

Revitalizing Religious Programs in Elementary Schools Post Covid-19

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ABSTRACT

Religious programs cannot be carried out due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. However, after the repeal of PPKM, the school resumed carrying out the religious program. This study aims to analyze the school's efforts to revitalize religious programs when schools are allowed to hold face-to-face learning in line with the decline in the spread of Covid-19. The research method used is descriptive qualitative. Research informants are school principals, PAI teachers, and students. Collecting data through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis through data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. This study found that the revitalization of religious programs was carried out after the program was not implemented optimally or even could not be implemented due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. This revitalization is essential as a form of school responsibility in strengthening character education, one of which is the religious program. The revitalized programs are 1) Quran recitation at the 0th hour, 2) commemoration of Islamic holidays, and 3) Yasin recitation. On the other hand, the school also revitalizes the teachers' understanding of the importance of religious education, teacher professionalism, and moral degradation as a challenge. Revitalizing religious programs can be done after the end of Covid-19 by revitalizing the program and teacher's understanding so that it can educate students' character through religious education in schools.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic has been spreading for 3 years in Indonesia since the end of 2019 (Retaduari, 2022; Subagyo & Dewi, 2022). The virus has had a devastating impact on various sectors, including the economy, social, and education (Al-Fatih & Aulia, 2021; Azhara & Kartini, 2022). One of the real impacts in the world of education is learning from face-to-face in the classroom to online learning (Rigianti, 2020). Not only that, all learning activities outside the classroom were eliminated, including religious programs at school.

Religious programs in schools are extracurricular activities or often called religious extracurriculars. These activities include several activities with the aim of forming students with character, one of which is religious character. Extracurricular activities are a process of perfecting education at the cognitive level towards the affective and psychomotor aspects so that it can bridge the problem of school education with education in the family and the challenges of globalization for developing countries such as Indonesia (Hambali & Yulianti, 2018). The presence of religious programs can minimize immoral attitudes in students and form students with good morals.

Extracurricular activities answer the discussion of Islamic Religious Education lesson content which gets a limited time allocation every week, while the demands of society require the quality of students to be experts in the field of science but also master the religious field. This reading has sparked the founders and teachers of schools that place religious traditions as part of the school curriculum and sparked community boredom which has led to the emergence of the phenomenon of deviant behaviour of adolescents who adorn the news of electronic media and social media in the form of uncivilized behaviour, poor praiseworthy morals and low motivation to learn to read the Qur'an (Hambali & Yulianti, 2018). Schools are given the authority to organize religious programs.

Religious programs in schools can be carried out in various forms such as Pesantren Kilat, Habituation of Good Morals, Completion of Reading and Writing al-Qur'an, Ramadan Worship, Spiritual Tourism, Islamic Spiritual Activities, PAI Skills and Arts Week, Celebration of Islamic Holidays (Agama, 2009). This regulation is general and flexible. In its implementation, each educational institution in each region can develop other types of religious extracurricular activities and can adapt and develop their own according to their respective needs, situations, conditions, and potentials that are inconsistent with the objectives of national education and the objectives of organizing Islamic education (Hambali & Yulianti, 2018). However, during the Covid-19 Pandemic, this activity could not be carried out optimally. Therefore, the religious program needs to be revitalized because it cannot be implemented for almost 3 years. In addition, religious education at home and in the community is not optimal, thus providing opportunities for children to engage in disgraceful behaviour. According to Saidah et al. (2022), the environment is an inhibiting factor for parents because the environment is still lacking in implementing Islamic religious education. As well as the role of parents in fostering children's spirituality, even though it has been carried out in accordance with the teachings and rules of the Islamic religion based on the data obtained, it is still lacking. So the implementation of Islamic religious education has not fulfilled the maximum.

There have been many studies on the revitalization of religious programs, including Munawaroh's research (2020) about the revitalization of the nation's character through PAI, Asrin (2020) regarding the revitalization of religious activities, Rozi (2022) about the revitalization of character education, Sunarso (2020), and Firdaus (2020) about revitalizing the value of PAI. In contrast to previous studies, this research will focus on analyzing school efforts to revitalize religious programs when schools are allowed to hold face-to-face learning in line with the decline in the spread of Covid-19. This research is important to provide information on how religious activities can be carried out again.

2. METHODS

This type of research is descriptive qualitative research with a case study approach that aims to reveal the facts of the revitalization of religious programs in schools. This research was conducted in

one of the public elementary schools in Palembang City. There were 3 informants in this study, namely the principal and teacher of Islamic Religious Education. In collecting data using observation and interviews. Then the data was analyzed by data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. *Revitalization of Religious Programs*

Religious programs in schools may vary according to the prevailing religious teachings and culture. However, religious programs in schools generally aim to educate students about religious and cultural teachings. The aim is to help students understand and respect the teachings of different religions and cultures and help them become tolerant and dignified individuals. This is as stated by WP:

"Religious programs in schools are part of extracurriculars that aim to understand religious teachings and instil character according to religious teachings by carrying out various activities."

MW also stated:

"Besides religious education in class, schools also add extracurricular religious programs outside the classroom. The goal is to instil religious teachings in students so that they become students with noble characters.

Religious programs aim to instil religious -based character. Religion has played its role in an effort to fortify students from negative influences and do commendable morals, including religious. Students are equipped with religious teachings and positive habituation in schools.

Planting Character in Children Done Early means participating in preparing a generation of nation with character, which is expected to be able to lead the nation and make a civilized country, uphold the noble values of the nation with good character and character and become a generation of high knowledge and decorate themselves with faith and piety (Ainiyah & Wibawa, 2013). Religious extracurricular activities are very helpful in improving students' ability in Islamic religious education. With the existence of religious extracurricular activities, students have the provision to keep themselves away from various negative influences due to globalization of life (Marpuah, 2016).

The implementation of religious programs was hampered and even could not be carried out during the Covid-19 Pandemic due to the government's social restriction policy. Schools shift learning from offline learning to online learning. What can be carried out is only for learning Islamic religious education in online classes, while all extracurricular activities are stopped until there is a government policy. This was disclosed by WP:

"The Covid-19 pandemic has stopped extracurricular activities, one of which is religious activities. We focus on intracurricular learning through applications such as Zoom and WhatsApp".

ES also stated:

"Religious activities such as reciting the Koran and reading Yasin's letter in the school field have been temporarily suspended to support government policies so that the spread of the virus can be controlled. We religious teachers only teach learning materials online."

Covid-19 made religious extracurricular activities temporarily stopped. COVID-19 pandemic has influenced many aspects of life, including religious programs in schools. Some obstacles that arise in religious school programs during the Covid-19 Pandemic include social restrictions because many religious activities involve students in large quantities. To overcome these obstacles, some schools have been looking for alternative solutions to carry out religious programs, such as by conducting religious activities online or by limiting the number of participants in physical religious activities. According to Suherman (2020), Islamic religious education activities in schools including religious programs cannot

be implemented optimally and even have an impact on the unwillingness of students to carry out their responsibilities as Muslims.

The Covid-19 pandemic has shown a decrease in cases day by day, and this situation has prompted the government to renew its policy by re-implementing face-to-face learning in schools while still adhering to health protocols. Schools began to carry out extracurricular activities, such as religious activities gradually.

Religious programs that were revised after the allowance of face-to-face learning at school are 1) reciting the Quran at the 0th hour, 2) commemoration of Islamic holidays; and 3) reading Yasin. However, in its implementation, the school community must adhere to health protocols, including wearing masks during school activities. This statement was expressed by MW:

"In this semester, schools are allowed face-to-face learning at school with 100% students. So that religious activities have been carried out again. In hour 0, students recite the Qur'an and recite Yasin every Friday."

Also disclosed by WP:

"Almost 3 years, learning activities are not optimal because of Covid-19. All extracurricular activities are temporarily suspended. Therefore, after a new policy from the Government, schools revived religious extracurricular activities. This is important to do because many students are exposed to the negative effects of the internet and smartphones. Religious activities, it is expected to fortify oneself from negative influences and become students who have a noble character.

The details of the implementation of these activities are:

1. Reciting the Quran at the 0th hour
Every day before learning activities in the classroom take place, at hour 0 or 06.40 to 07.00. Students are required to read Iqra or Al-Qur'an supervised by the class teacher or subject teacher. Each student is checked one by one by the teacher. This activity aims to prepare and familiarize students with reading the Qur'an in everyday life. Another goal is for students to love the Qur'an and enjoy reading it.
2. Celebration of Islamic Holidays
In addition to classroom learning activities, the school regularly organizes PHBI. The activity carried out is the commemoration of the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad or known as Mualid Nabi. This activity will be filled with various performances prepared by students with the guidance of PAI teachers. Among the performances are singing religious songs, poetry, reading prayers, drama, and others. Before the ustadz gives a religious lecture about the Prophet's birthday, a student performance is held first. This commemoration aims for students to love the Prophet Muhammad and emulate him in their daily lives.
3. Reading Yasin
This activity is carried out every Friday. On this day, students are accustomed to reading Yasin letters led by other students or religious teachers. This activity aims for students to love the Qur'an by reading it fondly and getting the virtue of reading it.

3.2. Revitalization of Teacher Understanding

In addition to religious programs, revitalization is also carried out in aspects of teacher understanding and awareness related to the importance of religious education in schools, as revealed by WP:

"As the principal, I always remind the teacher to increase his competence wrong with the subjects being taught. The teacher can participate in various discussions, seminars, and training. Concerning religious teachers, it is necessary to renew the understanding of changes that occur due to the flow of globalization. And also the responsibility as a teacher, namely forming students with noble character with religious teachings. "

There are several things in an effort to revitalize the understanding and awareness of Islamic education teachers and other teachers, namely:

1. The importance of religious education. Religious education can direct and guide students to understand Islam's teachings to increase faith and piety to Allah SWT.
2. The importance of character education. Schools must be able to instil good character through Islamic religious education subjects and exemplary school personnel.
3. Being a responsible teacher. Professional teachers must be responsible for their profession by providing the best education for students, such as religious and character education.
4. Moral decline is a challenge. This phenomenon must be realized. It is really happening in society, including students today, so teachers need to overcome this problem with religious programs at school.

The COVID-19 pandemic has influenced many aspects of life, including Islamic religious education. Revitalization of the understanding of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in the COVID-19 pandemic is very important because teachers are one of the key factors in delivering Islamic religious education material to students. Several ways can be done to revitalize the understanding of Islamic religious education teachers in the Covid-19 pandemic, including: 1) Online training: Online training can be held to improve the understanding of Islamic religious education teachers. In this training, teachers can learn better and more latest teaching methods in teaching Islam in the midst of Pandemic Covid-19; 2) Online Discussion: Online discussion can be held between Islamic Religious Education Teachers to discuss various matters related to the teaching of Islamic religion in the Pandemic Covid-19. In this discussion, the teacher can share experiences and learn from each other their experiences; 3) Webinar. A webinar can be held to discuss topics related to Islam teaching in the COVID-19 pandemic. This webinar can be followed by Islamic religious education teachers from various regions and can broaden their insights into teaching Islam; 4) Online Learning Module: Online Learning Module can be prepared to help Islamic Religious Education teachers in teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. This module can contain materials related to Islam and also the appropriate teaching techniques to be applied in the Pandemic period; and 5) Making a community network: Islamic religious education teachers can create a network of the community with other teachers in their environment. In this way, teachers can share experiences and gain support from their colleagues (Ani, 2022; Desi, 2022).

Revitalizing the understanding of Islamic religious education teachers in the Covid-19 pandemic period is very important to ensure that students can still gain a good understanding of Islam even in difficult situations. In addition, this can also help teachers in overcoming the challenges and obstacles that arise in teaching Islam during the Pandemic period (Hanafi et al., 2021). After almost 2 years, the school did not hold a religious program. Precisely in the odd semester of 2022, the religious program can be implemented again with a slightly different nuance. The difference can be seen in the enthusiasm of students, especially third-grade students, who have never participated in this activity since they entered school. For students above grade 3, it can be seen that their enthusiasm for following and preparing for activities is very high with participation and direct involvement in religious programs. The school strives to provide the best program for students as a form of responsibility to achieve national education goals.

Religious Education is an effort to educate a child in the form of guidance and care so that students can understand and practice religious teachings when they finish their education and make religion a way of life. Religious education, in which character education is embedded, is considered more effective for shaping character in students so that they are more moral and religious (Wibowo, 2014). Religion plays an important role in shaping student character because there are teachings that direct humans to do good and have noble character. In schools, character education through religious education must be strengthened with religious subjects and religious activities.

In strengthening character education in students, the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is very strategic to actualize this. By using Islamic Religious Education learning, it can be a medium to

channel knowledge in the cognitive (religious) aspect, as a medium in channelling moral values and norms for the formation of affective aspects (attitudes), which has a role in controlling psychomotor aspects (behaviour) so as to create a whole individual personality. Islamic Religious Education is a compulsory subject in schools because it aims to improve students' spiritual values and noble morals. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education has an important task in the implementation of strengthening character education in students at school (Ainiyah & Wibawa, 2013). Becoming a perfect human being (*insan kamil*), in which students reflect Islamic teachings and noble morals, is obtained through religious education.

The role of PAI subjects is very strategic in realizing character strengthening in students at school. (Arsyad et al., 2020). Through Islamic religious education at school, students get knowledge about Islam and a self-habituation to instil religious values in themselves. For this reason, it is necessary for the ability of educators and parents to teach, understand and instil habituation in students so that the formation of student characters in accordance with PAI subjects (Setiawan et al., 2021). Religious education does not only rely on the role of PAI subjects but also needs the support of teachers, parents and the school community.

Strengthening character education by using PAI subjects, all school members, including principals, teachers, school staff and students, also play an active role, and behave positively in a conducive, comfortable, and safe situation so as to create a good situation to create intelligence in thinking and social intelligence of students in the learning process. Creating a conducive situation in students' lives by having good speech, being polite, respecting each other, maintaining cleanliness, being responsible in everything, etc. This is the result of the application of strengthening character education through PAI subjects (Huda, 2021). This is what is expected from the implementation of religious education in schools so as to form students with a religious character. Schools are also given the authority to create extracurricular programs with religious nuances to help and strengthen PAI subjects in the classroom with various obstacles.

According to Syatibi (2013), extracurricular activities are activities outside the lesson content to facilitate learning for self-development according to needs, potential, talents, and interests through planned activities specifically organized by competent and authorized educators/experts at school. Basically, there is no essential difference between Islamic Religious Education extracurricular activities and extracurricular activities in general. In simple terms, the difference lies in the orientation of its implementation regarding Islamic religious teachings and in the types of extracurricular activities organized. Religious extracurricular activities focus more on teachings/concepts with Islamic values, such as *Duha* prayers and praying together before the lesson begins (Hambali & Yulianti, 2018). Religious activities aim to share interpretations, deepening, and events related to the teachings of Islam to foster character in students to have good morals (Ristanti & Salsabila, 2022).

The implementation of religious extracurricular activities is one of the vital elements of constructive student personality. The aim is to explore and motivate students in certain fields. In this case, extracurricular activities aim to support and improve the development of students' insights, especially in the field of Islamic Religious Education. The goals and objectives of extracurricular activities in schools can be determined based on the principles of extracurricular activities. According to Oteng Sutisna (1983) that the principles of extracurricular programs are 1) Students, learners, and education personnel should participate in efforts to develop activity programs; 2) Team consolidation is fundamental to coordination and synergy in team performance; 3) Avoid restrictions on participation; 4) Process is more important than results; 5) Dynamic and comprehensive activity programs accommodate all the needs, interests, talents, and potential of students; 6) Activity programs adjust to school needs; 7) Program evaluation is based on the contribution to educational values at school; 8) The activity program becomes an oasis of abundant motivation for the learning content in the classroom, on the other hand, learning activities in the classroom are productive sources of motivation for learner activities, and 9) The integration of extracurricular activities with the overall educational program at school.

4. CONCLUSION

Revitalization of religious programs was carried out after the program was not implemented optimally or even could not be implemented due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. This revitalization is important as a form of school responsibility in strengthening character education, one of which is through religious programs. The revitalized programs are 1) Quran recitation at 0th hour, 2) commemoration of Islamic holidays; and 3) Yasin recitation. On the other hand, the school also revitalized the teachers' understanding of the importance of religious education, teachers' professionalism, and moral degradation as a challenge. This study provides recommendations for further research to examine the effectiveness of religious programs in strengthening character education for students.

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