

Religious Counselors Efforts in Shaping the Positive Character of Adolescents Who Drop Out of School in Sei Bilah Pangkalan Brandan

Research Article

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Abstract. Religious instructors are the "spearhead" of the Ministry of Religion in carrying out the duties and functions of fostering religious communities in order to improve the quality of people's religious life. This study aims to explore the efforts of religious instructors in shaping positive character in adolescents who drop out of school in Sei Bilah Village, Pangkalan Brandan. In the context of this community, teenagers who drop out of school often fall into promiscuity, so the role of religious instructors as pioneers assigned to deal with this problem is important. This research uses a qualitative approach by analyzing data using the Miles and Huberman method which includes data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing, and triangulation. Through regular coaching every week, religious instructors provide guidance, advice, as well as effective strategies to form positive characters in teenage dropouts. The methods used include mentoring and Quran literacy training to eradicate Quran illiteracy. The findings from this study are expected to provide valuable insights in improving the coaching of out-of-school youth at the local level and contribute to the development of better practices and policies in the future.

Keywords: Religious counselors, characteristics, school dropouts

Introduction

Religious instructors are the "spearhead" of the Ministry of Religion in carrying out the duties and functions of fostering religious people in order to improve the quality of people's religious life (I. Saputri & Setyowati, 2021). According to KMA Number 516 of 2003 concerning Technical Guidelines for the Implementation of the Functional Position of Religious Counselor and its Credit Score. The duties of religious instructors include developing religious guidance or counseling activities and development through religious language. Extension activities include preparation (identification of potential areas or target groups, preparation of work plans, and work programs), preparation of guidance materials (written and recorded), and implementation of guidance and extension activities through various methods, including face-to-face and mass media.

One of the efforts made by religious instructors is to develop the character of teenagers, including teenagers who have dropped out of school. This coaching often involves several meetings and trainings, such as Quran reading training. This positive character building aims to change the bad environment into a better one, considering that the environment is one of the factors that influence the development of adolescent characteristics (Nisa et al., 2023).

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In carrying out their role as religious coaches in Sei Bilah Village, religious instructors also collaborate with mentors in the Learning Activity Center. Religious educators, when providing guidance to the community, suggest and direct children who have dropped out of school to attend non-formal learning in the Learning Activity Center.

Factors that cause bad character in adolescents include lack of parental support and being in an unhealthy environment (Masing & Astuti, 2021). In addition, dropping out of school is a significant factor affecting negative character in adolescents. According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary, dropping out of school is a condition in which students leave school before graduating. Ali Imron stated that students who drop out of school are those who leave school before graduating or receiving a certificate of completion.

The results of this study found that there were adolescents who consciously said that the main reason for not continuing their schooling was due to lack of interest and willingness from themselves, the characters found were poor and anarchic characters, lack of morals and manners in living their daily lives. The link between the problems in Sei Bilah Village and the character of adolescents is that the implications of adolescent faith affect education so as to cause bad behavior and moral values due to a lack of upbringing from institutions (formal, informal, and non-formal) that affect the character of these adolescents.

The role of religious instructors at the Ministry of Religion in improving religious harmony, although the role is not listed in the regulations regarding the duties and functions of religious teachers, the role of the Ministry of Religion is clear. We cannot ignore religious leaders in this matter. Religious instructors also guide, nurture and mobilize the community to do good and stay away from prohibited acts.

They are also tasked with inviting the community to be able to foster and create an environment that supports the means (Bate & Yudi, 2022). Conveying kindness and giving good advice is found in the Qur'an surah An-Nahl verse 125 which reads:

أَدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجِدِّلْهُمْ بِآيَاتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ

125. Call (people) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good lessons and argue with them in a good way. Indeed, your Lord is the One who knows better who has strayed from His path and He is the One who knows better those who are guided (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2010).

Based on the interpretation of Al-Misbah, this verse explains messages about learning methods and their proper use that can be understood by the general public. In it, the verb amar "ud'u" is found which means inviting, calling, or calling. In the study of da'wah science, there are principles used in da'wah methods, such as wisdom, good advice, and discussion (Rizka, A., Dedi, M. 2023).

Religious instructors are not arbitrary in conducting guidance in the community. This is reflected in the research conducted by Syarifah Suhra (2023) with

the title "The Role of Religious Counselors in Developing Tolerance Character in the Community." This study concluded that coaching conducted regularly and in collaboration with the Social Service can improve the character of tolerance in society (Suhra et al., 2023). The methods used by religious instructors include regular meetings, training, and structured counseling, resulting in a significant positive impact.

Another relevant research was conducted by M. Tafui (2023) with the title "The Role of Parents in Fostering the Morality of Out-of-School Teenagers in Fatukbot Village, East Nusa Tenggara". The results of this study indicate that the lack of morality in children who drop out of school makes the role of parents very important in coaching. Tafui found that moral guidance by parents internally greatly affects the character of adolescents who drop out of school in their neighborhood (Tafui, 2023).

The main difference between this research and previous research lies in the focus and approach to coaching. Tafui's research focuses on the role of parents in the moral development of out-of-school children internally at home. In contrast, this study examines the efforts of religious instructors in fostering the character of adolescent dropouts directly in the field, involving broader interactions with the community and collaboration with various parties.

Through the approach taken by religious instructors in Sei Bilah Village, Pangkalan Brandan, it was found that structured and sustainable coaching can help shape positive character in out-of-school youth. The religious instructor works not only as a provider of religious material, but also as a mentor and guide who helps adolescents in facing various life challenges and developing good moral values.

Based on the data found in the area, researchers are interested in conducting research on "The Efforts of Religious Counselors in Shaping the Positive Character of Out-of-School Youth in Sei Bilah Village, Pangkalan Brandan".

Method

The type of research used by the author is qualitative research, this research was conducted at the Religious Affairs Office of the Babalan District of Pangkalan Brandan on Alur Dua Street, Sei Lapan Kec. Sei Lapan, Pangkalan Brandan, Langkat Regency, North Sumatra Province. Direct observation and interaction with religious instructors on duty in place (Cahyono, 2021). This research was conducted at the religious affairs office of Babalan Pangkalan Brandan District on Jalan Alur Dua Kec. Sei Lapan, Pangkalan Brandan Langkat Regency, North Sumatra Province. This research was conducted for one month starting from February-March 2024.

Direct observation and interaction with religious instructors who are on duty in place. In this study, there is a human instrument, namely the researcher himself and must have provisions and extensive theories and insights, so that he is able to ask, analyze, photograph, and construct the social situation under study more clearly and meaningfully (Mekarisce, 2020).

The data sources for this research are divided into two things, namely: 1. Primary data, religious instructors, community leaders and teenagers dropping out of school. 2. Secondary data, data that has been compiled and made in the form of documents that serve to complement research data (Mekarisce, 2020). To obtain the necessary data, the author uses various data collection techniques, including: interview,

observation, and documentation methods. Collect data and researchers use these tools and interview guides, and edit interview guides so that the research process runs smoothly. Data analysis uses the Miles and Huberman method which consists of data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing, and data triangulation (Cahyono, 2021).

Results and Discussion

The Role of Religious Counselors in Community Life

Religious instructors have an important role in the life of the nation, society, and state. Based on the Decree of the Minister of Religion (KMA) Number 79 of 1987, religious instructors act as community mentors, role models, and government connectors (Fahrurrozi & Munir, 2021). There are several main functions of religious instructors, namely as Informative and Educative Functions.

In every counseling session, they do not forget to convey the importance of protecting themselves from promiscuity, drugs, LGBT, and pornographic expressions on social media for better youth activities (S. Saputri et al., 2022). In addition, Islamic religious advisors also act as agents of change to bring about changes for the better. The activity program carried out by the head of the KUA and religious counselors is expected to have a positive impact on the community, especially in Sei Bilah Village, Pangkalan Brandan.

Religious instructors who became informants in this study stated that while in the field, they conducted guidance, gave advice, and direction in the field of religion to improve people's religious knowledge and encourage goodness. In addition, their program also includes eradicating Quran illiteracy through regular recitation every week.

This was revealed from interviews received by researchers from various sources, seeing that the teenagers around Sei Bilah Village began to show changes for the better and some teenagers who dropped out of school also had the ability to recognize the letters of the Koran fluently.

The following are photos of the Quran recitation training activities in Sei Bilah Village, showing the atmosphere of the routine recitation and the interaction between the religious educators and the participants:



Figure 1: Implementation of Quran training activities

The results of the interviews show that religious instructors in Sei Bilah Village conducted an initial survey to identify the factors causing school dropouts. Coaching is conducted every Thursday and Saturday at 20:00 WIB, while Quran illiteracy eradication activities are conducted every Friday at 14:00 WIB. In addition,

religious instructors provide motivation to build teenagers' interest in continuing school and convey religious values and basic religious knowledge.

Character Development by Religious Counselors

Character development by religious instructors is very important in forming individuals with noble character and integrity. Religious instructors not only teach textual religious teachings, but also instill moral values such as honesty, responsibility, hard work, and respect for others. Through programs and activities such as training, lectures, and group discussions, they seek to shape positive character in adolescents and other community members (Lestari et al., 2022).

Religious instructors also collaborate with various institutions such as social services, educational institutions, and community organizations to expand the reach and effectiveness of character development. By engaging communities in religious and social activities, they empower individuals to become agents of change in their neighborhoods (Wulandari et al., 2022). Religious instructors use various coaching methods, including lectures, group discussions and skills training, to help adolescents understand and internalize moral values.

In addition, the collaboration between religious instructors and mentors at Sanggar Kegiatan Belajar also creates a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Adolescents receive guidance and motivation, both academically and morally, so that they are better prepared to face future challenges.

The existence of Sanggar Kegiatan Belajar is very helpful for people who have limitations in continuing formal education. The aim is to help children who have dropped out of school to catch up on their studies (Warman, n.d.). This non-formal learning has a very positive impact on teenagers who have dropped out of school, allowing them to obtain a diploma according to the package taken.

In the picture below, you can see the active atmosphere at the Learning Activity Center in Sei Bilah Village, conducting the Equivalency Test (UK) as religious instructors and mentors work together to provide education and guidance to teenagers who have dropped out of school:



Figure 2: Implementation of coaching activities for learning activity centers

Thus, the non-formal learning program at the Learning Activity Studio in Sei Bilah Village not only contributes to increasing the level of education, but also to the development of the potential of adolescents who have dropped out of school. This

is in line with the goal of creating a young generation that is educated, characterized and has adequate life skills.

Activities that young people often participate in include Quran recitation at mosques and community centers, sports and arts. In addition to the Islamic school, we also provide training to residents, especially the younger generation, so that they are smarter and become trainers who can reach out to families (Wahyu Ziaulhaq, 2022). With several factors influencing the character of teenagers in Sei Bilah Village, Pangkalan Brandan, dropping out of school is not an excuse for teenagers not to study. Efforts made by religious instructors also have a good impact on adolescents who drop out of school, have good character and know the basics of religion (Alifa, 2023).

Characteristics of Dropout Adolescents

Personality is one of the main human factors that shape a person's psychological character and make him behave in harmony with himself and various situations. The Greek word symbol "To Mark" means, to concentrate. For example, applying appropriate values to actions and forms of action. There are parts of behavior that have bad character such as: dishonest, cruel, or greedy and there are also those that are called good or noble character such as: honest, helpful and not saying harsh words (Yusuf, 2019).

Mc Millen and Whitener, define dropouts as students who fail to complete a program of study on time or complete six years of junior secondary education and therefore do not receive a primary school graduation qualification (Wildatu Syarofah, 2021). Expert opinions regarding this character vary even though they actually have almost the same meaning. For example, the opinion of Scereno, character is the characteristics or attributes that can shape and distinguish from personal characteristics, in the mental complexity of individuals, groups and society (Hidayanti, 2023).

In this study, adolescents who drop out of school will also experience a period of excessive crisis so that it is more difficult to know what their identity is and behave badly, the character that exists in adolescents who drop out of school must lack motivation and enthusiasm, therefore they will be given direction and motivation so that positive character values will be formed (Sa'idah et al., 2023).

Children who have entered the age of 12 years-21 years are referred to as adolescents. According to Ericson, adolescence is a time of identity crisis cycle or search for self-identity, Ericson's opinion is further emphasized by James Marcia that the characteristics of adolescents who are in the process of seeking self-identity often cause problems in adolescents (Arini D, 2021).

The following are presented some teenagers who dropped out of school:

No.	Informant Name	Age	Last Education	Reason for dropping out
1.	Dini Atika	12 Years	Did not finish elementary school	Due to incomplete personal data (no family card) and moving house because parents separated.
2.	Haikal Syahputra	15 years	Elementary School	No interest and economic constraints
3.	Hafis	15 years	junior high school	No interest in continuing school and being influenced by friends.

From the data collected through interviews and observations, the researchers concluded that the causes of teenage dropouts in Sei Bilah include lack of interest in learning, environmental influences, following friends who are not in school, and interest in the world of work to make ends meet. Unsupportive family economic factors and lack of religious education also play a role, resulting in negative behavior in children (Anwar Yulianti, Hadju V, 2022).

The results of interviews with the head of the Sei Bilah neighborhood show that the low interest and willingness to go to school, as well as the majority of the population who work as fishermen with low income, are the main factors for dropping out of school. Educated parents tend to encourage their children to go to school because they consider education very important. Apart from education, the economic condition of the parents also has a big influence.

Positive character

Other terms such as morality, ethics, and character are often associated or synonymized with morality. A person with character means a person with good manners, behavior, character, and temperament, and we can conclude that this definition means that character is the same as ethics and morals. In this study, character is defined as a person's unique trait or personality.

In a humanistic perspective, positive character is often associated with optimal self-development, where individuals have the opportunity to reach their full potential as human beings. This involves characteristics such as self-awareness, openness to new experiences, and the ability to achieve self-actualization. On the other hand, negative character traits can arise when individuals are hindered in reaching their full potential due to traumatic experiences, social barriers, or lack of support for personal growth. So when a person shows bad behavior, that is actually what the person is showing, it is the person's habit of life.

Allah Ta'ala says in the Qur'an surah Al Qalam verse 4:

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

And you are truly of great character (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2010).

Positive character can help individuals to be better and make a positive contribution in their environment, be it in school, family, community. Positive

characters in general include: honesty, perseverance, hard work, independence, and courage should be able to help in forming a strong and positive adolescent character (Fauziah, & Alfina, 2023). There are various kinds of positive characters that are important for a person's development, namely:

- Empathy: The ability to understand, feel and consider the emotions of others, and respond empathetically to the situations and experiences of others.
- Self-reliance: The ability to take initiative, take responsibility for personal actions and decisions, and have a healthy sense of self-confidence.
- Discipline: The ability to control oneself, obey laws and regulations, and consistently carry out duties and obligations.
- Collaboration: The ability to work with others, recognize differences, and contribute well to a team or group.
- Gratitude: Being grateful for what one has and appreciating the blessings in life.
- Respect: Respecting others regardless of differences and honoring individual rights.
- Social Responsibility: Willingness to contribute to society, help others, and care for the common good.

Interview data with Mr. Selamat as a religious instructor in Sei Billah Village can be concluded that the character of adolescents in the area is very lacking in religious knowledge and even the basis of religious knowledge cannot be understood by them, so that the personality that emerges is a person who grows without knowledge and has a bad character, they commit many crimes as they please so that they fall into drugs and other crimes.

Actions taken by teenagers can be positive or negative. Teenagers commit crimes that make society feel unsafe, such as stealing, drinking alcoholic beverages, using drugs, acting recklessly, and watching illegal videos (Agama et al., 2023). This character building is not an activity that can be determined when it is achieved. Indeed, there are certain benchmarks that can be used as indicators that a person already has good character. However, this does not mean that the process ends, as human life always has dynamics and challenges. No human being has a perfect character (Bakhril Amin, 2024).

The results of interviews with religious instructors show that positive character building in adolescents begins with identifying their environment. The process of character building is unique to each individual and is strongly influenced by the surrounding environment. If their environment has many negative influences, it is crucial to create a positive and supportive environment. Religious instructors also emphasized the need for active involvement from families and communities in creating a conducive environment.

All humans have strengths and weaknesses, including humans who we can currently see as humans who in our view have met the criteria for character, so this character formation is a continuous process, a lifelong process and during human life (Hidayanti, 2023).

Through regular interactions and structured guidance programs, adolescents can be directed to develop moral values such as honesty, responsibility, and hard work.

The researcher conducted an interview with a religious counselor to find out what the main factors were that made the decision for adolescents not to continue their schooling. It is only that they are able to send their children to school at the basic level but cannot continue to a higher level, which is why many children behave deviantly in all kinds of ways in order to make money for the needs of the family.

Challenges in Coaching

Religious counselors play an important role in shaping the positive character of out-of-school youth in Sei Bilah Village, Pangkalan Brandan. However, they face various obstacles that hinder the effectiveness of the coaching program. Coaching that is carried out regularly does not always run smoothly, there will be obstacles or challenges felt by religious instructors, including: (1) an unfavorable social environment, religious instructors often face challenges from the social environment. As in the sei bilah village, there are several factors, namely, poverty, family disharmony, and the negative influence of social media can hinder coaching efforts. (2) lack of family support, (3) financial barriers. These barriers can reduce the effectiveness of character development. Solutions include increased funding, communication skills training for instructors, development of more interesting learning methods, and collaboration with other parties to support the coaching program.

Conclusions

Based on the discussion that the researchers have described above, conclusions can be drawn, namely:

- a. Religious counselors play an important role in shaping positive adolescent character. Through religious education, guidance in decision making, emotional and spiritual support, and social skills development.
- b. Religious counselors conduct coaching in the field and conduct training in recognizing the letters of the Qur'an which aims to form a positive character for adolescents who drop out of school.
- c. Adolescent dropout is a serious problem that affects many aspects of life and is very complex. However, with the right support and efforts it can help hope and reach full potential. By investing in alternative education programs, psychological support, job training, and family support, we can open the door to a better future for out-of-school youth.
- d. Factors that cause adolescents to drop out include economic factors, unstable families, social pressure, and lack of motivation. When they are no longer in a formal education environment, they may be vulnerable to problems such as unemployment, poverty, and engaging in negative behaviors.

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