

Fostering Effective Islamic Moral Instruction through Teacher Creativity: A Study at MA Muhammadiyah Limbung

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of teacher creativity in enhancing the effectiveness of Islamic moral instruction (Aqidah Akhlak) at MA Muhammadiyah Limbung, Indonesia. It explores how creative pedagogical strategies support students' moral development, engagement, and classroom participation within the framework of Islamic education.

A qualitative case study approach was adopted, involving classroom observations, in-depth interviews with teachers, school leaders, and students, as well as document analysis. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns of creative teaching practices and the factors that support or hinder their implementation.

The findings reveal that teachers employed diverse and contextually relevant strategies, such as multimedia integration, storytelling, discussion-based learning, and value-oriented games. These methods effectively enhanced students' understanding of moral content and made learning more participatory. Despite infrastructural constraints, teachers creatively adapted by using visual aids, video sharing, and collaborative media. Factors supporting creativity included teacher competence and student enthusiasm, while barriers included lack of facilities and student misbehavior.

Teacher creativity is crucial in delivering effective moral education. By combining various instructional methods and adapting to classroom conditions, teachers promote meaningful and engaging Islamic learning experiences. Institutional support and ongoing professional development are essential to sustain such creativity, particularly in resource-limited contexts.

Keywords: Teacher Creativity, Islamic Moral Instruction, Effective Learning, Faith-Based Schools, Qualitative Case Study, Multimedia Pedagogy, Moral Education.

1. Introduction

The development of Islamic education in the 21st century is marked by the demand for learning that not only emphasizes the transfer of knowledge but also the inculcation of noble values and character. This becomes increasingly crucial in the context of Akidah Akhlak (Islamic creed and ethics) learning, which plays a strategic

role in shaping students' morality and personality according to Islamic principles. Learning that relies solely on conventional approaches is often insufficient to stimulate active and reflective student participation. Therefore, teacher creativity becomes a key element in creating meaningful and effective learning experiences (Malik & Jumani, 2022). Moreover, the role of the teacher as a facilitator of learning requires the ability to design innovative, interactive, and contextual methods tailored to the needs of contemporary students (Sholeh et al., 2024). In the context of madrasahs, creative approaches enable students not only to comprehend the content of Akidah Akhlak teachings but also to internalize those values into their daily behavior (Badri & Malik, 2024). Creativity in teaching Akidah Akhlak may include the use of digital media, project-based learning techniques, and the integration of moral values through storytelling and reflection (Satriawan & Kurniawan, 2025). Within this framework, teachers are expected to transform into inspirational and transformative agents of learning (Zamsiswaya et al., 2024).

The need for innovation in Akidah Akhlak instruction is also driven by the current moral challenges faced by young generations, who live in environments influenced by technological advancement, globalization, and identity crises. Consequently, the effectiveness of learning is not only measured by cognitive outcomes but also by the extent to which ethical values are formed and practiced by students. Previous studies emphasize that teachers bear both moral and professional responsibilities to adapt learning strategies that bridge normative religious teachings with the real-life contexts of students (Succarie, 2024). This aligns with student-centered learning approaches, which emphasize the active role of learners in exploring and reflecting on values (Marzuki et al., 2025). In this regard, teachers must go beyond delivering content to serve as role models, communicators, and character builders (Al-Hawamleh, 2019). Research focusing on teacher creativity in moral and religious instruction also shows a positive correlation with increased ethical awareness among students (<https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.23.11.22>). Therefore, teacher creativity is not merely an additional aspect but a primary requirement for ensuring the success of character education in madrasahs (Memon et al., 2024).

Although numerous studies have addressed the importance of creativity in education, specific research exploring the creativity of Akidah Akhlak teachers at the senior Islamic high school (MA) level remains limited. This represents a significant academic gap, considering the nature of Akidah Akhlak instruction, which is value-laden, and the developmental stage of upper-secondary students who are entering identity formation phases. Teachers at the MA level face dual challenges: delivering abstract concepts such as tawheed (monotheism), faith, and ethics while making

them relevant and contextual for adolescents. Teacher creativity in packaging this material is crucial to ensure student engagement in the learning process (Hasanah et al., 2023). Additionally, post-pandemic learning challenges require teachers to utilize various media and hybrid learning approaches that uphold spiritual values. In the context of MA Muhammadiyah Limbung in Gowa Regency, this study is essential to observe how Akidah Akhlak teachers implement creative practices to achieve holistic learning effectiveness. This research also addresses the need to document best practices that can be replicated by other madrasahs, both within and beyond the Muhammadiyah educational environment. Therefore, the focus of this study is to explore the dimensions of teacher creativity in delivering effective Akidah Akhlak instruction within a modernist Islamic school setting.

In conclusion, this background highlights the urgency of researching teacher creativity in Akidah Akhlak education to foster effective learning. The uniqueness of this study lies in its focus on integrating value-based approaches, pedagogical strategies, and the context of a Muhammadiyah madrasah in a semi-urban area. The results of this research are expected to contribute to the development of Islamic education scholarship and the implementation of adaptive and transformative moral instruction aligned with contemporary educational demands.

2. Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design to explore the manifestations of teacher creativity in the implementation of Islamic moral instruction (Aqidah Akhlak) at MA Muhammadiyah Limbung, Gowa Regency, Indonesia. The case study model was chosen to provide an in-depth and contextualized understanding of the pedagogical strategies, media usage, and classroom dynamics that characterize effective and creative teaching practices.

Research Site and Participants

The research was conducted at MA Muhammadiyah Limbung, a senior Islamic high school located in a semi-urban area of South Sulawesi. The selection of the research site was based on purposive sampling, considering the school's active efforts in implementing value-based Islamic education and its reputation for adopting innovative teaching methods. Participants in this study included four core stakeholders: (1) teachers of Aqidah Akhlak, (2) the school principal, (3) the curriculum coordinator, and (4) selected students from grades X and XI.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through the following methods:

- a. **In-depth Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers, school leaders, and students to capture their experiences, perceptions, and reflections on teaching-learning processes. Interviews allowed for the exploration of both cognitive strategies and affective dimensions in instructional practice.
- b. **Observation:** Non-participant classroom observations were undertaken to examine how creativity was manifested in lesson planning, media use, student interaction, and moral development strategies. Observation guidelines focused on teaching methods, learning environment, and student responses.
- c. **Document Analysis:** Teaching materials such as lesson plans (RPP), syllabi, PowerPoint presentations, and student worksheets were analyzed to validate the instructional strategies and evaluate the creativity embedded in content delivery.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved the process of coding, categorization, and interpretation to identify recurring themes related to teacher creativity and instructional effectiveness. The data from interviews, observations, and documents were triangulated to ensure validity and reliability. Codes were generated inductively and were grouped into broader categories such as media usage, method variation, classroom interaction, and moral content integration.

Trustworthiness of Data

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of findings, several strategies were adopted:

- a. **Triangulation:** Data sources and methods were cross-verified to confirm the consistency of emerging themes.
- b. **Member Checking:** Key participants were asked to review summarized interview transcripts to confirm accuracy and authenticity.
- c. **Thick Description:** Detailed narratives were provided to reflect the actual classroom context and teacher behavior, thereby enhancing transferability.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Institute for Research and Community Service (LPPM), Muhammadiyah University of Makassar. All participants gave informed consent prior to data collection. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the research process.

3. Hasil

Teacher Creativity in Islamic Moral Instruction at MA Muhammadiyah Limbung

Creativity is an essential demand in both education and daily life. It fosters innovation and continuous development. In the context of Islamic moral instruction (Aqidah Akhlak), the application of teacher creativity has a demonstrable positive impact on students. Creative instructional strategies manifest through interactive teaching approaches, such as asking thought-provoking questions, presenting visuals, demonstrations, sensory engagement, observation, and encouraging active participation throughout the learning process.

Field observations indicate that during the COVID-19 pandemic, interactive learning approaches were actively implemented. Teachers utilized various digital tools, including Google Forms, Google Meet, and learning material distribution through messaging platforms. The use of digital projectors (infocus) was perceived as the most effective medium in delivering Aqidah Akhlak content, often accompanied by audio materials such as songs. For example, in a lesson about the twenty obligatory attributes of Allah, students were asked to memorize the list while watching and singing along to educational videos, making learning more enjoyable and less burdensome.

As affirmed by the school principal, the teaching and learning process is a collaborative effort where teachers teach, students learn, and school leaders continuously motivate and support both groups. Teachers also share instructional files through a centralized system to ease student access. In response to technical limitations, teachers often prepare backup materials such as posters and printed images.

A teacher shared that due to limited resources such as projectors, they employ alternative strategies to maintain student engagement. This includes using visual aids, videos about the afterlife, and reflective activities related to gratitude. Students are encouraged to view, analyze, and discuss digital content shared via smartphones, fostering moral reflection outside the classroom. This blended use of visual and traditional materials—textbooks, worksheets, and supplementary readings—enhances the teaching-learning experience.

Another teacher described the integration of games and role-playing in teaching about good and bad character. These activities encourage all students to participate, bringing moral lessons to life through dramatization. From these findings, it is evident that teachers at MA Muhammadiyah Limbung demonstrate creativity by combining visual, auditory, and kinesthetic elements in their lessons while adapting to the learning environment and student characteristics.

Implementation of Effective Learning at MA Muhammadiyah Limbung

Effective learning can be defined as the successful achievement of learning objectives. It occurs when students are able to comprehend and apply the knowledge imparted by teachers. Active student engagement is a key indicator of effective instruction. At MA Muhammadiyah Limbung, effective instruction is realized through careful planning, strategic media use, and engaging pedagogy.

According to the school principal, teachers are expected to select the most suitable strategies and media aligned with curriculum standards and instructional goals. Media selection must be adapted to the learning content and student needs.

The curriculum coordinator emphasized that instructional creativity lies in diversifying teaching methods. Using only one method may lead to student boredom, whereas combining multiple strategies within one session can address various learning styles and increase effectiveness.

A subject teacher stated that effective instruction begins with preparing a well-designed lesson plan (RPP) featuring relevant topics such as the attributes of Allah. Instruction is supported by digital tools like PowerPoint presentations enriched with visuals, videos, and animations. This multimedia approach increases student interest and supports formative assessment.

A student interview revealed that engaging classroom atmospheres—supported by games and moral storytelling—enhance motivation. Students appreciate when learning is meaningful and integrated with narratives related to the lesson themes.

Based on these insights, effective instruction in Aqidah Akhlak at MA Muhammadiyah Limbung involves:

- a. **Lesson Planning:** Teachers create lesson plans covering 2–3 class sessions per topic.
- b. **Material Preparation:** Materials are developed several days in advance using textbooks and online references.
- c. **Teaching Method Selection:** A mix of discussions, Q&A, demonstrations, and assignments is used, based on student needs and lesson content.
- d. **Teaching Execution:** Implementation follows the RPP, employing a blend of lecture, storytelling, role modeling, and memorization methods. This approach not only conveys content but also fosters character development through example and interaction.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors of Teacher Creativity at MA Muhammadiyah Limbung

Instructional success is influenced by supporting and inhibiting factors. According to the curriculum coordinator, creativity thrives when teachers possess the capacity to innovate and students show high motivation. Conversely, lack of teacher creativity and classroom disruption may hinder instructional flow.

A teacher shared that students' enthusiasm often supports creative teaching, making classroom management easier. However, occasional disruptions from a few students are viewed not as barriers but as challenges to be addressed through engaging media and methods.

In conclusion, the main supporting factors for teacher creativity are teacher competency and student enthusiasm. Inhibiting factors include limited teacher innovation capacity and disruptive student behavior. Despite these challenges, teachers at MA Muhammadiyah Limbung demonstrate resilience and adaptability in fostering effective Islamic moral instruction through creative pedagogy.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the integral role of teacher creativity in fostering effective Islamic moral instruction. The consistent use of varied teaching methods, including visual media, storytelling, games, and digital tools, reinforces the argument that pedagogical flexibility enhances student engagement and understanding. This aligns with contemporary theories of constructivist learning, particularly those of Vygotsky, which emphasize that learners construct knowledge through social interaction and active involvement in the learning process. Vygotsky's notion of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) suggests that students can achieve higher levels of understanding when assisted by more knowledgeable individuals, such as creative teachers who scaffold their learning experiences (Alshammari, 2021).

In addition to constructivist theory, the findings also resonate with Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences. Gardner, argues that students possess different kinds of intelligences, including linguistic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, visual-spatial, musical, and bodily-kinesthetic. The implementation of diverse instructional strategies by the teachers at MA Muhammadiyah Limbung—such as videos, music, dramatization, and discussions—addresses these multiple intelligences and caters to different learning preferences, making instruction more inclusive and effective (Howard-Jones, 2019).

Moreover, the study reflects the principles of Transformative Learning Theory, proposed by Jack Mezirow. According to Mezirow (1997), learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and

actions. When teachers integrate creative methods that provoke reflection and emotional engagement, such as storytelling and role-playing, they stimulate transformative learning, allowing students to internalize values and change their behavior (Dirkx, 2012).

The integration of creativity is not only a pedagogical strategy but also a response to systemic limitations. Teachers' ability to innovate within constraints—limited resources, diverse student abilities, and technological access—demonstrates pedagogical resilience. Moreover, creative methods foster affective and moral dimensions of learning, which are critical in Islamic education but often underexplored in standard curricula (Suherman, 2022).

This study reinforces existing literature that advocates for the use of multi-modal and student-centered strategies in religious instruction. It adds context-specific evidence from a semi-urban Islamic school setting, thus contributing to a broader understanding of how creativity operates in faith-based educational contexts. The importance of school leadership support and collaborative culture also emerged as crucial elements in sustaining instructional innovation (Wildan et al., 2025).

Despite successes, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, teacher readiness, and classroom management require systemic intervention. Future studies should explore scalable models of teacher training and infrastructure development that support creativity in religious instruction.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that teacher creativity plays a pivotal role in fostering effective Islamic moral instruction. Teachers at MA Muhammadiyah Limbung implemented various creative teaching methods, including the use of multimedia, storytelling, role-playing, and discussion-based strategies. These approaches significantly enhanced student engagement, moral comprehension, and participation in class activities.

The success of these creative strategies was supported by thoughtful lesson planning, the integration of multiple instructional methods in a single session, and responsiveness to student needs and classroom dynamics. Teachers demonstrated resilience by adapting to infrastructural limitations through low-tech alternatives, such as visual aids and interactive storytelling, while also leveraging digital tools when accessible.

Key factors supporting creativity included teachers' pedagogical competence and students' motivation, while obstacles included limited facilities and occasional

classroom disruptions. The presence of supportive school leadership and a collaborative teaching culture also contributed to sustaining creativity in instruction.

This study reinforces that fostering creativity among Islamic education teachers is not merely a pedagogical enhancement but a necessary foundation for character-based and engaging religious education. The findings offer valuable insights for teacher development programs, particularly in faith-based schools operating in low-resource environments.

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