EFFORTS TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' ACADEMIC INTEGRITY THROUGH RELIGIOUS CULTURE

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Abstract:

This research aims to uncover the impact of religious culture on the academic integrity of students at Madrasah Aliyah Darul Ulum Lumajang. Using a qualitative approach with a case study design, this research involves in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis. The research results show that religious education and a conducive learning environment play a significant role in shaping students' academic integrity. The moral values taught in religion, such as honesty and responsibility, become a strong foundation for student behavior. Additionally, the madrasah environment that emphasizes religious values creates an atmosphere that supports ethical behavior. Nevertheless, this study also found challenges such as academic pressure and the influence of the social environment that can trigger cheating behavior. This study concludes that a strong religious culture can serve as a fortress for students' academic integrity. However, continuous efforts are needed to ensure that religious values are effectively internalized and the learning environment remains conducive.

Keywords: *Efforts To Improve, Academic integrity, Religious culture.*

INTRODUCTION

Religious culture is an effort to realize the values of religious teachings in behavior and morals in everyday life(Khadavi, 2023). Religious culture plays an important role in shaping students' character and behavior by emphasizing values and traditions rooted in religious teachings(Wardi & Amartika, 2020; Wening, M. H., 2020). This involves strategies such as creating a religious atmosphere, instilling Islamic values, and consistently applying traditions to foster a religious culture in the academic environment(Guntoro & Hasan, 2023). By integrating religious teachings into daily activities, it can instill values of academic integrity to shape students who are free from various forms of cheating(Sagala et al., 2024). Academic integrity is the most important aspect in achieving educational goals(Widodo et al., 2023). Every student, educator, and school stakeholder must uphold the values of academic integrity by developing human resources and nurturing religious character(Kenia & Uyun, 2023). Academic integrity is a commitment to academic values manifested in behaviors such as honesty, trustworthiness, fairness, respect, and responsibility in fulfilling academic demands (Hafizha, 2022), and it plays an important role in maintaining ethical standards and the quality of education(Syarif, 2023). This integrity refers to the moral of honesty and self-unity in terms of moral character. According to the International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI), academic integrity is defined as a commitment to five core values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility(Lau, 2021). If these values are absent in students, then issues of academic integrity will arise, leading to various forms of

academic dishonesty and a lack of responsibility(Syarif, 2023).

Academic dishonesty encompasses various fraudulent actions such as plagiarism, falsifying attendance, and manipulating academic work.(Kenia & Uyun, 2023) This happens because academic grades are considered a priority over true learning, which leads to academic dishonesty such as cheating (Kenia & Uyun, 2023) (Razek, 2017), despite arguments stating that dishonest behavior or academic cheating has become part of the fundamental moral issues of every individual.(Laka & Krismiyanto, 2024).

Academic dishonesty has evolved into a phenomenon that undermines the reputation of the education system, which is concerning (Razek, 2017). It is no wonder that in recent years, academic integrity has become one of the most popular issues worldwide(Duliba et al., 2021). It cannot be denied that the prevalence of academic dishonesty occurring in educational environments is a consequence of advancements in information technology(Palandeng et al., 2023). Although there are many factors that cause academic dishonesty, according to Octavia et al., the four main factors that lead to students' academic dishonesty are pressure, opportunity, rationalization, and ability. If any one of these elements is not met, then academic dishonesty will not occur(Pramudyastuti et al., 2020). The role of religion is expected to serve as a bastion for student integrity so that they do not fall into the hegemony of academic values alone, thereby legitimizing academic dishonesty. In this context, it is necessary to identify the relationship between students' religiosity and academic behavior, as well as to reveal how religious values can influence attitudes towards academic integrity.

According to several studies, religiosity has an impact on academic integrity. The research findings (Pramudyastuti et al., 2020) indicate that religiosity significantly affects academic cheating, with higher religiosity associated with a lower tendency to engage in cheating behavior(Kenia & Uyun, 2023). Additionally, Herlyana et al. found that religiosity has a "negative" influence on academic dishonesty. In other words, if students' religiosity is high, academic dishonesty is also lower(Herlyana et al., 2017). The same results were also found in a study conducted by Arifah et al., which concluded that religiosity impacts academic dishonesty(Arifah et al., 2018). Widyana shows different research results indicating that religiosity does not have a significant impact on academic cheating behavior(Laka & Krismiyanto, 2024). Based on the above opinions, this research was conducted to gain knowledge about religiosity as a culture towards academic integrity at Madrasah Aliyah Darul Ulum Lumajang. It is important to understand the role of religion in shaping students' attitudes and behaviors related to academic integrity, as this can provide valuable insights in efforts to prevent cheating in the world of education.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to deeply explore complex social phenomena. The case study was selected because it enables researchers to intensively investigate the specific context at MA Darul Ulum Lumajang, thus providing a rich and in-depth picture of the phenomenon being studied. In addition, case studies also allow researchers to make analytical generalizations, which means drawing conclusions that apply to similar cases. The data collection techniques used in this study are in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted with the principal, teachers, and selected students from various classes at MA Darul Ulum Lumajang. The selection of this school is based on the school's reputation in implementing religious values, student diversity, or data availability. The number of respondents interviewed includes the principal, 4 teachers, and 5 students. Participatory observation was conducted to directly observe the learning activities, student social interactions, and the learning environment that supports or hinders the development of academic integrity.

Documentation is carried out to collect additional data in the form of school documents, such as curricula, syllabi, and exam results. Data analysis in this study refers to the interactive data analysis model according to (John W. Creswell, 2018). The stages

of data analysis include: (1) data reduction, which involves selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming raw data into a more understandable form; (2) data presentation, which involves organizing data in the form of matrices, diagrams, or narratives to facilitate the identification of patterns and themes; and (3) conclusion drawing, which involves making interpretations of the presented data to answer the research questions. In the conclusion drawing stage, the researcher will perform data triangulation, which involves comparing data from various sources (interviews, observations, and documents) to enhance the validity of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Education and culture in building an academic moral foundation

Religious education plays a very important role in shaping students' academic integrity. Religious education is considered a moral foundation that shapes students' character and helps them understand the values of honesty, responsibility, and trustworthiness.

Responden	The Role of Religious Education in Shaping Academic Integrity
Head of Madrasah	Very important, it serves as the moral and ethical foundation for students
Teacher	Helps students understand the values of honesty, responsibility, and trustworthiness
Student	Influences daily behavior, making them more aware of the consequences of their actions

Table 1. Interview Results

From the table above, there is a strong consensus among school principals, teachers, and students regarding the importance of religious education in shaping academic integrity. All respondents emphasized that religious education provides a strong moral foundation for students. This strong consensus indicates that religious education has successfully internalized moral values in students. This shows that religious education is not just theoretical knowledge, but has also shaped students' daily behavior and attitudes.

In addition to general education, the learning environment in madrasahs is very conducive and also impacts the cultivation of academic integrity. The open classroom atmosphere, positive teacher-student interactions, and the presence of a reward and punishment system based on religious values create an environment that supports honest and responsible behavior.

Environmental Aspects	Relation to Academic Integrity
Classroom atmosphere	Conducive to open and honest discussions
Teacher-student interaction	Mutual respect and openness
Presence of a reward and punishment system	Based on religious values

Table 2. observation results

The learning environment in madrasahs plays a very important role in shaping students' academic integrity. A positive and conducive environment can facilitate the internalization of moral values taught in religious education. A conducive learning environment can serve as a model for student behavior. If students see their teachers and

peers behaving honestly and responsibly, they are likely to imitate that behavior. In addition, a positive environment can also increase students' motivation to learn and reduce academic pressure that can trigger cheating.

Cases and causes of academic dishonesty

Academic dishonesty in madrasahs reflects a significant challenge in maintaining the integrity of education. Some forms of dishonesty, such as plagiarism, manipulation of assignment data, and illegal collaboration in exams, are often found(Pangesti et al., 2023). The main factor causing this is the pressure to achieve high academic results without considering the ethical learning process(Pertama & Anggiriawan, 2022). According to various studies, this phenomenon not only damages the reputation of students but also tarnishes the image of madrasahs as institutions that uphold religious values. Therefore, addressing this issue requires a comprehensive approach, including the improvement of the evaluation system and the intensive instillation of moral values.

Academic dishonesty in the madrasah environment indicates a gap in the education system. Although religious values are emphasized, many students are still tempted to cheat due to the lack of internalization of these values. Pressure from parents, academic competition, and lack of supervision are contributing factors to this deviant behavior(Susanti et al., 2024). The impact is very broad, ranging from the loss of trust among students to the weakening of collective morality. Therefore, madrasahs need to take a more serious approach in integrating religious education into the assessment system that encourages honest behavior.

Pressure is the dominant cause of students' academic cheating behavior(Pramudyastuti et al., 2020). The pressure to achieve high grades from parents or teachers often leads students to justify any means, even if it goes against ethical norms. Opportunities also play a major role; weak teacher supervision or the absence of technological controls allow students to cheat the system. Rationalization exacerbates this problem, with students justifying cheating as an "emergency" or survival strategy. Finally, individual abilities, whether in exploiting loopholes or devising cheating strategies, play a significant role in perpetuating this practice.

Religious Culture as a Reinforcer of Academic Ethics

Religious education not only serves as a means of teaching moral values but also functions as a tool for the continuous transformation of students' character(Kulsum & Muhid, 2022). In a global context where academic integrity has become a crucial issue(Nugroho, 2023). Teaching religious values not only enhances individual honesty but also strengthens the education system by reducing the risk of academic ethical violations. This is consistent with studies that show that religiosity provides a strong moral foundation in facing academic pressure.

The moral values taught in religion, such as honesty, trustworthiness, and responsibility, become a strong foundation for students. When these values are internalized, students tend to behave according to the prevailing ethical norms. Students with a strong understanding of religion tend to have lower levels of academic dishonesty(Sholihah, 2019). This indicates that religious education not only provides cognitive knowledge but also holistically shapes an individual's character, enabling them to distinguish between right and wrong in an academic context. the internalization of religious values significantly impacts the tendency to commit academic fraud (Daryanto & Ernawati, 2024). In other words, without a strong moral foundation, individuals are more susceptible to deviating from ethical norms.

Through the internalization of religious values, religious education has a connection with academic integrity. Values such as justice, responsibility, and honesty help students understand the moral consequences of their actions. A study found that the level of students' religiosity is inversely related to cheating behavior(Heryadi et al., 2024). Students with a strong religious foundation tend to prioritize the value of honesty over academic results alone(Sholihah, 2019). This happens because religious education provides an ethical framework that guides behavior, allowing students to make decisions

based on strong moral principles. In addition to academic education, a conducive madrasah environment supports the formation of academic integrity. An open classroom atmosphere, positive relationships between teachers and students, and a reward system based on religious values create an ecosystem that encourages honest behavior. Positive interactions can strengthen the internalization of values(Nuryupa et al., 2024).

However, if this environment is not reinforced, the potential for students to adopt ethical behavior will weaken. Therefore, it is important for educational institutions to continuously maintain a supportive learning atmosphere so that students feel intrinsically motivated to behave according to religious values. A positive learning environment reinforces the moral values instilled through religious education. Open interactions and appreciation of good behavior allow students to internalize these values. a supportive environment can reduce academic stress and enhance ethical compliance(Thohari et al., 2024). In other words, a healthy learning environment serves as a platform for students to practice what they have learned morally. This positive effect also reduces the chances of academic cheating because students are exposed to ethical behavior models from their teachers and peers.

A conducive religious culture plays an important role in shaping academic integrity. Religious traditions consistently applied in an academic environment can serve as a strong deterrent against dishonest behavior. A positive religious environment enhances students' commitment to moral values(Oktafia & Adiyono, 2023; Sagala et al., 2024). If this culture is allowed to fade, the risk of declining academic ethics quality will increase. Therefore, it is important for educational institutions to strengthen religious practices at the institutional level so that students can be inspired to lead an honest and responsible academic life.

The integrated religious culture within the education system greatly contributes to maintaining academic ethical standards. When students witness genuine religious practices in daily life, such as honesty and respect, they tend to imitate those behaviors. Studies show that the moral example set by teachers plays a crucial role in instilling ethical values(Aini & Ramadhan, 2024; Judrah et al., 2024; Parnawi & Ridho, 2023). Moreover, religious culture provides a spiritual foundation that strengthens students' resistance to the temptation of academic misconduct. In conclusion, the close relationship between religious culture and academic ethics reinforces the importance of value-based education in the modern world

CONCLUSION

Religious education plays a central role in shaping academic integrity. Teaching values such as honesty, responsibility, and trustworthiness helps students understand the moral consequences of their actions. In addition, a conducive learning environment with a strong religious culture reinforces the application of these values in daily life. the collaboration between religious education and a supportive academic environment creates students with high morality, thereby able to reduce academic dishonesty practices. This research contributes to the efforts of instilling a sense of religiosity to uphold academic ethics. The approach used, namely a combination of interviews and observations, offers empirical data that strengthens the argument about the importance of religious values in education. In addition, this research explains the correlation between a conducive environment, religious values, and academic integrity, which provides practical guidance for educational institutions. This study also expands the literature review by demonstrating that the internalization of religious values is effective in shaping the moral character of students in the context of madrasahs.

The limitation of this research lies in its narrow focus on the madrasah environment, so the results may be applicable to other educational contexts such as public schools. Moreover, the qualitative method limits the generalization of the findings. Other variables such as social pressure and access to technology have also not been analyzed in depth. Therefore, further research is needed to explore the impact of

religiosity in a broader educational environment, using a quantitative approach to strengthen the generalization of the findings

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