of Allah (SWT) in Surah Az-Zariyat, verse 56:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ ﴿٥٦﴾

Meaning: *'And I did not create the jinn and humankind except that they worship Me"* (Kementerian Agama RI t.thn.)

Allah affirms in the Qur'an, in Surah Az-Zariyat verse 56, that the purpose of the creation of jinn and humans is none other than to worship Him: *"And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me."* This verse clearly establishes that the essence of human and jinn existence lies in servitude to Allah. Worship in this context is not limited to ritual acts alone, but encompasses a holistic submission, devotion, and obedience to all that Allah commands. It includes both outward actions such as prayer, fasting, and charity as well as inward aspects like sincerity, humility, and faith. True worship demands that one aligns every part of their life with divine guidance, making their entire existence an act of devotion (Kindarasa, 2020).

Worship education plays a crucial role in increasing human awareness of worship, helping individuals understand their existence as servants of God and encouraging wholehearted submission to Him. Education is one of the most important aspects in shaping quality human resources, especially in terms of faith and morality. This can be strengthened by enhancing Islamic Religious Education as a foundation for life. Therefore, it is important to include religious content in the curriculum, organize regular religious activities, and involve qualified religious teachers (Faris et al., 2025). The socialization of religious values can be carried out through character development and extracurricular activities related to worship practices, such as prayer, Qur'an literacy, muhadharah (religious speeches), fasting, and student participation in religious programs. These efforts aim to enhance students' spiritual understanding and awareness. Support from educators especially religious teachers and active participation from students in school religious programs are essential in strengthening worship education (Sakban & Sundawa, 2023).

The role of an Islamic Religious Education teacher is crucial in shaping students' personalities and guiding them toward a life aligned with Islamic values. As both educator and role model, the teacher is responsible for educating, teaching, and training instilling moral values, imparting knowledge, and developing skills (Yuslem et al., 2023). Teachers are also expected to act as second parents, earning students' trust and admiration, while contributing to the community by sharing knowledge to improve societal quality (Mukhtar, 2024). Allah (SWT) says in Surah Al-Ahzab [33]: 21 as follows:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِيْ رَسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ اُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللّٰهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْاٰخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللّٰهَ كَثِيْرًاۗ ﴿٢١﴾

Meaning: *Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah (Muhammad) you have a good example to follow, for those who hope for (the mercy of) Allah and the Last Day and remember Allah much*" (Kementerian Agama RI t.thn.)

The success of an Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teacher as a motivator can be seen in how effectively students are encouraged and inspired to perform acts of worship consistently and wholeheartedly (Amalia et al., 2024). A motivated student tends to view worship not as a burden, but as a meaningful and fulfilling practice. Motivation in this context is deeply connected to discipline; when students are internally driven and understand the purpose behind worship, they are more likely to be consistent, punctual, and sincere in carrying it out. The role of the IRE teacher is not limited to delivering religious material, but extends to being a role model, motivator, and problem-solver. Teachers must be able to identify the spiritual, emotional, and behavioral challenges faced by students and address them with wisdom and empathy (Mukhtar, 2024). As stated in the Hadith of the Prophet:

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسلم: إِنَّ اللهَ لَمْ يَبْعَثْنِيْ مُعْنِتاً وَلاَ مُتَعَنِّتًا وَلَكِنْ بَعَثَنِيْ مُعَلِّمًا مُيَسِّرًا

Meaning: *Aisyah narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "Indeed, Allah did not send me to be harsh or to cause harm, but He sent me as a teacher and one who makes things easy."* (H.R. Muslim no. 1475).

An-Nizam Private Junior High School, as one of the private educational institutions in Medan City, is committed to providing quality Islamic religious education to its students. The school is located in an area with high social and cultural diversity, which requires innovation in strengthening religious education so that it can be well accepted and implemented by all students. In reality, the decline in religious education among students has become an increasingly pressing issue that demands attention from various parties, including educators, parents, and society at large (Utari et al., 2024). This phenomenon reflects a complex dynamic, with several factors contributing to the decline in students' spiritual awareness regarding worship and the practice of religious values. These factors include a lack of seriousness in participating in religious activities, the absence of personal awareness in fulfilling worship obligations, and the rapid advancement of technology, which significantly influences religious education activities (Sirait & Pohan, 2022). Many students are more interested in using their gadgets, and limited time also becomes a barrier, as they often have other obligations that prevent them from fully focusing on religious education and participating wholeheartedly in worship education programs (Umar et al., 2025).

Previous research titled *"The Role of PAI Teachers in the Implementation of Dhuha Prayer for High School Students"* highlighted that schools must pay greater attention to and emphasize worship education, particularly the Dhuha prayer. In that study, teachers played the role of motivators, organizers, and facilitators, which was crucial in instilling discipline among students during the implementation of the

Dhuha prayer (Judge, 2023). The difference between the previous study and the current research lies in the focus. The previous research concentrated specifically on the Dhuha prayer, while this study focuses more broadly on both obligatory and sunnah prayers, as well as other religious activities (Masita & Rifa'i, 2024).

Despite a general decline in students' moral behavior, which makes it difficult to condition them in worship education activities, teachers continue to make their best efforts to raise students' awareness of the importance of fulfilling worship obligations (Lestari et al., 2023). Therefore, this research is important in providing a deeper understanding of the worship education strengthening programs developed by An-Nizam Private Junior High School in Medan, with the aim of enhancing students' understanding and practice of religious values. Based on the phenomena and data presented above, the researcher is interested in further analyzing how worship education is strengthened at An-Nizam Private Junior High School Medan, the contribution of Islamic Religious Education teachers in that process, and the supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of worship education strengthening activities.

The purpose of this research is to explore and analyze the efforts made to strengthen worship education at An-Nizam Private Junior High School in Medan, with a particular focus on the role of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in guiding and shaping students' religious behavior. This study aims to examine how various religious activities both obligatory and sunnah are implemented within the school environment, and how these practices contribute to the development of students' spiritual discipline and understanding of Islamic values. Furthermore, the research seeks to identify the specific roles played by IRE teachers as motivators, facilitators, and supervisors in these worship programs, as well as to investigate the factors that support or hinder the successful implementation of worship education initiatives.

2. Methodology

This research uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. Qualitative methods are a type of research based on post-positivism philosophy , where the researcher plays a key role in understanding the natural conditions of objects (Sugiyono, 2021). The phenomenological approach was chosen because it aims to understand the meaning of an individual's or group's life experiences regarding a particular phenomenon. In this context, the phenomenological approach is used to describe the experiences, perceptions, and meanings felt by the research subjects regarding the strengthening of religious education at An-Nizam Private Middle School, Medan.

This research was conducted at An-Nizam Private Junior High School located at Jl. Tuba II No. 62, Tegal Sari Mandala III, Medan Denai District, Medan City. The research activities lasted for two months, starting from March to May 2025. The main data sources came from informants consisting of Islamic Religious Education teachers, Worship Practice teachers, and students. In addition, data was also

obtained through documents related to the worship education program implemented at the school. The data collection techniques used included observation, interviews, and documentation studies. Observations were conducted to directly observe students' worship development activities in depth. Interviews were used to dig deeper into information to complement the observation results. Meanwhile, documentation studies aimed to analyze documents relevant to the worship development activities. Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman model , which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. To ensure data validity, triangulation techniques were used to cross-check the various data sources obtained (Rukminingsih, 2020).

3. Results and Discussion

The discussion in this study seeks to explore in depth how worship education is strengthened at An-Nizam Private Junior High School in Medan, particularly through the active role of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers. Based on the data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, it is evident that the school integrates religious practices not merely as formal routines, but as an essential part of its educational culture. Daily activities such as congregational Dhuha and Dhuhr prayers, Qur'an literacy sessions, fasting on Mondays and Thursdays, and Qur'an memorization are carried out regularly and are guided by teachers with dedication. These programs are not only intended to fulfill religious obligations but also serve as a means of building spiritual discipline, moral integrity, and a sense of responsibility among students.

IRE teachers play a central role in shaping students' attitudes toward worship. Their presence goes beyond classroom instruction, as they also act as role models, mentors, and motivators who guide students in practicing religious values both inside and outside the classroom. Through continuous encouragement, personal example, and direct involvement in religious activities, teachers help students internalize the importance of worship in everyday life. Moreover, the school environment which supports religious expression and provides adequate facilities for worship contributes significantly to the overall success of these programs. However, despite these efforts, some challenges persist, such as students' lack of seriousness or consistency in performing worship, which requires ongoing attention and innovative strategies from educators.

To explore how religious education is implemented and strengthened at An-Nizam Private Middle School, Medan, semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers, students, and the school principal. The questions aimed to capture insights about the school's strategies, challenges, and the perceived impact of religious programs on students' behavior and spirituality. These interview questions covered aspects such as daily practices, curriculum integration, parental involvement, and extracurricular activities. The complete set of interview questions is listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Interview Questions for Stakeholders Regarding Religious Education Strengthening

No.	Respondent	Interview Question
1	Teacher	How do you integrate religious values into daily teaching activities?
2	Teacher	What challenges do you face in implementing religious education programs?
3	Teacher	How do you assess students' progress in religious knowledge and practice?
4	Student	Which religious activities at school do you enjoy the most, and why?
5	Student	How do school programs influence your daily worship habits at home?
6	Student	What difficulties do you face when participating in religious programs?
7	Principal	What policies or initiatives has the school implemented to strengthen religious education?
8	Principal	How do you involve parents in supporting students' religious growth?
9	All Respondents	In your opinion, how has religious education at this school changed students' attitudes and behavior?

Strengthening Religious Education at An-Nizam Private Middle School, Medan

Based on the results of observations and interviews conducted with the Islamic Religious Education teacher who is also the researcher, An-Nizam Private Middle School Medan not only focuses on improving academic performance but also guides, educates, and nurtures students to develop strong worship character. This is achieved through various religious education strengthening programs, such as the daily implementation of Duha prayer, Qur'an literacy sessions every Friday and Saturday, congregational Dhuhr prayer, and *muhadharah* (public speaking practice) held in turns according to a set schedule. Other programs include Friday prayers for male students, fasting on Mondays and Thursdays along with monthly group iftar on the second Thursday, *Mabit* (overnight stay with Qur'an reflection) held every first Saturday–Sunday of the month, daily Qur'an memorization review (*muraja'ah*), and a short Islamic boarding program during the holy month of Ramadan. In accordance with what was conveyed by the Islamic Religious Education teacher, he say:

"Every time I enter the classroom, I bring the attendance list and the memorization deposit list of the students. Before the lesson begins, students are required to submit their Qur'an memorization to the teacher. This Qur'an memorization program aims to create a Qur'anic generation that memorizes and practices the Qur'an correctly in their daily lives. Once all students have finished submitting their memorization, the teaching and learning process begins. When the second bell rings, I instruct the students to go downstairs to perform the Duha prayer in congregation at the An-Nizam Mosque, also known as the Hajjah Sakdiyah Mosque. After completing the Duha prayer, students are allowed to take a break and return to class when the school bell rings. At the time for the Dhuhr prayer, I once again direct the students to go downstairs to perform the prayer in congregation and to bring their individual worship report books. All teachers are actively involved in helping to manage and supervise the students' worship activities. After the Dhuhr prayer, selected students are assigned to deliver a short lecture according to the predetermined schedule. During the lecture, other students are required to take notes on the key points being delivered."

The foundation for establishing the religious education strengthening program at An-Nizam Private Middle School Medan is due to the moral degradation and numerous complaints from parents and the community regarding the behavior and morals of today's children. The school has taken the initiative to address this issue by recognizing that students' worship habits at school are often very different from those at home. Not all students receive the same level of religious education at home, as they come from diverse family backgrounds. Some parents may not be sufficiently responsive to their children's religious education. Therefore, there is a need for external efforts, such as from the school, to create religious programs and instill consistent worship habits. These regular religious activities at school help students develop a sense of routine and build awareness to engage in positive actions and fulfill their religious obligations. The goal of this religious education strengthening program is not only for students to perform worship at school but also to develop the habit of doing so at home. This program aims to shape students' character, foster a sense of responsibility and discipline, and instill religious values so that they are kept away from negative behaviors (Lubis et al., 2021).

As for the extracurricular activities that support strengthening religious education at An-Nizam Private Middle School Medan , namely Al-Qur'an recitations and mentoring carried out every day Thursday, where during their mentoring given materials related strengthening worship education for increase outlook Islam specifically about worship, besides mentoring is also done For form religious and training character participant educate For Can come on stage speak in front of general, and of course to motivate they For more active practice religious values in life daily with good and right .

The contribution of Islamic Religious Education teachers in Strengthening Worship Education

Islamic Religious Education teachers play an important role in worship education by providing understanding of religious teachings, fostering worship habits, and serving as good role models. They also contribute to shaping students' character with noble morals and obedience to Allah SWT (Khofiyah, 2023). Based on interviews conducted by the researcher with an Islamic Religious Education teacher, it was found that the strengthening of religious education at An-Nizam Private Middle School Medan is not solely the responsibility of Islamic Religious Education teachers. Rather, all teachers even the principal are equally responsible for supporting the implementation of worship education programs. All teachers are expected to provide guidance, supervision, and motivation to students so they remain diligent in performing acts of worship.

In addition to the motivation given by teachers, the school also collaborates with parents to ensure students are supervised and supported in their worship practices at home. Students are given special worship report books to record and evaluate their religious practices while at school. Moreover, the school regularly invites external parties, such as motivators or guest speakers, to instill religious values and further strengthen the worship education program for students at An-Nizam Private Middle School Medan. The evaluation of the success of religious education in the

school is carried out through monthly meetings, which involve subject teachers, especially those teaching religious subjects such as Islamic Religious Education, Worship Practice, Tahfidz, and Al-Qur'an. In these meetings, teachers discuss students' responses and development in relation to religious learning. This effort aligns with the guidance of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who said:

مَنْ رَعِيَّةٍ اسْتُرْعِيَهُ اللَّهُ يَمُوتُ يَوْمَ يَمُوتُ وَهُوَ غَاشٌّ لِرَعِيَّتِهِ إِلَّا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ الْجَنَّةَ

Meaning: " *Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you will be held accountable for those under your care."* (HR. Bukhari dan Muslim)

This hadith emphasizes that teachers have a great responsibility in guiding, supervising, and evaluating the development of their students, especially in the aspect of religious education. If there is alignment between the Islamic Religious Education material and worship practices, the Islamic Religious Education teacher collaborates with the Worship Practice teacher. The goal of this collaboration is to ensure that students do not only receive theoretical knowledge but also engage in practical worship activities, either inside or outside the classroom, in accordance with the material being taught. In accordance with what was conveyed by the Worship Practice teacher, he say:

" When I enter the classroom and begin the learning process, I do not focus heavily on delivering theoretical material. Instead, I only present the key points, and then immediately assign students to engage in direct practice related to the topic being studied. Through this method, I train students to develop positive habits and deepen their understanding of worship. This habituation aims to ensure that students not only understand the theory behind worship, but are also able to apply it in their daily lives."

Based on the results of interviews conducted by the researcher with the Worship Practice teacher, the implementation of the religious education strengthening program established by the school clearly has an impact on student assessment. The teacher applies a system of rewards and consequences in the implementation of students' worship practices, which are monitored through evaluations of their worship activities. All of this is in line with the element of discipline (Munawar et al., 2024). The reward given by the teacher for students who consistently perform worship, such as the Duha prayer, is in the form of additional marks or bonus points. As for the consequences, there are no physical punishments or special penalties. For students who fail to follow the rules, the school collaborates with the guidance and counseling teacher to approach the student, identify the reasons behind the violation, and find a solution to prevent recurrence (Rinda Fauzian et al., 2021). To create a deterrent effect for students who break the rules in worship activities, the teacher may assign them to memorize verses of the Qur'an or hadith and submit them on the same day. Through this method, students will gradually develop greater discipline in carrying out religious activities and minimize rule violations at school.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Strengthening Worship Education

Supporting factors in religious education include adequate facilities and infrastructure, full support from both parents and the school, as well as the active involvement of religious communities. In addition, students' interest and motivation, along with a harmonious relationship between teachers, students, and parents, are also crucial. Students play a central role as the main actors in these activities, while parental concern becomes one of the strongest forms of support in the effort to strengthen religious education. This is because parents help foster their children's awareness and willingness to engage in religious activities. Furthermore, the commitment of teachers greatly influences the effectiveness of implementing religious education programs. Teachers hold an important role as role models, supervisors, and companions for students (Faris et al., 2025).

Based on the results of interviews with Islamic Religious Education teachers, several supporting and inhibiting factors were identified in the implementation of religious education. Supporting factors include the availability of worship facilities, such as a comfortable prayer room and adequate prayer equipment, which help students perform their worship solemnly and comfortably. Meanwhile, one of the main inhibiting factors is the lack of internal awareness among students to fulfill their religious obligations. This makes it difficult to supervise them during worship activities. Many students are often lazy or reluctant to participate in congregational prayers for various reasons. Limited time also hinders students from deeply engaging with religious education. Additionally, the influence of gadgets significantly impacts students' religious focus and discipline. As has been delivered by the Islamic Religious Education teacher, he say :

Inhibiting factors are always present in religious education activities, but the unity and dedication of the teachers at An-Nizam Private Middle School, Medan, play a key role in overcoming these challenges. Teachers not only guide and supervise students but also actively participate in religious activities, setting a positive example. Their discipline and obedience to school rules serve as a model for students, encouraging them to follow the same path."

From the interview results above, although there are various inhibiting factors in religious education activities, teachers consistently strive to overcome these obstacles through various solutions, such as fostering students' awareness by involving parents and the community. Addressing challenges in religious education is certainly not easy, but teachers are required to be more patient and apply a variety of strategies. Some of the strategies that can be implemented include understanding the character of each student, creating an enjoyable learning atmosphere, and continuously providing motivation to the students (Hasballah, 2020).

4. Conclusion

Based on discussion by researchers show above so can withdrawn conclusion that The strengthening of religious education at An-Nizam Private Middle School Medan is a strategic effort to shape students' religious character and noble morals. Through various worship programs such as Duha prayer, Dhuhr congregational

prayer, fasting on Mondays and Thursdays, Qur'anic literacy, overnight stays, Qur'an review sessions, and religious mentoring, the school is committed to increasing students' spiritual awareness and their sense of responsibility as Muslims to fulfill their religious obligations. The success of these programs is greatly influenced by the role of teachers especially Islamic Religious Education teachers who act as motivators, mentors, and role models in guiding students to consistently perform acts of worship. Several supporting and inhibiting factors affect the implementation of religious education at the school. Among the supporting factors are the availability of proper worship facilities, such as comfortable prayer rooms and adequate equipment, which help students worship with focus and comfort. However, one of the main inhibiting factors is the lack of internal awareness among some students regarding their worship obligations, which makes it challenging to encourage consistent participation in religious activities. Addressing this issue requires continuous effort, patience, and collaboration between teachers, parents, and the broader school community.

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