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Strengthening Character Education Through The Project Based Learning (PJBL) Model In Islamic Religious Education Learning At SMPN 2 And SMPN 3 Pujut

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning based on Project-Based Learning (PjBL), identify the character values developed, and describe the process of strengthening character education at SMPN 2 and SMPN 3 Pujut. The background of this research is based on the urgency of strengthening character education through active, collaborative, and student-oriented learning. The study used a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, while data validity was tested through triangulation of sources and techniques.

The results show that the implementation of PjBL in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is carried out through the stages of planning, implementation, and evaluation, aligned with the syntax of the PjBL model. Project-based learning encourages active student involvement in contextual problem-solving processes, thus making learning more meaningful. The most dominant character values developed include religiousness, discipline, hard work, creativity, and responsibility. Character strengthening occurs systematically through teacher strategies in managing learning, habituation, role modeling, and collaboration among students in group work. In addition to improving material mastery, the PjBL model also has implications for improving students' critical thinking and communication skills. These findings indicate that PjBL is an effective Islamic Religious Education (PAI)

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learning model for strengthening character education in a contextual and sustainable manner.

Keywords: Strengthening Character Education, Project Based Learning (PjBL), Islamic Religious Education (PAI).

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in developing the intelligence and personality of children for the better. Therefore, education is continuously developed and enhanced to produce the desired generation (Azzet, 2011). Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System states that "National Education functions to develop abilities and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation in order to enrich the nation's life. It aims to develop the potential of students to become individuals who believe in and fear God Almighty, possess noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens." This means that education in Indonesia emphasizes not only academic aspects but also character building as the primary foundation of national development (Andrean et al., 2020).

Character education in schools can be understood as a learning process oriented towards the formation, strengthening, and development of student behavior as a whole, based on specific values used as a reference by the school. Thus, character education does not merely exist as a separate program, but becomes an integral part of all learning activities in every subject (Kesuma et al., 2011). Character education aims to foster positive behaviors that align with the moral, social, and spiritual values upheld by educational institutions. This understanding is based on the assumption that every child is an individual with innate potential that can be optimally strengthened and developed. This strengthening and development process is always grounded in the value system implemented by the school as a character-building institution (Rasyid, 2024).

In general, the learning process in educational institutions is usually focused on achieving specific competencies established in the curriculum. However, in practice, the aspect of character formation often receives insufficient attention because it is considered something inherent in students from birth. In fact, character is not simply an innate trait, but rather is formed from traits, dispositions, or personality, as well as values internalized through experience and habits. Character can also be viewed as a self-identity consciously built through positive activities carried out continuously and consistently (Daryanto et al., 2013). Thus, it is crucial to design a learning

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model that is not only oriented toward mastering knowledge and skills but also encourages the development of moral values and character in students. Character education must be implemented systematically and continuously, involving various aspects, such as knowledge, feelings, love, and concrete actions. In this regard, students must be at the center of learning, making them subjects, not objects. Students are taught to collaborate with teachers and other students, and teachers must ensure that the learning process is meaningful for students so they can apply it in their daily lives (Angga, 2022).

One of the subjects that plays a strategic role in shaping students' character is Islamic Religious Education (PAI). This subject is taught at all levels of education, from elementary school to university, with the aim of preparing students to become members of society who understand and practice the values of Islamic teachings (Drajat, 2000). The scope of Islamic Religious Education includes four aspects: the Qur'an and Hadith, Creed and Morals, Fiqh, and Islamic Cultural History (Asep et al., 2020). Through these four aspects, students are guided not only in religious knowledge but also in developing attitudes and behaviors in accordance with Islamic teachings. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a very important role in strengthening a person's attitudes and morals, as Allah SWT says:

وَاِنَّكَ لَعَلٰى خُلُقٍ عَظِيْمٍ

Meaning: "And indeed, you are of a great moral character" (QS. Al-Qalam (68): Verse 4).

Based on the above verse, humans are said to be creatures of good moral character. Morality is a science that discusses good and bad and explains what humans should do towards others, aligns goals, and shows the path to what to do. Thus, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) not only emphasizes religious knowledge but also shapes the character, morals, and behavior of students so that they can become responsible individuals and contribute positively to society. The moral values emphasized in Islamic teachings need to be realized in educational practices, particularly through Islamic Religious Education (PAI), to ensure its relevance to the needs of the times.

Public Junior High Schools in Pujut District, Central Lombok Regency, include SMPN 2 and SMPN 3 Pujut. Both schools consistently implement the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) subject as a primary component of character education. Based on the results of initial observations conducted by researchers, it was found that several indicators of character values had emerged in student behavior, particularly in aspects of discipline and caring. This was evident in students' habits of arriving on time to school, participating in learning activities until completion, and demonstrating concern through actions such as helping teachers prepare learning materials and

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maintaining classroom cleanliness. However, phenomena in the field also showed that student character formation was not fully optimal. Problems were still found in the learning process related to low levels of student honesty and responsibility towards individual assignments and group work. In practice, some students still showed a lack of honesty in completing assignments or relied on other group members without actively contributing, so that the values of responsibility and cooperation had not developed evenly. This condition indicated that although discipline and caring had developed, other moral and ethical aspects still needed to be improved to align with the expected goals of character education.

In an effort to foster this character, both schools have implemented the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes material flexibility and strengthening the Pancasila Student profile. Learning is implemented using a student-centered approach, thus encouraging contextual and meaningful learning experiences. One of the recommended learning models in this curriculum is Project-Based Learning (PjBL), as it actively engages students in completing real-life projects, making the learning process more relevant and meaningful (Taskiran, 2021). Furthermore, the project-based learning model provides opportunities for students to engage in learning activities through collaborative project activities to produce a product and present the results (Eliyasni, et al., 2019). Thus, students not only understand the subject matter but also develop social and emotional skills and independent learning, both individually and in groups, to achieve the set goals.

Based on an interview with Ms. Emy Seri Nurhayanti, S.Ag. A PAI teacher at SMPN 2 Pujut said, “I have actually tried implementing project-based learning, for example, on prayer material, I asked students to create a flowchart about prayer procedures. However, there are still obstacles because not all teachers understand the stages of Project Based Learning thoroughly. Some teachers, including myself, still need to learn in terms of project planning, task distribution, and assessment of the results.” Meanwhile, the results of an interview with Mrs. Siti Rohani S.Pd., a PAI teacher at SMPN 3 Pujut said that, “Some students are still having difficulty adjusting, because they are used to lecture-style learning. So, when I ask them to work in groups, many are still confused. Usually I ask them to create projects such as concept maps on the material of prostration of gratitude. But because they are not used to this learning method, they tend to wait for instructions from me. In the end, only a few people in the group are active.” Thus, it can be concluded that in the two schools that were the object of the study, various obstacles were still seen, both from the teachers and students. From the teacher perspective, uneven understanding of the basic principles and stages of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) results in inconsistent learning

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implementation, resulting in low student engagement in projects. Meanwhile, from the student perspective, adaptability, collaboration, and initiative are still limited, resulting in suboptimal active learning experiences and character building through project activities. Therefore, a more focused and planned Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model is needed to increase active participation and strengthen character education values in the learning process.

Several previous studies have discussed character education and the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model. Research by Anjar Fitrianingtyas et al. (2021) demonstrated that the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in early childhood education can foster character development through meaningful and contextual project activities. Similar findings were presented by Ilma Jamilatun Nur and Siti Mulyanawati (2022), who confirmed that the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) within the Independent Curriculum in P5 subjects in elementary schools can foster critical thinking skills, creativity, and the values of mutual cooperation and discipline, which are part of the Pancasila Student Profile. This is reinforced by the findings in Eka Risma Junita's (2022) thesis which proves that the complete implementation of the PjBL model in Islamic Religious Education learning is able to shape students' social, religious attitudes, and skills through the stages of problem identification, planning, project implementation, and evaluation. However, studies that specifically link both with character education in Islamic Religious Education subjects are still limited, especially in regional high schools such as Central Lombok. Therefore, this research is important to fill the gap in research, while providing theoretical contributions to the development of literature and practical contributions for teachers and schools in optimizing student character building through the Project Based Learning (PjBL) model.

METHOD

This research is a field research with a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to systematically, factually, and in-depth describe the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, character values that emerge in learning activities, and strengthening character education through the Project Based Learning (PjBL) model in the Independent Curriculum at SMPN 2 and SMPN 3 Pujut, Central Lombok Regency. In this study, the researcher acts as the main instrument (key instrument) directly involved in the data collection process through observation, interviews, and documentation. The researcher's presence at the research location was carried out actively to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon being studied and to build good relationships with informants. The research locations were chosen because both schools have

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implemented the Independent Curriculum, have adequate facilities and infrastructure, complete teaching staff, and face various challenges in developing student character. Data sources in this study consist of primary data and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from the principal, Islamic Religious Education teachers, and students through a purposive sampling technique, while secondary data were obtained from various documents, books, articles, and archives relevant to the research. Data collection techniques were conducted through non-participant observation to observe the learning process and school activities, unstructured interviews to dig for in-depth information from informants, and documentation to obtain supporting data in the form of school profiles, teaching modules, learning project results, and various related documents. Data analysis used the Miles and Huberman model which includes data condensation, data presentation, as well as drawing conclusions and verification. Data validity was maintained through extended observations, increased diligence, and triangulation of sources and techniques to ensure the data obtained was valid, accurate, and accountable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Process of Strengthening Character Education in Islamic Education Learning Based on the Project Based Learning (Pjbl) Model at SMPN 2 and SMPN 3 Pujut

1. SMPN 2 Pujut

Strengthening character education in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning based on Project Based Learning (PjBL) at SMPN 2 Pujut takes place through various processes integrated in the implementation of a portfolio project on the material of Aqiqah and Qurban. Character strengthening does not occur instantly, but develops through learning experiences that actively involve students in every stage of the project. Based on research results, the process of strengthening character occurs through teacher strategies, habituation, teacher role models, and group work. Through this process, the characters of discipline, responsibility, religiosity, hard work, and creativity are gradually strengthened throughout the learning process.

a. Strengthening Character through Teacher Strategies

Strengthening character education in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) based on Project-Based Learning (PjBL) at SMPN 2 Pujut is also carried out through teacher strategies integrated into every stage of the learning process. Teacher strategies are planned efforts to manage learning so that character values do not simply emerge spontaneously but are formed through a directed learning process. In the context of this research, the most dominant character traits strengthened

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through teacher strategies are responsibility and discipline.

These strategies are evident in various steps taken by teachers from the planning stage to the implementation of learning, such as explaining learning objectives, forming groups, dividing tasks according to each member's role, setting project completion deadlines, and monitoring the progress of learning activities. This series of strategies provides a means for students to learn responsibility for their assignments and discipline in completing work within the allotted time.

As stated in an interview with Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher, Ms. Sery Emy Nurhayati, S.Ag., who stated:

"In project-based learning, I not only look at the final portfolio results, but also at the students' process while working in groups. From the beginning, they are directed to divide up tasks, determine a work schedule, and complete their respective sections. If someone is less active or hasn't completed their assignment, I usually remind them and provide guidance so they can stay involved in the group work."

The interview results indicate that the teacher's strategy is not only oriented toward project completion, but also toward student engagement throughout the learning process. The teacher actively directs students to follow the activity stages in an orderly manner and carry out tasks according to their assigned roles.

In line with this, the researcher's observations reinforce these findings. During the portfolio project, the teacher consistently monitored the progress of each group's work, provided guidance when students encountered difficulties, and reminded them of deadlines for completion. This situation made the learning process more focused and allowed students to remain focused on the desired goals.

Furthermore, one student, Tirta Handika, stated:

"Before starting work on the portfolio, the teacher first explained each group member's assignment. This way, we knew what we needed to do and weren't just relying on others. If there was an unfinished assignment, the teacher usually immediately asked about its progress."

This statement indicates that the teacher's strategy of dividing tasks and monitoring helped students understand their respective roles within the group. Through this process, each group member had the opportunity to actively participate in completing the project.

Based on research findings, the teacher's strategy of dividing tasks, setting deadlines, and monitoring the project was an effective process in strengthening students' sense of responsibility and discipline. This character building does not occur through mere advice, but through direct experience that requires students to carry out their roles, manage their time, and be accountable

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for their work throughout the learning process. Through this strategy, character values are gradually strengthened through student involvement in real and ongoing learning activities.

These findings align with Purba and Tarigan's view that character education will be more effective when integrated into learning activities that provide opportunities for students to experience, practice, and reflect on the values they learn (Purba et al., 2024). In project-based learning, teacher strategies serve not only as a means of classroom management but also as a mechanism that enables the natural internalization of the values of responsibility and discipline through meaningful learning experiences (Damayanti, 2024).

Thus, teacher strategies in Project-Based Learning (PjBL)-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at SMPN 2 Pujut serve as a means of strengthening the character of responsibility and discipline through structured assignments, setting clear timeframes, and ongoing monitoring throughout the portfolio project. The focus of this strengthening is not solely on the project's outcome, but rather on the process of student engagement in carrying out tasks and fulfilling mutually agreed commitments.

b. Strengthening Process Through Habituation

Strengthening character education in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) based on Project-Based Learning (PjBL) at SMPN 2 Pujut is also carried out through integrated habituation at every stage of the learning process. Habituation is a continuous process so that character values are not only understood conceptually but also become part of students' daily behavior. In the context of this research, the most dominant character strengthened through habituation is religious character.

This habituation is evident through various routine activities carried out during the learning process, such as praying before and after lessons, greetings, and linking learning materials to Islamic values in daily life. These repeated activities serve as a means for students to habituate to practicing religious values in their learning activities.

Based on interviews with Islamic Religious Education teacher, Mrs. Sery Emy Nurhayati, S.Ag, it was shown that strengthening religious character is not only done through the delivery of material, but also through routine activities carried out consistently throughout the learning process.

In line with this, the researcher's observations showed that teachers consistently began and ended lessons with a communal prayer. Furthermore, during discussions and portfolio project development, teachers repeatedly reminded students to connect the material being studied with religious values that can be applied in everyday life.

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Based on research findings, consistent habituation in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning based on Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is a crucial process in strengthening students' religious character. Through repeated activities, religious values are not only understood as learning material but also practiced in daily learning activities.

This aligns with Yunia Nabila Aziziy's view that habituation is an effective method in character education because it allows the values taught to become part of students' behavior through continuous practice (Aziziy, 2023). In the context of project-based learning, habituation provides students with opportunities to implement religious values in a concrete way during the learning process (Raiyan, 2026).

Thus, character strengthening through habituation in Islamic Education learning based on Project Based Learning (PjBL) at SMPN 2 Pujut takes place through routine activities that are carried out consistently, so that religious values are not only understood at the knowledge level, but also become habits that are reflected in the behavior of students during the learning process.

c. Strengthening Process Through Teacher Exemplary Behavior

Strengthening character education in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) based on Project-Based Learning (PjBL) at SMPN 2 Pujut is not only achieved through teaching strategies and habituation, but also through the role models demonstrated by teachers throughout the learning process. Modeling is one form of character strengthening because students tend to imitate the attitudes and behaviors they observe directly from teachers, who are respected and role models in the school environment.

In this study, the most dominant character strengthened through teacher role models was hard work. This character strengthening was evident through teachers' commitment to preparing lessons, assisting students during project work, and providing consistent guidance until projects were completed. These attitudes provide students with concrete examples of the importance of perseverance, patience, and commitment in completing a task.

Interviews with Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher, Ms. Sery Emy Nurhayati, S.Ag, indicated that teachers not only provide verbal direction but also directly demonstrate diligence and consistency in supporting the learning process. Through these behaviors, students gain concrete examples of how to carry out work diligently to achieve the desired goals.

Consistently, observations revealed that during the portfolio project, the teacher actively monitored the progress of each group, provided feedback on student work, and assisted groups experiencing difficulties in preparing the project. The teacher continued to guide the learning process until all groups completed the assigned tasks.

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Furthermore, student Ferdi Iyan Gozari stated:

"The teacher always accompanied us while working on the portfolio. If there was anything we didn't understand or had difficulty with, she immediately helped and explained it again until we understood."

Student Ferdi Iyan Gozari's statement indicates that students directly observed the teacher's dedication to her duties during the learning process. This attitude exemplified the importance of perseverance and commitment to completing work.

Based on research findings, teacher role models are a crucial factor in strengthening students' hard-working character. Through concrete examples demonstrated by teachers in diligently carrying out assignments, students gain firsthand experience of the importance of perseverance, patience, and commitment in completing work.

This finding aligns with Purba's opinion, which states that teachers are "moral models" for students, thus their attitudes and behavior in daily interactions have a strong influence on the development of their character. Through role models, teachers not only serve as transmitters of material but also as figures who provide examples of behavior that students can emulate in their daily lives (Faturahma et al., 2025).

Thus, strengthening the character of hard work through teacher role models in Project-Based Learning (PjBL)-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at SMPN 2 Pujut occurs through the examples of behavior demonstrated by teachers during the learning process. The teachers' sincerity and consistency in assisting with project implementation serve as role models for students to remain diligent, persistent, and diligent in completing learning assignments.

d. Strengthening Process Through Group Work

Strengthening character education in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning based on Project Based Learning (PjBL) at SMPN 2 Pujut also occurs through group work during portfolio projects. Group work is a collaborative learning process that provides space for students to interact, discuss, and develop ideas together to complete assigned tasks. In the context of this research, the most dominant character strengthened through group work is creativity.

Group work in this learning is evident through the division of roles among members, discussions to determine the concept and format for portfolio presentation, the collection and processing of information, and the process of compiling the final project results. During this process, students are not only directed to complete assignments but are also given the opportunity to develop ideas and determine the presentation method they deem most interesting and in line with the group's understanding.

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Interviews with Islamic Religious Education teacher, Mrs. Sery Emy Nurhayati, S.Ag, indicate that the teacher does not restrict students' thinking but rather provides them with the freedom to develop ideas. This situation is a crucial factor in encouraging creativity, as students are required to determine the most appropriate and engaging presentation method.

In line with this, observations revealed that each group produced a different portfolio format. This variation was evident in the use of images, narrative summaries, and a combination of the two. These differences indicate a developing creative process within each group.

During the discussion process, researchers observed that students responded to each other's ideas, considered several alternatives, and then combined these ideas into a single portfolio concept. This process demonstrates the dynamics of creative thinking that occur naturally within groups.

Based on research findings, group work in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning based on Project Based Learning (PjBL) at SMPN 2 Pujut serves as a process that significantly strengthens students' creative character. This creativity is evident through the freedom to develop ideas, the ability to discuss, the choice of presentation formats, and the effort to produce more varied work. A broader examination reveals that learning is not solely oriented toward completing assignments but also focuses on developing students' thinking, making them more open, flexible, and innovative in addressing problems.

This finding aligns with Supuwuningsih's opinion, which states that collaborative learning places interaction between students as the primary source of new ideas (Supuwuningsih, 2025). Through the process of exchanging ideas and collaborating, students not only complete assignments but also develop the ability to create more creative solutions within groups (Amarlita, 2024).

Therefore, group work in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning based on Project Based Learning (PjBL) at SMPN 2 Pujut is a crucial process in strengthening creative character through interaction, discussion, and collaborative idea development in the preparation of portfolio projects.

2. SMPN 3 Pujut

Strengthening character education in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning based on Project Based Learning (PjBL) at SMPN 3 Pujut takes place through various integrated processes within the calligraphy project. These processes are not solely focused on the final product but also on learning experiences that encourage students to develop character values gradually through teacher strategies, habituation, role models, and group work.

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a. Strengthening Process Through Teacher Strategy

Strengthening character education in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning based on Project Based Learning (PjBL) at SMPN 3 Pujut is carried out through various strategies implemented by teachers throughout the learning process. In the PjBL model, teachers not only serve as material presenters but also as facilitators, directing, guiding, and providing opportunities for students to actively participate in each stage of the project. Through these strategies, teachers strive to strengthen students' religious and creative character through group projects on the Asmaul Husana calligraphy.

Teachers' strategies for strengthening religious character involve linking the Asmaul Husana material to students' daily lives. Teachers not only explain the theoretical meaning of the Asmaul Husana but also provide examples of the application of the values contained within them so that students can understand the relevance of the material to real life.

Interviews with Islamic Religious Education teacher Ms. Siti Rohani, S.Pd., indicate that the strategies implemented by teachers are not only oriented towards delivering learning material but also towards instilling religious values through contextual understanding. Teachers strive to connect the material to students' real-life experiences so that religious values are easier to understand and internalize.

The researchers' observations align with this, showing that throughout the learning process, teachers repeatedly linked the Asmaul Husana material to students' daily behavior. Teachers provided examples of behaviors that reflect the values of honesty and responsibility related to the meaning of the Asmaul Husana they were learning. Furthermore, teachers also asked students to explain the meaning of the Asmaul Husana they had written in their calligraphy projects.

Teachers not only reinforced religious character but also aimed to strengthen students' creative character. This was achieved by giving students the freedom to determine the design, colors, lettering, and ornamentation used in their calligraphy projects.

As student Ahmad Wirdas also stated:

"The teacher gave us the freedom to determine the design of the calligraphy we would create. Each group was allowed to create different shapes and ornaments, allowing us to explore our own ideas together with our group members."

Based on the research findings outlined above, it can be concluded that teacher strategies in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) based on Project-Based Learning (PjBL) are a crucial process in strengthening students' character education. By linking the Asmaul Husana material to everyday

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life, teachers strengthen students' religious character through understanding and appreciation of religious values. Meanwhile, providing freedom in determining the design and form of calligraphy projects serves as a means of supporting the development of students' creative character.

This aligns with Akhtim Wahyuni's opinion, stating that character values are not only taught theoretically but also integrated into character education. This is more effective if the learning experiences allow students to understand, feel, and practice them directly (Wahyuni, 2021). In the context of project-based learning, teacher strategies serve as a means of enabling students to gain meaningful learning experiences while simultaneously developing character through real-life and ongoing activities (Fadil et al., 2025).

Based on the research findings, overall it can be concluded that the teacher's strategy in Islamic Religious Education learning based on Project Based Learning (PjBL) at SMPN 3 Pujut plays a role as a means of strengthening religious and creative characters by linking Asmaul Husana material with everyday life and providing opportunities for students to develop ideas and creativity in completing calligraphy projects in groups.

b. Strengthening Process Through Habituation

Strengthening character education in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) lessons based on Project Based Learning (PjBL) at SMPN 3 Pujut is also carried out through consistent habituation throughout the learning process. Habituation is one way teachers instill character values in students through repeated activities, so that they become part of daily behavior. In this study, the most dominant character strengthened through habituation was discipline.

Discipline is evident in various learning activities, such as arriving on time, following agreed-upon rules, bringing necessary equipment for calligraphy projects, and completing assignments according to the predetermined schedule. These activities are carried out continuously throughout the project, so students become accustomed to respecting time and carrying out tasks in an orderly manner.

Interviews with Islamic Religious Education teacher Ms. Siti Rohani, S.Pd., indicate that discipline is fostered through structured learning activities and consistent implementation of rules throughout the project. The teacher not only provides direction at the beginning of the activity but also continuously reminds students to adhere to the agreed-upon rules. In line with this, the researcher's observations showed that students arrived at class according to the lesson schedule, brought the tools and materials needed for calligraphy, and immediately began group work after receiving instructions from the teacher. Students were also seen striving to complete each stage of the project within the specified deadline.

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Based on the research findings, the habituation implemented in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning based on Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is a crucial process in strengthening students' disciplined character. Through consistent implementation of rules, time management, and completion of assignments, students gain experience that helps them understand the importance of discipline in learning activities.

This aligns with Yunia Nabila Aziziy's view that habituation is an effective method in character education because it allows the values taught to become part of students' behavior through continuous practice. In the context of project-based learning, habituation provides students with opportunities to practice discipline in real-life situations throughout the learning process. It can be concluded that strengthening the character of discipline through habituation in Islamic Education learning based on Project Based Learning (PjBL) at SMPN 3 Pujut takes place through activities that are carried out repeatedly and consistently so that students are accustomed to respecting time, obeying rules, and completing tasks according to the predetermined schedule (Putra et al., 2025).

c. Strengthening Process Through Exemplary Behavior

Strengthening character education in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) based on Project-Based Learning (PjBL) at SMPN 3 Pujut is not only achieved through teaching strategies and habituation, but also through the example demonstrated by teachers throughout the learning process. Exemplary behavior is one form of character strengthening because students tend to imitate the behavior they observe directly from teachers, who are respected and role models in the school environment. In this study, the most dominant character strengthened through teacher example was hard work.

Hard work was reinforced through the teacher's earnestness in guiding students throughout the calligraphy project. The teacher not only provided direction at the beginning of the activity but also continuously accompanied, monitored the progress of students' work, and assisted them when they encountered difficulties completing the project.

Interviews with Islamic Religious Education teacher Ms. Siti Rohani, S.Pd., showed that the teacher not only provided verbal instructions but also directly demonstrated diligence and sincerity in carrying out her duties as an educator. This attitude serves as a concrete example that students can observe throughout the learning process.

The researchers' observations also align with this. They observed that teachers actively circulated around the classroom, monitoring the progress of each group, providing feedback on students' work, and assisting groups experiencing difficulties in the calligraphy process. Teachers

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also continued to assist students until all groups completed their assigned projects.

Based on the research findings, teacher role models are a crucial factor in strengthening students' hard-working character. Through concrete examples demonstrated by teachers in diligently carrying out tasks, students gain firsthand experience of the importance of perseverance, patience, and commitment to completing work.

These findings align with the opinion of Siti Khodijah et al., who stated that teachers serve as moral models for students, thus teachers' attitudes and behaviors in daily interactions have a strong influence on student character development (Khodijah et al., 2024). Through role models, teachers not only serve as transmitters of material but also as role models who provide examples of behavior that students can emulate in their daily lives (Arpah, 2026).

Based on the findings described above, it can be concluded that the strengthening of the character of hard work through teacher role models in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning based on Project Based Learning (PjBL) at SMPN 3 Pujut takes place through examples of behavior demonstrated by teachers during the learning process. The teacher's sincerity and consistency in assisting the implementation of the calligraphy project serve as an example for students to remain diligent, not easily give up, and be serious in completing learning tasks.

d. Strengthening Process Through Group Work

Strengthening character education in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning based on Project Based Learning (PjBL) at SMPN 3 Pujut also occurs through group work during the Asmaul Husana calligraphy project. In the project-based learning model, students collaborate to plan, implement, and complete assigned projects. Through this process, students gain experience that fosters the development of responsible character.

Responsibility is reinforced through the division of tasks within the group. Each group member has a specific role and task that must be completed to ensure the project's success. This requires students to carry out their tasks effectively and be accountable for the results.

Interviews with Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher Siti Rohani, S.Pd., indicate that the teacher provides opportunities for students to learn responsibility through the implementation of assigned tasks within the group. Each member is required to fulfill their role to ensure the project's successful completion.

In line with this, the researcher's observations indicate that students carry out their tasks according to the agreed-upon division of labor. Each group member appears to be involved in the calligraphy process and strives to complete their respective tasks to the best of their abilities.

Based on research findings, group work in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) based on

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Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is a crucial process in strengthening students' sense of responsibility. Through the division of tasks, implementation of roles, and active involvement in project completion, students learn to fulfill their obligations, maintain commitments, and take responsibility for the results of their work.

This finding aligns with the views of Muhammad Ihsan Dacholfany et al., who stated that character develops through social experiences that provide students with opportunities to directly practice moral values in their daily lives. In the context of project-based learning, group work provides a space for students to learn responsibility for themselves and their group.

Based on the above findings, it can be concluded that group work in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) based on Project-Based Learning (PjBL) at SMPN 3 Pujut serves as a means of strengthening the sense of responsibility through active student involvement in carrying out tasks, maintaining group commitments, and completing calligraphy projects together to achieve predetermined goals.

Based on the comparison table above, it is clear that the strengthening of character education in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) based on Project Based Learning (PjBL) at SMPN 2 and SMPN 3 Pujut shares similarities in their process approach, namely through teacher strategies, habituation, role modeling, and group work. However, there are differences in the emphasis on orientation and dominant character traits developed at each school.

In terms of teacher strategies, SMPN 2 Pujut tends to emphasize strengthening discipline and responsibility through structured learning management, such as clear task allocation, time-bound targets, and ongoing monitoring of portfolio work. Meanwhile, SMPN 3 Pujut focuses more on strengthening religious and creative character by linking the Asmaul Husana material to everyday life and providing more space for students to develop calligraphy ideas and designs.

In terms of habituation, SMPN 2 Pujut emphasizes the instilling of religious values through routine activities such as group prayer and greetings integrated into learning activities. SMPN 3 Pujut emphasizes the development of discipline, reflected in punctuality, adherence to schedules, and student readiness for project implementation.

In terms of teacher role models, both schools demonstrate the strengthening of hard work through the role of teachers as role models who accompany and guide students until project completion. The difference lies in the implementation context: SMPN 2 Pujut emphasizes consistent process supervision, while SMPN 3 Pujut emphasizes patience and mentoring in students' creative processes.

In terms of group work, both schools utilize collaboration as a means of character building,

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but with different focuses. SMPN 2 Pujut focuses more on strengthening creative character through the freedom to develop ideas and product variations, while SMPN 3 Pujut emphasizes strengthening responsibility through clear role division in project completion.

Overall, it can be concluded that the main difference between SMPN 2 and SMPN 3 Pujut lies in the orientation of the character building developed. SMPN 2 Pujut emphasizes strengthening the character of discipline, responsibility, religiousness, hard work, and creativity through structured and systematic learning management. Meanwhile, SMPN 3 Pujut emphasizes strengthening the character of religion, creativity, discipline, responsibility, and hard work through freedom of expression and the development of student creativity in the learning process.

CONCLUSION

The process of strengthening character education in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning based on Project Based Learning (PjBL) at SMPN 2 and SMPN 3 Pujut takes place systematically through teacher strategies, habituation, role models, and group work. Teacher strategies are implemented through providing direction, motivation, supervision, reinforcement, and evaluation integrated into each stage of learning. Habituation is carried out through routine activities that encourage students to apply character values consistently in learning activities. Teachers demonstrate exemplary behavior through attitudes, behaviors, and responsibilities that serve as examples for students. Group work is a means of strengthening character because it provides opportunities for students to learn to work together, communicate, respect the opinions of others, and be responsible for shared tasks. Thus, the Project Based Learning model not only functions as a learning approach oriented towards achieving academic competencies, but also becomes an effective means of strengthening students' character education in a contextual and sustainable manner.

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