



Integration of Compassion Skills in Islamic Religious Education: Building Islamic Character in the Modern Era

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Abstract

The integration of compassion skills in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is a relevant approach to building Islamic character in the modern era. Compassion, which includes understanding, feeling, and acting to alleviate the suffering of others, can serve as a foundation for the moral and social development of students. This study aims to explore how compassion skills can be integrated into PAI to strengthen the Islamic character of students. The research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method, conducted in a high school involving teachers, students, parents, and the principal as research subjects. Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. The results of the study show that the application of compassion in PAI can enhance students' moral understanding and increase empathy towards others. However, challenges in consistently implementing compassion practices in schools still need to be addressed. This study provides insights into the importance of integrating compassion in character education at schools and recommends strategic steps to optimize the implementation of compassion-based Islamic values in PAI.

Keywords: Compassion Skills; Islamic Religious Education; Islamic Character

Introduction

The integration of compassion skills in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is an innovative approach relevant to the challenges of education in the modern era. These skills reflect the core values of Islam, such as *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, which emphasize compassion and care for others. In the context of PAI, developing compassion is not only an effort to realize Islamic teachings but also provides students with the opportunity to understand moral values deeply (Abiddin, Omar, & Saroni, 2024). Moreover, compassion serves as a crucial provision for students in responding to the dynamics of globalization, which often dilute humanitarian values. By integrating these skills, PAI can strengthen the formation of Islamic character that meets contemporary challenges. This places compassion as a strategic element in maximizing the role of PAI as a medium for character transformation, both in the school environment and in the students' social lives (Sukari & Haerullah, 2024).

Academically, the development of compassion skills in PAI is strongly relevant to the modern educational paradigm, which emphasizes the importance of balancing cognitive, affective, and social aspects. Much literature highlights the importance of character education in creating a humane and ethical generation. In practice, compassion skills become a solution for addressing the challenges of multiculturalism and social changes in the digital era. Students equipped with these skills are expected to become tolerant, caring individuals who contribute positively to society (Smeltzer, Poli, & Axenova, 2024). In practice, compassion skills are a strategic solution to the challenges of multiculturalism and social change in the digital era. Students equipped with these skills are expected to develop tolerant and caring attitudes towards differences and contribute positively to their social environment. Thus, the integration of compassion in PAI is not only academically relevant but also provides practical benefits in shaping a generation ready to face the complexities of the modern world (Rahmat, 2023).

Previous research has shown various approaches to integrating Islamic values into character education. For instance, a study by Baidah and colleagues (2024) discusses the effectiveness of a value-based approach in building students' morality through PAI (Baidah, Hijaya, Rahmah, Harahap, & Gusmaneli, 2024). Other research, such as that conducted by Sofiani and colleagues (2024), emphasizes the importance of strengthening emotional aspects in religious education to create harmonious social relationships (Sofiani, Nabila, Neviani, & Syalini, 2024). However, these studies tend to be conceptual and do not delve deeply into the practical implementation of compassion skills in the learning context.

Although there has been much research on Islamic character education, there is still a gap in the literature regarding the practical implementation of compassion skills in PAI. Some studies only provide theoretical frameworks without detailing specific implementation steps. Additionally, there is inconsistency in the application of Islamic values in school environments, particularly in developing students' empathy. This research aims to address these gaps by offering an applicable model for

integrating compassion that is relevant to 21st-century educational needs (Delimanugari & Sibawaihi, 2024).

This study aims to explore how compassion skills can be integrated into PAI to build an Islamic character relevant to the modern era. The main issue addressed is the lack of a holistic approach connecting Islamic values with the development of empathy and social care. This research was conducted at the high school level with students as the primary unit of analysis.

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study method to deeply explore how compassion skills were integrated into Islamic Religious Education (PAI). This approach was chosen because it provided a holistic understanding of the experiences, views, and practices of teachers, students, and other stakeholders in building Islamic character in the modern era. The research was conducted at a high school that had implemented character-based compassion learning. The research subjects included PAI teachers as the implementers of the learning, students as beneficiaries, parents to understand their perceptions, and the principal as the policy maker. Subjects were selected using purposive sampling with specific criteria, such as teachers actively using compassion-based methods and students who had participated in PAI learning for at least one semester.

Data were collected through three main techniques. First, in-depth interviews were conducted with teachers, students, parents, and the principal to understand their perspectives on the importance of compassion and its application in learning. Second, participant observation was carried out by directly observing the learning process in the classroom, including the interactions between teachers and students and students' responses to compassion-based methods. Third, documentation involved collecting documents such as lesson plans, teaching materials, evaluation notes, and school activity reports related to character education.

The collected data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach with several key steps: data reduction, categorization, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was performed to filter relevant information, while categorization grouped the data based on main themes such as understanding compassion, teaching practices, implementation challenges, and its impact on students. Data presentation was done in the form of descriptive narratives supported by direct quotes from the research subjects, followed by drawing conclusions that compared the research findings with related theories and literature.

The validity of the data was ensured through source triangulation, which involved comparing information from various research subjects to ensure data consistency, and member checking to confirm interview results with the research subjects. Additionally, field notes were used to document the data collection and analysis process transparently. This study had limitations in specific locations and contexts, so the results might not be generalizable. However, the research findings were expected

to provide a deep understanding for the development of compassion-based learning models in the future.

Findings and Discussion

Understanding Compassion

Compassion skills are the abilities to understand, feel, and respond to others' suffering with a genuine intention to help and alleviate their burdens. These skills involve a combination of empathy, attention, and actions aimed at supporting others. In practice, compassion is not just about feeling what others are experiencing but also about responding with warmth and care. (Enciso, Yang, & Ugarte, 2024)

These skills are rooted in three main elements: awareness, empathy, and action. Awareness means recognizing the presence of needs or suffering around us. Empathy involves the ability to feel others' emotions as if we were in their position. Compassionate action, on the other hand, is manifested through real responses that help, such as listening, providing assistance, or simply offering moral support. (Morizio, Cook, Troeger, & Whitehouse, 2022)

Developing compassion skills requires practice and self-reflection. One way to train them is by paying attention to others' body language, facial expressions, or tone of voice as emotional cues. Additionally, practicing gratitude and mindfulness can enhance sensitivity to others' needs and improve the ability to respond positively and constructively. (Miller & Verhaeghen, 2022)

In the context of education, compassion becomes an important skill that can foster better relationships between educators, students, and the surrounding community. In the workplace, these skills contribute to the creation of a supportive and collaborative environment. Ultimately, compassion skills benefit not only others but also enhance the emotional well-being of those who practice them. (Rahmat, 2023)

Compassion is a sincere attitude born from the heart to understand, feel, and care for others, especially those experiencing difficulties or suffering. It involves a blend of deep empathy and a genuine desire to help, driving actions that are beneficial and supportive. This attitude goes beyond mere pity as it encompasses an active urge to alleviate others' burdens. (Mohib, 2024)

Compassion has strong roots in human values and often arises from the recognition that all humans share challenging and imperfect life experiences. This is demonstrated through gentle attention, patience, and a desire to understand others' conditions without judgment. When someone shows compassion, they create a safe space for others to feel accepted and valued. (Karolina & Arcanita, 2022)

In daily life, compassion can be manifested in many forms, such as attentive listening, providing emotional support, or simply showing care through words and small actions. It also includes the ability to be kind to oneself, especially when facing failure or difficulty.

Compassion not only strengthens interpersonal relationships but also has positive impacts on mental and emotional health. Those who practice compassion tend to feel happier, have strong social bonds, and create a harmonious environment around them. Ultimately, compassion is a fundamental basis for a more meaningful life, both individually and collectively. (Mohib, 2024)

The cognitive component in compassion is the ability to understand others' suffering and recognize the conditions or situations they are experiencing. This component requires deep thinking to identify others' experiences, emotions, and needs through rational understanding and empathy. (Ho, Nakamura, & Swain, 2021)

Through the cognitive component, one can interpret non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, tone of voice, or body language, which indicates suffering. This understanding not only involves knowledge about what is happening but also an awareness of the factors influencing their situation, such as social, cultural, or specific contexts that might not be immediately apparent.

This process requires full attention (mindfulness) and the ability to put oneself in others' perspectives without ignoring their reality. For instance, when someone faces difficulty, the cognitive component helps us not just to sympathize but to understand what they truly need to feel supported. This component is crucial in compassion because without clear understanding, the actions taken might be inappropriate or even unhelpful. Therefore, understanding others' suffering cognitively is the first step to responding with meaningful and compassionate actions. (Enciso et al., 2024)

The affective component in compassion is the ability to feel deep empathy for others' suffering, accompanied by an inner urge to help them. This component includes emotional aspects that make someone truly "connected" to others' feelings, enabling them to experience what others are going through as if it were their own experience. (Kaźmierczak et al., 2024)

Empathy in the affective component does not just stop at recognizing emotions; it also creates a natural drive to provide support. For example, when seeing someone who is sad or distressed, the affective component allows us to feel their sadness and motivates actions like offering help, words of comfort, or just a calming presence. (Genzer, Adiva, & Perry, 2023)

This component involves high emotional sensitivity, often stemming from deep compassion for fellow humans. Moreover, the drive to help that arises from the affective component is genuine, without being motivated by rewards or praise. This makes compassion a pure response from the heart. The affective component is essential because it gives "soul" to compassion. Without empathy and the emotional drive to help, our actions might become mechanical or mere formalities. Therefore, this component ensures that the compassionate response given truly comes from goodwill and sensitivity to others' suffering. (Newton, 2022)

The key components of compassion skills include three interrelated aspects: cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. These three components function synergistically to ensure that compassion is not just a feeling but also manifested in real actions that support and alleviate others' suffering. (Karolina & Arcanita, 2022)

1. **Cognitive Component**

This component focuses on the ability to understand others' suffering and recognize the situations or conditions they face. It involves a rational understanding of what someone feels or experiences, including the factors that influence it. This awareness enables one to identify others' emotional and practical needs, forming the basis for providing an appropriate response.

2. **Affective Component**

This component includes the ability to feel empathy, which is the emotional connection with others experiencing difficulties. Additionally, the affective component evokes a sincere emotional drive to help. This aspect makes compassion more than just intellectual understanding but a response involving heart and feelings.

3. **Behavioral Component**

This component is the real manifestation of compassion through actions aimed at alleviating others' suffering. After understanding and feeling empathy, individuals with compassion will take active steps, such as providing moral support, physical help, or practical solutions according to the needs. The behavioral component ensures that compassion does not stop at intentions but is translated into beneficial actions.

These three components work together to create a complete compassion skill. Without cognitive understanding, empathy can become directionless. Without the affective drive, actions can become mechanical. And without real behavior, compassion remains a concept without impact. Therefore, compassion skills require the integration of these three components to truly provide benefits and bring positive changes in interpersonal relationships and society. (Sills-Maerov & Valanci, 2024)

a. **Cognitive Understanding**

Cognitive understanding is the ability to see the world from others' perspectives, recognize their conditions and needs deeply, and understand the suffering they experience. This component involves rational awareness and sensitivity to someone's emotional situation. With cognitive understanding, one can not only identify what is happening but also understand how the person feels in facing that situation. (Thomson, 2024)

b. **Emotional Response**

Emotional response includes the ability to feel empathy, care, and compassion towards someone experiencing difficulties. This component involves a strong emotional connection with others' suffering, prompting concern and a desire to provide support. Deep empathy becomes the main foundation of the emotional response, not only connecting someone with others' emotions but also creating warm emotional attachment. (Thomson, 2024)

c. **Motivation to Act**

Motivation to act is a strong desire to help others out of the suffering or difficulties they face. This drive arises from a combination of cognitive understanding and emotional response, creating a sincere motivation to alleviate their burdens. This drive often becomes the main trigger that moves someone to act, whether in the form of direct support or practical solutions that can help.

d. **Compassionate Action**

Compassionate action is the realization of compassion in the form of concrete steps aimed at helping others. This can be physical assistance, such as providing necessary goods or services, emotional support through listening and providing comfort, or other actions with a positive impact. Compassionate action ensures that compassion does not just stop at feeling or intention but is manifested in real contributions that truly benefit those in need. (Waird, 2023)

These four components work in an integrated manner, creating a comprehensive attitude of compassion. Starting from cognitive understanding that builds awareness, followed by emotional response that strengthens connections, then motivation to act as a driving force, until finally manifested in compassionate action that brings positive changes for others.

Building Islamic Character in the Modern Era

Building Islamic character in the modern era involves instilling the noble values of Islam within individuals, enabling them to navigate life amidst the challenges and dynamics of the contemporary world. Islamic character encompasses noble morals, integrity, personal piety, and social responsibility, all grounded in the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah. In the modern era, the rapid advancement of technology, globalization, and social changes often influence people's mindsets, behaviors, and lifestyles. This demands strategic approaches to building an Islamic character that remains relevant and robust (Suryadi, Ondeng, & Syahrudin, 2024).

Several important steps in building Islamic character in the modern era include:

1. **Instilling the Values of Tawhid**

Tawhid, as the core of Islamic teachings, must be the main foundation in character formation. A strong understanding of the relationship between humans and Allah (habluminallah) will shape attitudes of reliance, sincerity, and discipline in life.

2. **Integrating Islamic Values with Modern Life**

Islam is a universal and flexible religion. Values such as honesty, justice, hard work, and responsibility can be applied in various aspects of modern life, including technology, education, and the workplace.

3. **Moral-Based Education**

Both formal and informal education should aim to build noble morals. Creative and relevant learning methods, such as integrating technology into Islamic education, can attract young generations to learn and internalize Islamic values.

4. Strengthening the Role of the Family

The family is the first place for forming Islamic character. Parents serve as role models demonstrating how Islamic values are applied in daily life. Open discussions and the habituation of worship can strengthen the faith foundation of children.

5. Wise Management of Information and Technology

In the modern era, access to information is vast and quick. It is important to build an Islamic character that is critical and selective in filtering information and utilizing technology for good, such as spreading da'wah or learning knowledge.

6. Empowering an Islamic Social Environment

A supportive environment is essential for forming an Islamic character. A community that upholds Islamic values can be a place for developing individuals with noble morals. This can be realized through Islamic communities, religious activities, or social programs.

By following these steps, the Islamic character built in the modern era will not only be able to face the challenges of the times but also become a light that brings blessings and benefits to oneself, family, society, and the world at large. A strong Islamic character is the key to creating a just, harmonious civilization in line with Allah's teachings (Delimanugari & Sibawaihi, 2024).

Islamic Character Education in the Modern Era: Shaping a Morally Virtuous Society

Islam places noble morals at the core of human life. Values such as compassion (rahmah), mutual assistance (ta'awun), and caring for others (ihsan) are taught as life guidelines to create social harmony. In the context of education, Islamic character serves to shape individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also have hearts full of love, caring spirits, and behaviors that reflect faith in Allah SWT (Safitri, 2024).

However, in the modern era, challenges like individualism, materialism, and intense competition often distance society from these noble values. The spirit of togetherness and caring is being replaced by a mindset more focused on personal interests. As a result, social relationships become strained, and society becomes less concerned with the suffering of others (Islam, n.d.).

To face these challenges, Islamic character education emerges as a strategic solution. Through education based on compassion, students are encouraged to understand and feel the suffering of others, fostering the drive to help positively. For example, learning programs involving empathy-based activities, such as social actions or discussions on the importance of helping others, can be effective tools for instilling values of rahmah, ta'awun, and ihsan (Nur, 2024).

This approach not only trains students to have noble morals but also builds personalities that care about society. This aligns with Islamic teachings that consider good deeds a reflection of faith. By forming individuals with Islamic character, we contribute to creating a harmonious, compassionate society that always prioritizes collective good. Islamic character education in the modern era is a crucial foundation for producing a generation that is not only ready to face the changes of the times but also able to bring the light of Islam into every step of their lives (Irpan & Sain, 2024).

The Role of Educators in Building Islamic Character in the Modern Era

Educators play a central role in shaping Islamic character, especially in an era full of social, cultural, and technological challenges. As agents of change, educators are not only tasked with imparting knowledge but also instilling noble moral values according to Islamic teachings. This is important because Islamic character education is the main foundation for producing a generation that is faithful, morally virtuous, and capable of facing the complexities of the times (Khadafi, 2019).

- 1. First, educators act as role models (uswatun hasanah).**

In Islam, role modeling is the most effective teaching method. Educators who demonstrate integrity, compassion, honesty, and discipline in their attitudes and behaviors will inspire students to develop Islamic character. This role modeling provides practical learning on how Islamic values are applied in everyday life (Afifah, Astutik, Masitoh, & Khoidah, 2024).

- 2. Second, educators act as spiritual and moral guides.**

Amidst the challenges of the modern era, such as individualism, materialism, and foreign cultural influences, educators are responsible for guiding students to understand the importance of Islamic values in life. Through teachings based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, educators can help students build a solid understanding of tawhid, noble morals, and social responsibility (Kasman, 2024).

- 3. Third, educators act as facilitators of learning Islamic values.**

Educators need to design a learning process that involves cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. Through activities such as value discussions, simulations, social actions, or reflections, students are encouraged to understand, feel, and practice values of compassion (rahmah), care (ihsan), and cooperation (ta'awun) (Syauqillah, 2024).

- 4. Fourth, educators play a role in integrating technology with Islamic character education.**

In the digital era, educators must creatively utilize technology as a tool for spreading Islamic values. For example, using social media to convey messages of goodness, leveraging Islamic learning-based applications, or encouraging students to use technology wisely according to Islamic principles (Mappanyompa, Muhlis, Sahwan, & Saprun, 2024).

5. Fifth, educators act as emotional supporters and motivators.

By showing empathy and attention to students' needs, educators create a conducive environment for character growth. This caring attitude teaches students to have compassion for others while building their confidence in applying Islamic values in life.

Through these roles, educators become the main pillars in building Islamic character in the modern era. By guiding students to internalize Islamic values deeply, educators help shape a generation that is not only resilient in facing contemporary challenges but also capable of being successors of Islamic civilization that bring blessings and benefits to humanity (Umar, 2024).

Conclusion

The integration of compassion skills in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) provides a transformational approach to addressing moral and educational challenges in the modern era. Compassion, which is deeply rooted in Islamic values, serves as a bridge for students to develop empathy, moral awareness, and concrete actions in caring for others. The findings of this research emphasize that compassion, which is a combination of cognitive, affective, and behavioral components, plays a crucial role in shaping Islamic character. This integration not only equips students with the ability to contribute positively to a multicultural and digital society but also strengthens the role of PAI as a medium for character development that aligns with contemporary global demands. However, this research also identifies a gap in practical implementation, highlighting the need for a more concrete framework to effectively apply compassion in teaching.

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