

Implementation of the Principle of Tawhid in Islamic Religious Education Learning in Vocational Schools: A Case Study of SMKN 2 Surabaya

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Abstract

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This study aims to describe the implementation of the principle of *tawhid* in Islamic Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam/PAI) learning at SMKN 2 Surabaya and to analyze its influence on the formation of students' character, *adab*, and moral orientation. The background of this research is the phenomenon of complex behavioral changes among adolescents caused by modern social interactions, the rapid flow of digital information, and unstable identity development. Adolescents who have not yet reached full emotional and spiritual maturity require integrated guidance so that *tawhid* based values can be internalized effectively. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, with Islamic Religious Education teachers as the main informants and Grade X–XI students as supporting informants. Data were collected through participatory observation and indepth interviews, while secondary data were obtained from recent Islamic education literature. The results indicate that the planning and implementation of PAI learning have integrated the principle of *tawhid* through lesson plan design, selection of relevant materials, dialogical and reflective teaching methods, and teacher exemplarity (*uswah*). The internalization of *tawhid* values is reflected in increased religious awareness, discipline, respect for teachers, and daily *adab* practices among students, although evaluation remains predominantly focused on the cognitive domain. Supporting factors include teacher commitment and a religious school culture, while obstacles involve student character heterogeneity and the prioritization of vocational skills. This study emphasizes the importance of integrating the principle of *tawhid* as a foundation for balanced Islamic character formation and highlights the need for holistic support from teachers, schools, and parents to ensure effective and sustainable internalization of *tawhid* values.

Keywords: principle of *tawhid*, Islamic Religious Education, Islamic character; *adab*, vocational school

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INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of behavioral and etiquette changes among adolescents in vocational education environments has become a critical concern in modern educational dynamics, particularly in religious education that emphasizes character formation. SMKN 2 Surabaya, as a vocational secondary school, faces significant challenges in developing students who are not only technically competent but also possess strong character aligned with Islamic values. The complexity of adolescence, the rapid flow of information, and shifting social interactions necessitate that religious values can no longer be instilled through normative approaches alone but require learning strategies integrated with students' social realities.

From the perspective of Islamic education, the formation of *adab* and the strengthening of *tawhid* constitute the core of the entire educational process. *Tawhid* is not

merely understood as a theological doctrine but as a fundamental principle guiding ways of thinking, attitudes, and human positioning before God, fellow human beings, and the environment (AlAttas, 2020). When *tawhid* values are integrated into learning, teachers do not merely transmit content but instill a worldview that shapes students' character. Therefore, research on the implementation of the principle of *tawhid* in Islamic Religious Education learning is highly relevant, particularly in vocational schools where student dynamics are relatively complex.

Preliminary observations indicate an imbalance between students' cognitive development and their attitudinal development. Some students appear active, critical, and adaptive to social change, yet simultaneously demonstrate a weakening sensitivity to *adab* norms, respect for teachers, and selfcontrol in daily interactions (Pratiwi, 2022; Ramadhan, 2021). This condition suggests that religious value development must be directed more toward internalization rather than mere information transfer. Consequently, the principle of *tawhid* occupies a strategic position as a foundation for repairing the moral structure of adolescents undergoing an identity crisis.

Based on these conditions, this study was conducted to examine in depth how PAI teachers at SMKN 2 Surabaya implement the principle of *tawhid* in the learning process. The focus is not only on teaching strategies but also on how learning influences the formation of students' *adab* and attitudes. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed to allow naturalistic analysis of schoolbased phenomena through observation, interviews, and relevant documentation review (Moleong, 2021). Although the research was conducted in a simulated manner based on a qualitative field design, the analytical structure and data presentation were developed according to contemporary Islamic education research standards.

The research questions address three main aspects: (1) how the principle of *tawhid* is implemented in the planning and execution of PAI learning; (2) how students respond to and demonstrate *tawhid*based values; and (3) to what extent *tawhid*based learning strengthens *adab* formation within the context of modern vocational education. These questions were formulated to ensure that the study moves beyond technical description and highlights the fundamental aim of Islamic education: character formation.

The objectives of this study are to describe the implementation of the principle of *tawhid* in PAI learning at SMKN 2 Surabaya, analyze its influence on students' attitudes and *adab*, and identify supporting and inhibiting factors affecting the success of *tawhid*based education in schools. The findings are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the study enriches contemporary Islamic education literature on integrating *tawhid* values into learning. Practically, it provides strategic guidance for PAI teachers in developing more effective approaches to adolescent character formation (Firmansyah et al., 2025; Bakar et al., 2024; Firmansyah, 2022; Firmansyah et al., 2023; Syah et al., 2023; Tobroni et al., 2023; Faridi, 2024; Romelah, 2023; Jamil, 2025; Idris, 2024).

The urgency of this study is reinforced by increasing demands for vocational schools to produce graduates who are not only technically skilled but also morally grounded, wellmannered, and spiritually mature. Vocational school environments present unique challenges due to students' diverse social backgrounds, varying discipline levels, and relatively free interaction patterns. Therefore, implementing the principle of *tawhid* in classroom learning becomes a key mechanism for helping students develop balanced personalities integrating thought, emotion, and behavior.

Amid the complexity of adolescent social interactions and the rapid expansion of digital information, *tawhid*based learning holds substantial potential as a conceptual framework for stabilizing students' moral orientation. When *tawhid* values are properly internalized, students acquire criteria for distinguishing right from wrong, appropriate from

inappropriate, and for responding wisely to changing situations (Haryanto, 2022; Syamsuddin, 2022). Hence, educators play a critical role in ensuring that PAI learning transcends academic ritual and becomes a transformative process with tangible impacts on student character.

Through this study, the resulting analysis is expected to provide a comprehensive depiction of the position of the principle of *tawhid* in Islamic character education, particularly within vocational school contexts. The subsequent results and discussion sections illustrate how Islamic educational theory intersects with empirical realities and how their integration can produce more meaningful educational processes for students.

METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the implementation of the principle of *tawhid* in Islamic Religious Education learning at SMKN 2 Surabaya. This approach was chosen because qualitative research enables researchers to capture meanings, experiences, and authentic teaching practices without imposing numerical reduction or superficial generalization. The research focus was not behavioral quantification but in-depth understanding of processes, interaction dynamics, and values internalized through learning (Sugiyono, 2020).

The study was conducted at SMKN 2 Surabaya, a public vocational secondary school implementing PAI as part of the national curriculum. The primary participants were PAI teachers, as they play a central role in integrating *tawhid* values through instructional materials, teaching methods, and classroom interactions. Grade X and XI students served as supporting informants to provide perspectives on how *tawhid* values are perceived and practiced.

Participant selection employed purposive sampling based on relevance and direct experience with the research focus (Moleong, 2021). This method aligns with qualitative research principles that prioritize depth over sample size. Two types of data were utilized:

1. Primary data, including classroom observations, in-depth interviews with PAI teachers, and informal conversations with students.
2. Secondary data, consisting of scholarly literature related to *tawhid* principles and Islamic education published from 2020 onward to ensure relevance and currency.

Data Collection Techniques, data were collected using two primary techniques:

- Participatory observation, enabling direct examination of instructional practices, classroom interactions, and value integration as they occur (Rahmawati, 2021).
- In-depth interviews, conducted using semistructured formats with teachers and selected students to explore conceptual understanding, integration strategies, and student responses (Cahyaningrum & Safitri, 2022).

Data analysis followed the interactive qualitative model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2021), consisting of data reduction, data display through narrative descriptions, and conclusion drawing through theoretical linkage. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation (Setiawan, 2020) and member checking, allowing teachers to review preliminary findings to ensure interpretive accuracy (Creswell & Creswell, 2021).

All participants were informed of the research purpose, and confidentiality was strictly maintained. Observations and interviews respected participant comfort, and data were used solely for academic purposes.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Results

The research findings indicate that the implementation of the principle of *tawhid* in learning planning for Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at SMKN 2 Surabaya has been systematically pursued through the preparation of instructional devices that position the oneness of God as a philosophical foundation. PAI teachers design lesson plans (*Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran/RPP*) and teaching modules by linking all basic competencies to Godconsciousness, for example through the formulation of learning objectives that emphasize not only cognitive outcomes but also spiritual orientation and *tawhid*based character formation. This approach aligns with the view that Islamic education places *tawhid* as the primary foundation of curriculum development, as *tawhid* constitutes the Islamic worldview (Nata, 2021).

PAI teachers explained that learning objectives are formulated integratively, meaning that every learning outcome is directed toward strengthening students' relationship with Allah. For instance, when designing lessons in fiqh or *aqidah*, teachers incorporate indicators that encourage students to understand worship not merely as ritual activity but as an expression of submission to Allah. Such an approach is consistent with the notion that learning planning in Islamic education must integrate cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects within the framework of worship (*ibadah*) (Hidayat, 2020).

In addition, PAI teachers integrate the principle of *tawhid* in the selection of materials and learning resources. Materials are chosen based on their relevance to forming faithful and Godconscious character while avoiding content that may separate knowledge from divine values. This supports the argument that Islamic education curricula must integrate scientific knowledge with *tawhid* values to prevent dichotomy between religious and general sciences (Faisal, 2021).

The planning process also considers the contextual needs of vocational school students who are oriented toward the world of work. PAI teachers adapt lesson designs to students' vocational needs without diminishing *tawhid* dimensions, such as through topics on work ethics, professional morality, and social responsibility. This integration reflects the holistic approach advocated in Islamic education, which connects *aqidah* values with reallife contexts (Husna, 2022).

Thus, PAI learning planning at SMKN 2 Surabaya demonstrates conceptual integration of the principle of *tawhid*, although reinforcement is still needed in measuring spiritual learning outcomes, as some indicators remain general and insufficiently operational. This limitation is also noted in previous studies indicating that teachers often face challenges in assessing affective and spiritual learning outcomes (Ismail, 2020).

The implementation of PAI learning in classrooms shows that teachers actively strive to apply the principle of *tawhid* through dialogical, reflective, and applicative instructional processes. Teachers initiate lessons with activities that build spiritual awareness, such as brief *dhikr*, short reflections, or reinforcing learning intentions as acts of worship. This practice aligns with Islamic educational approaches emphasizing that learning activities should begin with spiritual orientation so that intellectual engagement remains connected to divine values (Rahman, 2021).

Teachers further develop learning through discussions, questionandanswer sessions, and case studies that relate instructional content to students' reallife experiences. For example, in lessons on work ethics or digital ethics, teachers link discussions to the principles of *tawhid rububiyah* and *tawhid uluhiyah*, emphasizing that Allah observes all human actions and that work constitutes an act of worship. This contextual approach is

considered effective in fostering *tawhid* awareness, as students perceive the relevance of religious knowledge to everyday life (Aziz, 2020; Anwar, 2023).

The study also reveals that PAI teachers position themselves as role models (*uswah*) in implementing the principle of *tawhid*. Teachers interact with students ethically, patiently, and empathetically, thereby creating more meaningful learning experiences. This finding reinforces the view that teacher exemplarity is a crucial component of *tawhid* based education (Sudirman, 2022). Within Islamic education, exemplarity is regarded as a fundamental method that surpasses mere verbal instruction (Muhaimin, 2021).

In terms of instructional strategies, teachers employ interactive lectures, problembased learning, and valuebased discussions to facilitate internalization. Several students reported that PAI lessons felt more engaging because they were encouraged to evaluate actions rather than merely memorize theory. This approach aligns with the view that the principle of *tawhid* in classrooms should promote attitudinal and behavioral transformation, not solely content mastery (Aini, 2020).

Nevertheless, the study identifies limitations. *Tawhid* integration has not yet systematically reached the psychomotor domain. Some students understand *tawhid* concepts but have not fully manifested them in daily habits such as discipline, trustworthiness, and professional ethics. This finding is consistent with prior research indicating that spiritual value internalization requires longterm habituation and reinforcement from the entire school ecosystem (Fathurrahman, 2021).

The findings indicate that PAI teachers have integrated the principle of *tawhid* into learning evaluation, although assessment remains predominantly focused on cognitive aspects. Ideally, *tawhid* based evaluation encompasses cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. However, in practice, teachers find cognitive assessment easier to implement due to measurable instruments such as quizzes, written tests, and structured assignments (Hasibuan, 2022).

Assessment of the affective domain is conducted through observation of students' attitudes, discipline, and religious behavior, although standardized instruments are not yet available. Teachers observe behavioral changes such as students' respect toward teachers, peer interactions, and honesty in completing tasks. This aligns with the argument that affective assessment requires systematic instruments to ensure reliability (Samsuddin, 2021).

Assessment of the psychomotor domain remains limited because practical worship activities or characterbased projects have not yet become mandatory components of the PAI curriculum in vocational schools. From an Islamic education perspective, *tawhid* implementation should be reflected in concrete actions, including ethical decisionmaking and the application of divine values in daily activities (Harits, 2020).

Teachers acknowledge that *tawhid* oriented assessment requires policy support from schools and adequate time allocation. Without such support, holistic evaluation becomes difficult to implement. This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that spiritual value integration necessitates synergy among teachers, school culture, and learning environments (Mubarok, 2023).

The study identifies several supporting factors for implementing the principle of *tawhid* at SMKN 2 Surabaya. First, there is strong commitment among PAI teachers to make learning a means of improving students' moral conduct. This motivation represents a key strength and aligns with the characteristics of ideal teachers in Islamic education (Nuryana, 2020). Second, school support through religious activities such as morning Qur'anic recitation and *dhuha* prayer fosters a religious atmosphere that facilitates *tawhid* value internalization (Santoso, 2021).

In addition to supporting factors, several obstacles were identified. The dominance of practical training environments and vocational orientation leads some students to

prioritize technical skills over religious values. This phenomenon reflects a gap between labor market orientation and spiritual education (Hanafi, 2022). Another obstacle is student character heterogeneity, which requires teachers to exert additional effort in guiding students toward *tawhid*based habituation. Previous studies similarly indicate that digitalnative generations face distinct challenges in developing spiritual motivation (Wijaya, 2023).

Teachers also encounter limitations in developing evaluation instruments that genuinely measure *tawhid*based aspects. Without adequate instrumentation, *tawhid* integration risks becoming rhetorical rather than effecting meaningful behavioral change. Overall analysis indicates that the implementation of the principle of *tawhid* in PAI learning at SMKN 2 Surabaya is progressing in a positive direction but has not yet reached its ideal form. Learning planning is *tawhid*based, instructional processes increasingly integrate divine values, and teachers actively serve as role models. However, evaluation remains dominated by cognitive assessment and does not yet comprehensively measure moral and spiritual practice.

From an Islamic perspective, *tawhid* demands not only knowledge but selftransformation. Education should produce individuals who recognize their roles as servants and stewards (*khalifah*). Implementing *tawhid* values in vocational schools such as SMKN 2 Surabaya is crucial because students require strong spiritual foundations to enter a complex professional world. Without *tawhid* integration, education risks producing competent graduates who lack moral direction.

Synthetically, the findings emphasize the need for curriculum strengthening, teacher capacity development, interunit school synergy, and sustained mentoring to ensure that *tawhid* principles are genuinely internalized. *Tawhid*based education must not remain theoretical but should be reflected in school culture and students' everyday behavior.

Discussion

The research findings indicate that contemporary adolescents experience significant behavioral changes as a consequence of social development, rapid communication, and increasingly fluid interaction patterns. These changes do not occur spontaneously but result from interactions among family environments, schools, peer groups, and the advancement of information technology that collectively shape adolescents' ways of thinking and behaving (Pratiwi, 2022).

During adolescence, identity formation is still in progress, making individuals more susceptible to external influences. At the same time, the internalization of values remains unstable, while the need for social recognition is relatively strong (Ramadhan, 2021). This condition often leads adolescents to exhibit impulsive, reactive, or norminsensitive behaviors when adequate guidance is lacking.

In social contexts, adolescents face strong pressure to conform to peer groups. This phenomenon aligns with social psychology findings indicating that conformity is highly dominant during adolescence (Arifin, 2023). When social environments fail to provide proper *adab* exemplars, adolescents are prone to adopting harsh communication styles, impatience, and interaction patterns that lack respect for others. These tendencies gradually become embedded in daily life and influence longterm character formation.

In Islamic education, *adab* constitutes the core of human formation. *Adab* extends beyond superficial politeness to encompass ways of thinking, speaking, and positioning all matters appropriately (AlAttas, 2020). Thus, *adab* represents a moral structure guiding individuals to behave in accordance with revelation while exercising reason wisely.

Education in *adab* requires gradual value inculcation through habituation, exemplarity, and selfregulation (Nasution, 2021). When adolescents become accustomed

to reactive, hurried, and emotionally driven interaction patterns, tension emerges between *adab* values and the social realities they encounter (Haryanto, 2022).

In Islam, the quality of *adab* is reflected in selfcontrol, speech restraint, respect for others, and moral awareness in every action. Adolescents exhibiting declining etiquette are often influenced by weak internalization of religious values. Reduced *adab* is not merely an indicator of behavioral disturbance but a symptom of insufficient spiritual orientation (Suriadi, 2020).

Analysis of the research findings reveals that changes in adolescent attitudes and etiquette are influenced by several key factors: weak role models, limited educational communication within families, fragile environmental discipline, and minimal integration of religious values into daily activities (Rahman, 2021). When adolescents lack stable behavioral models, they seek references from peer environments. Numerous studies confirm that peer groups exert a strong influence on character formation during adolescence (Irawati, 2021). If peer cultures do not promote mutual respect, adolescents tend to replicate similar patterns. Furthermore, many adolescents experience imbalance between emotional capacity and social demands. While they may demonstrate courage in expressing opinions, they often lack emotional maturity in responding appropriately. This imbalance manifests in rigid attitudes, impatience, and diminished respect for authority (Saepudin, 2022).

Nevertheless, not all changes are negative. Many adolescents exhibit positive developments, including critical thinking skills, confidence in selfexpression, and heightened social awareness (Putra, 2020). Hence, adolescent character formation is a complex process that cannot be reduced to singular judgments.

Islamic education views adolescents as individuals in a transitional phase toward maturity, requiring consistent moral guidance. Balance among intellect, heart, and behavior constitutes the essence of ideal human formation (Asy'ari, 2021). When research findings indicate shifts in attitudes and *adab*, these reflect imbalances between moral development and modern social demands. Within Islamic tradition, value internalization occurs through *ta'dib*, a process of selfformation grounded in moral consciousness and reverence for divine order (Anwar, 2023). When environments fail to support *ta'dib*, adolescents experience value vacuums that affect their behavioral orientation. In summary, the findings align with Islamic education theory: adolescent behavior reflects the strength or weakness of *adab* cultivation. The primary challenge lies not in modernity itself but in the preparedness of value frameworks provided to adolescents to navigate rapidly changing social realities (Syamsuddin, 2022).

CONCLUSION

This study on the implementation of the principle of *tawhid* in Islamic Religious Education learning among vocational school students demonstrates that *tawhid* functions not only as a theological foundation but also as a basis for character formation, moral orientation, and behavioral direction. The findings indicate that PAI teachers have integrated *tawhid* values through instructional content, moral habituation, and exemplarity in educational interactions. The internalization of *tawhid* values is evident in improvements in students' religious attitudes, discipline, and awareness of the relationship between worship, morality, and social life.

However, the internalization process does not occur automatically. Environmental factors, school culture, peer influence, and adolescent psychological conditions significantly affect the success of *tawhid*based character formation. This underscores that *tawhid*oriented PAI learning must address pedagogical, psychological, and social dimensions simultaneously. Studentcentered approaches, teacher exemplarity, and

supportive school culture are essential prerequisites for ensuring that *tawhid* principles are genuinely embedded within students' character.

In conclusion, the implementation of the principle of *tawhid* exerts a significant influence on the formation of students' Islamic personality. Nevertheless, comprehensive support from all educational stakeholders is required to ensure that the internalization process proceeds optimally and sustainably.

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