



Character-Based Islamic Religious Education Using Audio-Visual Media at SMK Negeri 3 Pertanian Bener Meriah

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ABSTRACT

Vocational schools carry a double mandate: preparing technical competence and forming character. This study examines how audio-visual media are used in character-based Islamic religious education at SMK Negeri 3 Pertanian Bener Meriah, the extent to which they support character formation, and what constrains their use. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, comprising eight weeks of classroom observation, semi-structured interviews with the Islamic education teacher, grade X students, the deputy principal for curriculum, and a guidance counsellor, and analysis of teaching modules, media scripts, and student reflection journals. The findings show that the instructional value of the media lies not in the footage but in the pauses the teacher creates within it. Video played without interruption produced engagement without moral reasoning, whereas video halted at a decision point obliged students to take a position before knowing the outcome. The observed shifts in character were likewise concentrated on values with a direct counterpart in vocational practice, such as trustworthiness and discipline, and were markedly thinner for values without such a counterpart. The principal constraint was not equipment availability but the teacher's time to design appropriate pause points.

Keywords: Audio-Visual Media, Character Education, Islamic Religious Education, Vocational School, Moral Reasoning

ABSTRAK

Sekolah menengah kejuruan menanggung dua tuntutan sekaligus: menyiapkan kompetensi teknis dan membentuk karakter. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana media audio-visual digunakan dalam pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam berbasis karakter di SMK Negeri 3 Pertanian Bener Meriah, sejauh mana media tersebut menopang pembentukan karakter, serta apa yang membatasi penerapannya. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan observasi kelas selama delapan minggu, wawancara semi-terstruktur terhadap guru PAI, siswa kelas X, wakil kepala bidang kurikulum, dan guru bimbingan konseling, serta telaah modul ajar, naskah media, dan jurnal refleksi siswa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa nilai instruksional media tidak terletak pada tayangannya, melainkan pada jeda yang diciptakan guru di tengah tayangan. Video yang diputar tanpa jeda menghasilkan keterlibatan tanpa penalaran moral, sedangkan video yang dihentikan pada titik keputusan memaksa siswa mengambil posisi sebelum mengetahui akibatnya. Pergeseran karakter yang teramati juga terkonsentrasi pada nilai-nilai yang memiliki padanan langsung dalam praktik kejuruan, seperti amanah dan kedisiplinan, dan jauh lebih tipis pada nilai yang tidak memiliki padanan demikian. Kendala utama bukan ketersediaan perangkat, melainkan waktu guru untuk merancang titik jeda yang tepat.

Kata Kunci: Media Audio-Visual, Pendidikan Karakter, Pendidikan Agama Islam, Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan, Penalaran Moral

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I. INTRODUCTION

Vocational secondary education in Indonesia carries an obligation that general secondary education does not. Its graduates enter workplaces where the consequences of dishonesty, negligence, or indifference are immediate and material, which means that character formation in this setting is not a supplementary aim but a component of occupational competence. Islamic religious education is the subject through which schools most often discharge this obligation, and it must do so for students whose orientation is practical, whose patience for doctrinal exposition is limited, and whose attention has been shaped by screens (Kurniawan, 2024; Mahfud & Ramdani, 2023).

Audio-visual media are the standard response. Indonesian research has accumulated substantial evidence that video, animation, and digital storytelling raise motivation, attention, and recall in religious education across school levels (Mannan et al., 2021; Akbar et al., 2024; Suharni et al., 2023), and the practice is now sufficiently established in vocational settings to be unremarkable (Sari & Rahayu, 2021). The evidence base is broad, and the direction of its findings is consistent (Rahman & Setiawan, 2022; Ningsih et al., 2021).

It is, however, narrow in a particular way. The overwhelming majority of studies report on whether media were used and what changed, treating the media as the intervention and the classroom as the site at which it is administered. The teacher appears in this literature chiefly as a facilitator whose competence conditions the effect (Rahman et al., 2023; Wibowo & Syam, 2022). What is seldom examined is what the teacher does with the media in the minutes during which they are shown, and whether variations in that conduct produce variations in outcome. The question matters because the two possibilities carry opposite practical implications: if the media do the work, the priority is better media; if what the teacher does with them does the work, the priority is the teacher's design of the encounter, and better media without better design will change little.

A second limitation concerns the treatment of character outcomes. Studies commonly report improvement in students' character following media-based instruction without distinguishing between the values on which improvement occurred (Abdullah et al., 2022; Rahmah et al., 2023). Character is reported in aggregate, as though honesty, discipline, cooperation, and compassion were interchangeable instances of a single construct responding uniformly to the same treatment. If they do not respond uniformly, aggregation conceals the pattern that would be most useful to practitioners, namely which values a given approach can reach and which it cannot.

This study addresses both gaps in a vocational setting. SMK Negeri 3 Pertanian Bener Meriah is a state agricultural vocational school in the Aceh highlands whose students combine strong local religious traditions with the practical orientation characteristic of the sector, and whose resource conditions, a single shared projector and uneven home internet access, are typical of rural vocational schools in Indonesia. Its Islamic education teaching has used audio-visual media routinely, making it possible to observe established practice rather than an experimental intervention.

Three questions guide the study. How are audio-visual media actually deployed within character-based Islamic education lessons at this school? To what extent, and in relation to which values, do they support character formation? And what conditions or constraints their effective use?

Two frameworks inform the analysis. The cognitive account of multimedia learning holds that comprehension improves when material is presented so as to manage cognitive load and support the learner's selection, organisation, and integration of information, and it identifies segmentation, the division of continuous material into learner-paced units, as a principle of instructional design (Mayer, 2021; Mayer & Fiorella, 2021). The character education tradition holds that moral formation proceeds through three interdependent components, moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action, and that instruction addressing only the first is unlikely to affect the third (Wibowo & Syam, 2022; Sari & Rahayu, 2021). Placed side by side, the two frameworks suggest a specific hypothesis about what audio-visual media can

accomplish: continuous playback may serve moral knowing and moral feeling, since it conveys information and elicits emotional response, but the transition to moral action requires the learner to occupy a position of judgement, and continuous playback does not require this. Segmentation might.

The study's contribution is to test that suggestion against classroom practice and to specify the conditions under which the transition occurs.

II. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design, chosen because the research questions concern the character and conditions of an established classroom practice rather than the magnitude of its effect. The design permits an account of processes, perceptions, and constraints in their natural setting and supports presentation of findings as contextual narrative.

The research was conducted at SMK Negeri 3 Pertanian Bener Meriah, a state vocational secondary school in Aceh Province specializing in agricultural and environmental studies and embedding Islamic values in its institutional ethos. The site was selected purposively because it integrates religious education with character-building activity and has used audio-visual media in Islamic education as a matter of routine. Its combination of established religious tradition and constrained technological infrastructure is common among rural vocational schools and supports the transferability of the account.

Participants comprised the Islamic education teacher as key informant, twenty-five grade X students enrolled in the 2024/2025 academic year, and the deputy principal for curriculum and a guidance counsellor as supporting informants. Selection was purposive, the criteria being direct involvement in media-supported Islamic education lessons and willingness to take part in interviews and observation.

Three techniques generated the data. Classroom observation was conducted over eight weeks and recorded teacher-student interaction, the manner and timing of media deployment, and student response, using a semi-structured schedule attending to the integration of character values and to the pedagogical handling of media. Field notes were written after each session to capture contextual detail and the researcher's reflections. Semi-structured interviews of thirty to forty-five minutes were conducted with the teacher, on pedagogical strategy, difficulties, and perceived impact, and with students, on their motivational, cognitive, and behavioral responses; interviews were recorded with consent. Documents examined comprised teaching modules, media scripts, school character policies, and students' reflection journals, and served to establish whether media use was planned and how it was aligned with curricular character indicators.

Analysis followed the interactive model. Data condensation involved transcription, summarizing of field notes, and coding around emerging categories including instructional design, character development, and constraint. Data display organized condensed material so that relationships between media handling and student response became visible. Conclusion drawing and verification developed and tested interpretations against the full data set. Coding within this process followed reflexive principles, with categories generated inductively from participants' accounts (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Coding proceeded inductively so that categories emerged from participants' accounts rather than being imposed.

Trustworthiness was addressed through four criteria. Credibility rested on prolonged engagement across the eight-week period, triangulation across observation, interview, and document sources, and member checking with participants. Transferability is supported by thick description of the setting. Dependability was maintained through documentation of procedures and an audit trail of analytic decisions. Confirmability was supported by reflexive journaling and peer consultation.

Ethical procedures followed established guidance for educational research. Permission was obtained from the school principal; written informed consent was collected from participants, with parental consent

for students under age; participants were told of their right to withdraw; and confidentiality was maintained through pseudonymization and secure storage.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Pause Rather Than the Footage

The most consequential finding of this study concerns not the media used but the way the teacher interrupted them. Observation across the eight-week period recorded two distinct patterns of deployment, and they produced markedly different classroom outcomes.

In the first pattern, a video of three to five minutes was played through without interruption and followed by discussion. This produced reliable engagement. Students watched attentively, and post-viewing discussion generated summaries of what had happened and statements of which character the students judged to have acted well. What it did not generate, in any recorded instance, was disagreement. Students converged rapidly on the morally correct reading, which the narrative itself had already supplied by showing the consequences of each character's choice. The discussion recapitulated a judgement rather than forming one.

In the second pattern, the video was halted before its resolution. In one observed lesson on honesty, a dramatization of a student finding a lost wallet was stopped at the moment of discovery, and the teacher asked what the students would do in that position. Here the classroom behaved differently. Students disagreed with one another, offered conditions and qualifications, and revised their positions in response to objections. Several proposed courses of action that the video's eventual resolution did not endorse. The teacher then resumed playback, and the resolution acquired the force of a response to positions the students had themselves committed to.

The difference between these patterns is structural rather than incidental. A completed narrative supplies both the dilemma and its resolution, so the student's task is comprehension. An interrupted narrative supplies the dilemma alone, so the student's task is judgement. Only the second places the student in the position that moral reasoning requires, namely having to decide without yet knowing the outcome. This is what the segmentation principle in multimedia design accomplishes here (Mayer, 2021), though for reasons beyond load management: segmentation does not merely make the content easier to process, it changes what the student is being asked to do with it.

The finding locates the instructional value in the teacher's design decision rather than in the media. The same footage generated recapitulation or reasoning depending on where it was stopped, and where to stop is a judgement about the material's moral structure that no video can make for the teacher. This qualifies the common conclusion that audio-visual media improve character education (Akbar et al., 2024; Aisyah & Rahmad, 2024). In this setting, media created the occasion for character education; the teacher's placement of the pause determined whether the occasion was used.

Values With and Without a Vocational Counterpart

The second finding concerns the distribution of observed change across values, and it is uneven in a way that aggregate reporting would obscure. Three values showed consistent movement across observation, interview, and reflection journals: trustworthiness in the discharge of assigned work, discipline in the observance of time and procedure, and cooperation in shared tasks. Two showed markedly less: compassion toward those outside the immediate group, and sincerity of intention in acts of worship.

The pattern corresponds to the presence or absence of a vocational counterpart. Students had ready analogues for the first three in their own practical training. In one recorded discussion on trustworthiness, a student connected an assigned workshop task to the obligation to complete it properly, mapping a religious concept directly onto a situation he encountered weekly. Teachers and the guidance counsellor reported parallel behavioral shifts: greater punctuality, more consistent participation in cleaning duties, more courteous greeting of staff, shifts consistent with earlier accounts of value-based character education in vocational schools (Sari & Rahayu, 2021; Ningsih et al., 2021). These are all behaviors with an occupational reading, and students could rehearse them daily in the ordinary course of their training.

The two values that moved less have no such counterpart. Compassion toward outsiders is not exercised in the workshop, and sincerity of intention is not observable at all, either by the student or by anyone assessing them. Reflection journals bore this out. Statements of behavioral intention concerning honesty and responsibility were frequent and specific, taking the form of undertakings about speech at home or conduct in group projects. Statements concerning sincerity were rare and, where present, general.

This is a finding about the reach of the method rather than about the students. Video dramatization works by depicting conduct and its consequences, which means it can address values that are enacted and observable (Abdullah et al., 2022; Rahmah et al., 2023). Values that are internal or that concern relations outside the student's habitual settings are not well served by a medium whose entire resource is depiction. The implication for practice is that schools should not expect a single method to serve the whole of the character curriculum, and should be explicit about which values require a different approach.

The finding also carries a caution about evaluation. A program assessed on the values it addresses most naturally will report strong results; the same program assessed across the whole character framework will report mixed ones. Studies reporting improvement in aggregate should therefore be read with attention to which values were actually measured, and vocational schools adopting media-based character education should assess selectively rather than globally if they wish to learn where the approach is falling short.

The Constraint Is Preparation Time

Three constraints were identified, and their relative weight departs from what the literature usually reports. The school possesses a single projector shared among teachers, and technical failure occasionally interrupted lessons; on one observed occasion the teacher narrated the video's content when the projector failed. Home internet access is limited, with only a minority of students able to revisit materials, a difficulty the teacher partly addressed by distributing compressed files for offline viewing. Both constraints are genuine and both were prominent in the teacher's account.

Neither, however, is what limits the practice identified in the first finding. Interrupted viewing does not require better equipment; it requires that the teacher have watched the material closely enough beforehand to know where its moral structure turns. This is preparation, and the teacher's account made clear that preparation is what she is short of. Locating material that is Islamic in substance, contemporary in idiom, and suited to vocational students was described as difficult, a constraint widely reported in Indonesian work on religious media (Suharni et al., 2023; Sidiq et al., 2024), and she frequently produced her own using presentation software and voice-over (Febriani & Aunillah, 2024). Time spent sourcing and producing is time not spent analyzing, and analysis is the input that the pause depends on.

The three constraints therefore stand in a definite relation. Equipment failure degrades delivery. Limited home access reduces reinforcement. Preparation time determines whether the lesson has the structure that makes it worth delivering. The first two are widely recognized and attract institutional remedy; the third is largely invisible because its absence produces a lesson that looks successful. A video played without pause still generates attention, participation, and positive student report, and an observer measuring engagement would record a good lesson. The finding is that engagement is an unreliable proxy for moral reasoning, and that the gap between them is filled by preparation.

This has a direct implication for professional development. Training in media production, which is what such programs usually offer (Sidiq et al., 2024), increases the teacher's capacity to generate material and therefore increases the demand on her preparation time. Training in the pedagogical use of existing material, by contrast, addresses the constraint that binds. Curating a shared repository of vetted video with suggested pause points, along the lines proposed for podcast and video collections in religious education (Gustina & Zakir, 2025; Khaidir, 2024), would relieve both sourcing and analysis, and would do more for classroom practice than an additional projector.

Two qualifications apply. The comparison between interrupted and uninterrupted viewing is observational rather than controlled: the two patterns occurred with different material and at different points in the term, and the study cannot exclude the possibility that other differences contributed. And the behavioral changes reported here were observed over eight weeks, which is sufficient to register a shift in conduct but not to establish that the shift persists.

Read together, the findings describe a practice whose effectiveness rests on an element that neither its advocates nor its critics usually examine. The media are necessary, since they supply the situation that classroom discussion could not otherwise present (Rahman & Setiawan, 2022; Mahfud & Ramdani, 2023). They are not sufficient, since the same media yield recapitulation or reasoning according to how they are handled. And their reach is bounded by the character of the values in question, extending readily to conduct the student can rehearse in the workshop and much less readily to dispositions that no workshop exercises. What audio-visual media contribute to character-based Islamic education in a vocational school is an occasion; the teacher's preparation determines what is made of it.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study examined the use of audio-visual media in character-based Islamic religious education at SMK Negeri 3 Pertanian Bener Meriah. It concludes, first, that the instructional value of the media lies in the teacher's placement of pauses rather than in the footage itself: continuous playback produced engagement and recapitulation of a judgement the narrative had already made, whereas playback halted before resolution obliged students to form a judgement of their own and generated genuine moral disagreement. Second, that the character effects were unevenly distributed, concentrating on values with a direct counterpart in vocational practice such as trustworthiness, discipline, and cooperation, and remaining thin on values without such a counterpart such as compassion toward outsiders and sincerity of intention. Third, that the binding constraint is the teacher's preparation time rather than equipment or connectivity, because designing an effective pause requires prior analysis of the material's moral structure.

The study's contribution is to shift the unit of analysis from the medium to the teacher's handling of it, and to show that engagement, the outcome most commonly reported in this literature, is an unreliable proxy for the moral reasoning that character education seeks.

Three implications follow for practice. Professional development should prioritize the pedagogical use of existing material over training in media production, since the latter increases demand on the resource that is already scarcest. Education authorities and school clusters should curate shared repositories of vetted video with suggested pause points, which would relieve both sourcing and analysis at the level where the burden is greatest. And schools should assess character outcomes value by value rather than in aggregate, so that the limits of the method become visible rather than being averaged away.

The study's limitations should be acknowledged. It examined a single school over eight weeks, so the durability of the observed behavioral shifts cannot be established. The comparison between interrupted and uninterrupted viewing is observational, and other differences between the lessons may have contributed. Future work should test the pause effect under controlled conditions, and should follow students into workplace placement to determine whether the values that moved in the classroom hold when their exercise carries real cost.

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