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ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION LEARNING AND DATING BEHAVIOR AT SMP "PEONY PUTIH"

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Abstract

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a strategic role in shaping students' character and religious behavior, particularly during early adolescence. However, the reality within school reveals a gap between the ideal objectives of PAI instruction and students' actual social practices, one of which is dating behavior. This study aims to analyze the implementation of PAI instruction, the forms and tendencies of students' dating behavior, and the factors that contribute to the normalization of dating as a common practice at SMP "Peony Putih". The research employs a qualitative approach using a phenomenological method. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving ten students from grades VII–IX (five who were dating and five who were not), one guidance and counseling teacher, and one PAI teacher, selected purposively. The findings indicate that PAI instruction is conducted in an orderly and structurally effective manner at the cognitive level; however, it has not fully succeeded in internalizing values within the affective and behavioral domains. Dating behavior is not merely understood as a personal relationship but as a social practice that constructs recognition and symbolic stratification within student interactions. The normalization of dating is influenced by peer norms, intergenerational imitation, social symbols, and implicit institutional tolerance. The study further reveals the presence of social stratification among students based on dating status, where those who are dating tend to gain higher social recognition within school interactions. Moreover, the dating culture at SMP "Peony Putih" is found to be strong and collective in nature, limiting the capacity of Islamic Religious Education messages to counterbalance its influence on students' social behavior.
Keywords: *Learning, Islamic Religious Education, Behavior, Dating.*

Abstrak

Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) memiliki peran strategis dalam membentuk karakter dan perilaku religius siswa, khususnya pada masa remaja awal. Namun, realitas di sekolah menunjukkan adanya kesenjangan antara idealitas pembelajaran PAI dan praktik sosial siswa, salah satunya perilaku berpacaran. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pelaksanaan pembelajaran PAI, bentuk dan kecenderungan perilaku berpacaran siswa, serta faktor yang menyebabkan pacaran menjadi praktik umum di SMP "Peony Putih". Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode fenomenologi. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi terhadap sepuluh siswa kelas VII-IX (lima berpacaran dan lima tidak berpacaran) satu guru BK serta satu guru PAI, yang dipilih secara purposive. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran PAI berjalan dengan tertib dan efektif secara struktural dan kognitif, namun belum sepenuhnya berhasil menginternalisasikan nilai ranah afektif dan perilaku. Perilaku berpacaran tidak hanya dipahami sebagai relasi personal, melainkan sebagai praktik sosial yang membentuk pengakuan dan stratifikasi simbolik dalam pergaulan siswa. Normalisasi pacaran dipengaruhi oleh norma teman sebaya, peniruan antar angkatan, simbol pergaulan, serta toleransi implisit sekolah. Temuan penelitian mengungkap adanya stratifikasi sosial antar siswa yang dibentuk melalui status berpacaran, di mana siswa yang berpacaran

cenderung memperoleh pengakuan sosial lebih tinggi dalam pergaulan sekolah. Selain itu, arus budaya pacaran di SMP "Peony Putih" terbukti cukup kuat dan bersifat kolektif, sehingga pesan-pesan pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam belum mampu menghalau kuatnya arus budaya pacaran tersebut dalam membentuk perilaku sosial siswa.
Kata Kunci: *Pembelajaran, Pendidikan Agama Islam, Perilaku, Pacaran.*

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education is an inseparable part of the national education system, whose main goal is to nurture individuals with faith, piety, and noble character.[1] In junior high schools, Islamic Religious Education plays a strategic role in building students' character by instilling Islamic values integrated into the curriculum and learning activities.[2] Islamic Religious Education serves not only as a means of transmitting religious knowledge cognitively but also as an instrument for comprehensive moral, spiritual, and social development. This is in line with the main function of education, namely shaping personality and attitudes grounded in religious values and equipping students with life skills relevant to the challenges of the times.

In line with this strategic role, the presence of Islamic Religious Education (*Pendidikan Agama Islam*, PAI) in schools is also legitimized by formal state regulations. In the context of national education regulation, Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System provides a firm legal basis for religious education at all levels of education. Article 12 paragraph (1a) mandates that every student is entitled to religious education in accordance with his or her faith, taught by educators of the same religion. Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs Number 183 of 2019 on the Curriculum of Islamic Religious Education and Arabic in Madrasahs systematically regulates the core competencies, curriculum structure, and learning content of PAI. The integration of Islamic Religious Education into the national curriculum is intended not only as an instrument for fulfilling students' religious needs but also as a strategy for character building and for shaping a student profile marked by faith, piety, and noble character. Therefore, the position of Islamic Religious Education in the curriculum plays a strategic role in supporting a holistic and transformative vision of national education.[3]

[1] Husni Hamim Ahmad et al., "Pengertian, Landasan, Tujuan Dan Kedudukan PAI Dalam Sistem Pendidikan Nasional," *Jurnal Dirosah Islamiyah* 4 (2022): 214–25, https://doi.org/10.17467/jdi.v4i2.899.

[2] Siti Rohmaniah et al., "Strategi Integrasi Nilai-Nilai Dalam Kurikulum Merdeka Untuk Pembentukan Karakter," *Jurnal Taujih* 7 (2025): 72–85.

[3] Iham Tompunu et al., *Pendidikan Islam Dalam UU SISDIKNAS No. 20 Tahun 2003*, 3, no. 2 (n.d.): 160–66.

The implementation of these regulations is reflected concretely in classroom learning. Islamic Religious Education is designed not only to provide a theoretical understanding of Islamic teachings but also to encourage the practice of these values in daily life.[4] Core subject matter such as *fiqh*, *aqidah*, *akhlaq*, and the history of Islamic culture is understood not merely as learning content but as a medium for instilling applicable Islamic ethics and morality. *Aqidah* strengthens students' belief in the principles of *tawhid*; *akhlaq* shapes behavior patterns that reflect commendable values; *fiqh* provides the legal basis for worship and social interaction; and the history of Islamic culture enriches students' historical insight and Islamic identity.[5]

Islamic Religious Education plays a significant role in shaping students' spiritual and emotional maturity. The subject does not merely guide students to be obedient in performing worship; it also encourages them to become individuals who are reflective and introspective, responsible, and tolerant in social life. Thus, all components of PAI learning complement one another in forming students who are not only intellectually capable but also spiritually and emotionally mature. This is highly relevant in facing the challenges of globalization and an increasingly complex flow of information, in which students need a firm moral foundation so that they are not easily swayed by harmful cultural influences.[6] In this context, one social phenomenon now widespread among junior high school students is dating behavior.

The junior high school years coincide with early adolescence, a developmental phase between the ages of 12 and 15 that marks the transition from childhood to adulthood.[7] In this phase, adolescence is a transitional period of development that encompasses biological, cognitive, and socio-emotional aspects.[8] As these changes occur, individuals begin to carry out their developmental tasks, one of which is building more mature interactions with the opposite sex.[9] This is because in adolescence individuals begin to accept and perform their social roles as men or women. At this stage, adolescents generally start forming new relationships with the opposite sex through dating. Dating is a form of relationship between two people who meet and do various

[4] Dahlawi Fath Jumadi et al., *Pengaruh Pendidikan Agama Islam Terhadap Moral-Moral Remaja*, (Bogor), 2025.

[5] Amanda Trianita et al., "Analisis Karakteristik Materi Fikih Di Berbagai Jenjang Pendidikan Pada Kurikulum Merdeka," *Student Research Journal* 2 (2024): 162–74, https://doi.org/10.55606/srjyappi.v2i6.1635.

[6] Ainul Halim and Mochamad Chairudin, *Dinamika Pembaharuan Pendidikan Islam*, n.d., https://doi.org/10.36835/jipi.v23i02.4243.

[7] Melyana Safitri, "Pengaruh Masa Transisi Remaja Menuju Pendewasaan Terhadap Kesehatan Mental Serta Bagaimana Mengatasinya," *Jurnal Pendidikan Ilmu Sosial* 30, no. 1 (2021): 21–26, https://doi.org/10.17509/jpis.v30i1.29495.

[8] Tati Nurhayati, *Perkembangan Perilaku Psikososial Pada Masa Pubertas*, 2016.

[9] Khamim Zarkasih Putro, "Memahami Ciri Dan Tugas Perkembangan Masa Remaja," *Aplikasia: Jurnal Aplikasi Ilmu-Ilmu Agama* 17, no. 1 (2017): 25–32.

activities together in order to get to know each other more closely.[10] Meanwhile, previous research views dating as a period of courtship between two individuals of the opposite sex, marked by a process of getting to know each other's character, strengths, and weaknesses.[11] Among adolescents, dating is regarded not only as part of emotional and biological needs but also as a sociological need: many adolescents feel more confident and proud when they have a boyfriend or girlfriend, while those who do not are often considered less sociable or left behind by their peers. Relationships with the opposite sex through dating are therefore growing stronger under the influence of social media, the environment, and weak oversight of religious values in daily life.

From the Islamic perspective, dating is not a legitimate or recognized form of relationship. Islam permits relationships between men and women only within a lawful marriage. Attraction to the opposite sex is part of human nature (*fitrah*), but Islam directs this nature towards the right path, namely marriage.[12] Premarital relationships such as dating are considered damaging rather than constructive. Islam even has a concept of *zina* that is not limited to sexual intercourse but also includes *zina* of the eyes, tongue, heart, and hands, all of which can occur in a dating relationship.[13] Therefore, students in religion-based schools need a deep understanding that dating is not an expression of love justified by the *shari'ah*. Islam instead recommends *ta'aruf*, a purposeful acquaintance aimed at marriage and conducted under the supervision of a *mahram*.[14] This is in line with the mission of religious education, which aims to instill faith, piety, and noble character in students.

The dating phenomenon among students of SMP "Peony Putih" shows a trend shaped by psychological, social, and environmental factors. Based on preliminary observations, about 40% of the students at this school admitted to being in a relationship, most of them with peers in the same grade and a small number with older students in higher grades. Their forms of interaction vary, ranging from intensive communication through social media and going out together to meeting in public areas around the school, although some students still limit their behavior, for example by avoiding excessive physical contact. This condition reflects the strong influence of peer culture, in which having a boyfriend or girlfriend becomes a symbol of social recognition

[10] Mary Kay DeGenova and F. Philip Rice, *Intimate Relationship, Marriage and Family* (McGraw Hill, 2005).

[11] Ekasari Fatma Mia et al., "Pengalaman Pacaran Terhadap Remaja Awal," *Wahana Inovasi: Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pengabdian Masyarakat UISU* 8, no. 1 (2019).

[12] Halim Setiawan, "Pernikahan Usia Dini Menurut Pandangan Hukum Islam," *Borneo: Journal of Islamic Studies* 3, no. 2 (2020): 59–74.

[13] Ayu Puspita Sari et al., "Pemahaman Terhadap Larangan Mendekati Zina (QS. Al-Isra' Ayat 32) Pada Mahasiswa PAI Yang Berpacaran Di UIN Fatmawati Soekarno Bengkulu," *Ghaitsa: Islamic Education Journal* 3 (2022).

[14] Muhammad Khairul et al., "Analisis Fenomena Berpacaran Perspektif Surah Al-Isra' Ayat 32 Dan Al-Hujurat Ayat 13," *Ulumul Qur'an: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 4 (2024): 207–31.

among adolescents. Students who are dating tend to be more confident in socializing, interact more actively, and express themselves more easily, whereas students who are not dating often feel that something is lacking in themselves, so they appear quieter and more passive in social interaction and occasionally feel inferior because they do not share the same experiences as their friends. Although dating affects self-confidence and social interaction, its effects on academic performance differ: students who are not dating have an advantage in learning because their focus and time are not consumed by the emotional dynamics of romantic relationships. Indeed, students who are not dating tend to be ranked at the top of their classes because they are able to keep their study habits consistent and maximize their academic potential.

This behavior can be understood through Erik Erikson's concept of psychosocial development, which holds that adolescents are at the stage of *identity vs. role confusion*, a period of searching for identity. At this stage, individuals try to discover who they are by experimenting with various social roles, including romantic relationships. In this context, dating becomes a form of identity exploration as well as a means of gaining recognition from the social environment.[15] When the school environment tolerates or even supports this behavior, adolescents will tend to regard it as an accepted social norm. Furthermore, Elizabeth B. Hurlock emphasizes that puberty, as the beginning of adolescence, is marked by drastic physical changes and complex emotional development. Adolescents begin to undergo physical transformations such as growth in height, voice changes, and increasing sexual attraction. Along with this, self-confidence and the desire to look attractive to others, especially the opposite sex, also grow. Attraction to the opposite sex is a natural part of adolescents' social and emotional development, but without proper guidance it can develop into actions that contradict religious principles and social rules.[16] Therefore, this period requires educational interventions that are not merely academic but also moral and spiritual, so that adolescents understand the limits of relationships between the sexes in accordance with Islamic values.

In practice, dating behavior among students has a negative impact on their concentration in learning, particularly in Islamic Religious Education. Dating without clear direction and commitment tends to consume students' attention and time, thereby disrupting their focus on learning. Overly intensive one-on-one interaction narrows students' social space and reduces their personal freedom to develop academically and spiritually. When problems arise in the relationship, emotionally immature students are more vulnerable to stress and frustration, which may reduce their interest and concentration in absorbing the subject matter, including the Islamic

[15] Ratu Fajrina Julieta, *Perkembangan Kepribadian Manusia Sejak Kecil Hingga Dewasa Menurut Pandangan Erik Erikson*, 2022.

[16] Elizabeth B. Hurlock, *Psikologi Perkembangan: Suatu Pendekatan Sepanjang Rentang Kehidupan*, trans. Istiwidayanti and Soedjarwo (Jakarta: Erlangga, 1980).

values that should shape noble character. As a result, the internalization of religious teachings is not optimal because it is disrupted by an unstable psychological condition caused by unhealthy dating.[17]

Dating behavior among junior high school students is an increasingly important issue to study, given that adolescence is a transitional period full of psychological changes. Although a number of studies have discussed the relationship between dating and students' religiosity, research that specifically examines the impact of dating on students' learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education is still rare. A previous study conducted at MTsN 1 Palembang showed PAI to be the foundation for building students' religious character in order to prevent deviant behavior such as dating, truancy, and smoking. PAI teachers instill values through habituation of worship, Qur'an recitation (*tadarus*), and religious activities, and they collaborate with guidance and counseling teachers, parents, and the school; however, that study did not describe innovative strategies relevant to the lives of today's adolescents and presented no data on the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education in addressing dating behavior.[18] Another study, conducted at MAN 1 Manado, highlighted that dating can lower students' academic achievement and religiosity. However, it did not explicitly link these findings to PAI as a school subject.[19] A further study at SMA Negeri 3 Selong explained that dating can affect students' learning outcomes, especially in Islamic Religious Education and Character Education. Such behavior can lower students' learning outcomes in this subject through reduced focus, motivation, and study time, which in turn affects achievement. Nevertheless, that researcher also found that the dominant factors were students' interest, ability, and environmental support.[20]

Previous studies indicate that the relationship between students' dating behavior and Islamic Religious Education learning has rarely been examined in depth, even though the phenomenon is relevant to study in early adolescence. Preliminary observations at SMP "Peony Putih" showed that Islamic Religious Education took place under ideal conditions: the timetable was always carried out; the PAI teacher, who holds a bachelor's degree and has 15 years of experience, was always present and actively teaching; student attendance was high; and daily and semester tests were conducted in an orderly manner. Yet amid these well-organized learning conditions, dating remained widespread and was accepted as part of the student culture at SMP

[17] Meliyanti Palidan, *Persepsi Siswa Tentang Dampak Pacaran Pada Siswa SMP Negeri 9 Tarakan*, 2018.

[18] Ana Marlia, *Pentingnya Pendidikan Agama Islam Sebagai Fondasi Anak Didik Di Sekolah: Studi Kasus Siswa Yang Suka Bolos Sekolah, Merokok Dan Pacaran Di MTSN 1 Palembang*, 2023.

[19] Mohammad S. Rahman et al., "Perubahan Perilaku Religiusitas Akibat Pacaran Bagi Peserta Didik Di Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Model 1 Manado," *Journal of Islamic Education: The Teacher of Civilization*, 2020.

[20] Suriyani, *Pengaruh Berpacaran Terhadap Hasil Belajar PAI Dan Budi Pekerti Siswa Di SMA Negeri 3 Selong*, 2023.

"Peony Putih". This surprised the authors because such behavior not only has the potential to lower morality but also disrupts students' academic achievement, for example when students spend long hours talking with their partners on the phone, cutting into their rest, so that they become drowsy and find it hard to concentrate in class. Based on this research gap, this study interprets the dating behavior of junior high school students as a social practice that forms symbolic stratification in student interactions. Dating is understood as a form of social recognition capital that affects students' positions, even though Islamic Religious Education has been running well structurally.

Under these conditions, PAI learning has been running in an orderly manner, yet dating behavior remains widespread among students. This phenomenon motivated the authors to conduct an in-depth study of the relationship between Islamic Religious Education learning and dating behavior among junior high school students. Accordingly, this study addresses the following research questions: (1) how is Islamic Religious Education implemented at SMP "Peony Putih"? (2) what are the forms and tendencies of dating behavior among the students? and (3) why has dating become a common tendency among students of SMP "Peony Putih"?

Furthermore, to understand students' dating behavior more comprehensively, the researchers examined its levels, ranging from mild forms to behavior considered worrying. The researchers also explored the factors influencing dating behavior at school, such as peer influence and a long-rooted culture of socializing among students. By examining all of these indicators, this study is expected to provide a complete picture of the two phenomena, Islamic Religious Education learning and students' dating behavior at SMP "Peony Putih", and to formulate learning strategies that are more contextual, responsive, and adaptive to the social realities students face.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method to understand students' experiences of dating behavior and Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMP "Peony Putih". This approach was chosen because it can explore the meaning of the experiences of students, both those who were dating and those who were not, in interpreting interactions with the opposite sex and the PAI learning process. The study also focused on changes in students who previously had no desire to date but who, after attending the school, felt an urge or desire to do so. The research was conducted on 16 June 2025, with research subjects identified through preliminary interviews with students in grades VII, VIII, and IX to distinguish those who were dating from those who were not. Informants were selected through purposive sampling, that is, the

deliberate selection of subjects based on specific criteria aligned with the research objectives.[21] Through this purposive sampling, 10 students were selected as informants, consisting of five students who were dating and five who were not, together with one PAI teacher and one guidance and counseling teacher.

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to examine forms of social interaction among students, including the behaviors and actions of individuals or groups that emerged in the school environment. The study also attended to students' communication, both face-to-face and through social media, and during observation the researchers noted the situations that formed and the use of symbols in students' social interactions. Interviews were conducted with students and the PAI teacher to explore their experiences, perceptions, and the influence of dating behavior on the learning process. Documentation in the form of attendance records, grades, and archives of learning activities served as supplementary data. Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation, namely by comparing data from students who were dating, students who were not dating, and the PAI teacher, and by combining the results of observation, interviews, and documentation to ensure the accuracy of the information. The data obtained were then analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña model, which comprises four main components: data condensation, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification.[22] Condensation was carried out from the outset to filter and focus on relevant information; the data were then presented as thematic narratives so that patterns and relationships among findings could be identified more easily. Preliminary conclusions were drawn and verified by comparing data sources to ensure the validity and consistency of the findings. This approach supported an in-depth, comprehensive, and continuous analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Islamic Religious Education Learning at SMP "Peony Putih"

SMP "Peony Putih" is a junior high school under the auspices of an Islamic educational institution and was founded in 2010. Its vision is to excel in achievement, to be skilled and independent, and to have noble character. This vision is realized through academic strengthening, skills development, and the internalization of Islamic values in all educational activities. In the academic year in which this study was conducted, the school had 169 students in grades VII, VIII, and IX. The school has also expelled students for violating rules of conduct related to their social

[21] M. Sofatur Rizky Nuralim and Yani Aguspriyani, "Teknik Pengambilan Sampel Purposive Dalam Mengatasi Kepercayaan Masyarakat Pada Bank Syariah Indonesia," *Neraca Manajemen, Ekonomi* 3, no. 1 (2023), https://doi.org/10.8734/mnmae.v1i2.359.

[22] Matthew B. Miles et al., *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (Sage, 2014).

relationships. This happened because the students were in dating relationships that went beyond the limits set by the school and the norms it upholds, resulting in personal situations that required special handling. This shows that Islamic Religious Education plays an important role as the subject that underpins the formation of students' religious character and attitudes.

Learning is essentially an integral part of the educational process. Learning can be defined as a process, method, and act of making human beings, as living creatures, learn.[23] In education, learning is understood as a planned interaction among educators, learners, and learning resources within a learning environment that is systematically designed, implemented, and evaluated so that learning objectives can be achieved effectively and efficiently.[24] Thus, Islamic Religious Education learning is oriented not only towards delivering religious content but also towards internalizing Islamic values, which are expected to be reflected in learners' attitudes and behavior.[25]

The implementation of Islamic Religious Education at SMP "Peony Putih" shows a relatively well-organized process in terms of both planning and delivery. This is relevant to discuss because educational practice often assumes that well-run religious instruction will correspond directly to the formation of students' religious behavior. In early adolescence, however, the internalization of values does not always proceed linearly. Therefore, PAI learning cannot be understood merely from the fact that teaching and learning take place in the classroom, but also from the extent to which the religious values taught are applied in students' daily lives. To examine this, the first step is to review the curriculum on which learning at the school is based.

In terms of curriculum, the school implements the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Independent Curriculum) with time allocations adjusted to each grade. PAI is allocated 3 lesson hours (*jam pelajaran*, JP) per week for grades VII, VIII, and IX. This allocation reflects an adjustment of the learning load and depth of content to students' developmental level. Conceptually, the *Kurikulum Merdeka* directs learning to focus on students' core competencies, content relevant to the context of their lives, and character building through meaningful learning activities.[26] At SMP "Peony Putih", implementation does not stop at the formal structure, as the school adds a religious strengthening policy through the BTQ (*Baca Tulis Al-Qur'an*, reading and writing the Qur'an) program, with 2 lesson hours per week held on days other than the PAI schedule. The addition of

[23] Sudirman et al., *Proses Belajar Dan Pembelajaran* (Media Sains Indonesia, 2023).

[24] Saringatun Mudrika et al., *Perencanaan Pembelajaran Di Sekolah: Teori Dan Implementasi* (Pradina Pustaka, 2021).

[25] Dzulfikar Akbar Romadlon et al., "Developing Progressive Islamic Aqidah Teaching Materials for Middle School Students," *Scaffolding: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam Dan Multikulturalisme* 5, no. 3 (2023): 681–98, https://doi.org/10.37680/scaffolding.v5i3.3335.

[26] Ryanjani Lila Anggraita et al., "Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Di Sekolah Dasar: Kajian Literatur," *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar* 9, no. 3 (2024), https://doi.org/10.23969/jp.v9i03.16731.

BTQ can be understood as the school's effort to improve students' ability to read the Qur'an while helping them understand and apply religious values in daily life, in line with the view that forming religious character requires continuity of learning experiences and habituation, not merely exposure to material in the classroom.[27]

Besides the curriculum, the strength of PAI implementation is also evident in the character and role of the educators involved. Based on the researchers' observations, PAI is taught by two female teachers with bachelor's degrees in the relevant field. They differ in teaching experience: the senior PAI teacher has about 15 years of experience and the junior PAI teacher about four years. This difference affects how the teachers deliver lessons and uphold values and rules in the classroom. The senior teacher tends to be firmer and more willing to admonish student behavior considered inconsistent with religious norms and school rules, so her moral guidance function is more explicit. The junior teacher, meanwhile, relies more on polite and persuasive communication, engaging students through dialogue and discussion. This pattern is consistent with findings that teaching experience affects teachers' confidence in upholding norms and correcting behavior.[28]

In terms of implementation, Islamic Religious Education at SMP "Peony Putih" is delivered in a disciplined and consistent manner. The PAI teachers are recorded as always present during lesson hours, and student attendance is relatively high. Students find the lessons fairly engaging because the methods used are varied and contextual. A teaching method can be defined as a way of putting a lesson plan into concrete activities so that learning objectives are achieved optimally.[29] Teaching methods therefore help determine whether a learning process succeeds and are an integral part of an instructional system. For this reason, religious educators must give serious attention to the choice of methods in PAI, since the subject is oriented not only towards mastery of content but also towards the formation of students' religious attitudes and behavior.

The use of these methods is evident, for example, in the topic of ablution (*wudu*), where the teacher applies supervised hands-on practice so that students not only understand the concept theoretically but also master the correct procedure of worship. For the topic of the Qur'an and Hadith, the teacher applies Problem-Based Learning (PBL) by raising issues prevalent in the school environment, such as bullying. Through this approach, students are guided to identify problems, formulate solutions based on the values of the Qur'an and Hadith, and produce learning

[27] Halimatuzzakiya Afnaz and Zaini Dahlan, *Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter Religius Siswa Melalui Pembiasaan Dalam Baca Tulis Al-Qur'an*, 3 (2024): 194–98, https://doi.org/10.59342/jgt.v3i2.

[28] Engelina Salainti and Alan Hubert Frederick Sanger, *Teachers' Strictness and Its Impact on Learning Outcomes*, 6, no. 2 (2024): 309–19.

[29] Nur Hafzhiyah Hasibuan et al., "Optimalisasi Pembelajaran Melalui Pendekatan, Strategi, Metode Dan Teknik Pembelajaran," *Counselia: Jurnal Bimbingan Konseling Pendidikan Islam* 5, no. 1 (2024): 202–13.

products such as digital posters. This is consistent with the findings of Suhirman et al. (2021), who state that problem-based learning can increase students' active participation while fostering moral awareness.[30] Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these methods in shaping students' moral awareness still depends on how the teacher manages discussion and reflection on values, so that learning is not merely normative but also touches the social realities students face.

Learning is supported by fairly adequate facilities and infrastructure. Teachers use an LCD projector and a laptop as learning media, and the classrooms are equipped with air conditioning and fans for comfort. Learning media play an important role in supporting teaching and learning, because learning media include anything that can be used to convey messages or learning materials so as to stimulate learners' attention, interest, thoughts, and feelings in learning activities to achieve particular learning objectives.[31] This conducive physical environment helps students maintain concentration and minimizes distractions during lessons. Several studies confirm that a comfortable learning space contributes to student engagement, although it acts more as a supporting factor than as the main determinant of successful value internalization.[32] Good facilities certainly increase the likelihood that learning runs smoothly, but they do not automatically ensure that religious values are realized in students' behavior.

In terms of learning attitudes and academic achievement, students respond relatively positively to PAI. This is evident in their seriousness in following lessons, their orderliness in completing assignments, and the regular conduct of daily and semester tests. The average PAI score is around 80, which generally reflects mastery of the material in the cognitive domain. Thus, PAI learning at SMP "Peony Putih" can be considered to run well administratively, pedagogically, and academically.

Forms and Tendencies of Dating Behavior among Students of SMP "Peony Putih"

Human beings are social creatures who need others to interact, communicate, and cooperate with. Because individuals cannot live entirely on their own, social relationships are a basic need that supports emotional and psychological well-being.[33] This need for closeness and more personal relationships then appears in various forms, one of which is a relationship with the opposite sex. DeGenova and Rice define dating as a relationship in which two people meet and do activities together in order to get to know each other, focusing on a process of exploration and

[30] Suhirman et al., "Problem-Based Learning with Character Emphasis and Naturalist Intelligence: Examining Students' Critical Thinking and Curiosity," *International Journal of Instruction* 14, no. 2 (2021): 217–32.

[31] Syamsiani, "Transformasi Media Pembelajaran Sebagai Penyalur Pesan," *Cendekia: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial, Bahasa Dan Pendidikan* 2, no. 3 (2022).

[32] Elizabeth Simbolon et al., "Analisis Dampak Lingkungan Kelas Terhadap Konsentrasi Belajar Siswa," *Irsyaduna: Jurnal Studi Kemahasiswaan* 5, no. 1 (2025): 116–28.

[33] Arman Hanafi and Muhammad Yasin, "Upaya Memperkuat Hubungan Sosial Dalam Kehidupan Bermasyarakat," *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan & Sosial* 1 (2023): 51–62.

mutual understanding before taking a more serious step. In early adolescence, such relationships are generally not yet oriented towards long-term commitment but towards getting to know each other and obtaining emotional support. Hurlock emphasizes that dating in adolescence is often related to the need for affection and the drive for social acceptance, so the dynamics of the relationship can be influenced by emotional maturity and self-control that are still developing.

Dating among adolescents is understood not merely as a relationship status but manifests in a wide range of behaviors. At a mild level, dating usually appears as more intense attention to one's partner, such as chatting more often or waiting for each other after school, while physical contact is still avoided because of shyness, school norms, or social control from the surrounding environment. However, when the relationship becomes more intense and supervision weakens, behavior can shift to a more serious level, for example looking for secluded places to be alone together, taking advantage of dark or empty classrooms, and even openly displaying physical intimacy. Dating behavior can thus be influenced by the intensity of the relationship, self-control, and the social situation that allows it, so that the line between what is reasonable and what is excessive often becomes blurred for students who are still emotionally unstable.

This phenomenon is also evident in the lives of students at SMP "Peony Putih". Observation showed that students' dating behavior occurs both outside and inside the school environment. Some students maintain relationships outside school hours, especially during holidays, meeting their partners in the neighborhoods around their homes. However, some students also take advantage of gaps in the school environment to be with their partners, such as during break time or when classrooms are empty because most students are in the canteen. In terms of who is involved, dating occurs mostly among peers, particularly among students in grades VIII and IX, although some students date older students. Dating interactions take place not only in person but also through social media. One student was found to call his partner "*sayang*" (darling) in an online conversation, a screenshot of which was then posted to an Instagram story. In addition, more serious dating behavior was observed, such as a grade IX couple interacting in the classroom during free time, with the male student lying with his head on the female student's lap. Some couples also use certain symbols in their relationships, such as matching couple keychains, which serve as markers of relationship status and social identity.

The tendency to date among students of SMP "Peony Putih" is closely related to external factors, especially peer-group influence and a culture of socializing that forms unwritten norms. One field finding showed a dating relationship shaped by social judgement: a grade IX female student dated a classmate because she was perceived as having particular attractions, such as an attractive appearance and good academic achievement, while her partner was not academically prominent. This pattern indicates that adolescent dating is driven not solely by emotional

closeness or rational consideration but by social perception, reputation, and the need for recognition from friends. Under these conditions, dating can be understood as a social practice produced by the logic of social acceptance within the peer group. Romantic relationships are interpreted not only as personal emotional bonds but also as a means of forming identity and social position in school interactions. Dating status is often perceived as a symbol of maturity and social existence, giving a certain social legitimacy to the students involved. As a result, the meaning of dating shifts from a private relationship to a symbolic practice with social value in the dynamics of student interaction.

The search for social recognition among students of SMP "Peony Putih" reveals differences in position within the structure of student interaction. Field findings show that dating is not merely a personal experience but is embedded in a layered structure of peer relations, producing differences in the level of recognition and social position among students. This condition can be understood through the concept of social stratification. According to Soerjono Soekanto, social stratification is the differentiation of members of society into hierarchical layers, each of which holds an unequal position in the social structure.[34] These differences in position are not always based on economic factors but can also derive from prestige, honor, and social recognition that develop in everyday interaction. Soekanto emphasizes that social stratification is universal and always found in social life, both in society at large and in smaller social groups, including the school environment. In this study, social stratification is understood as an informal and contextual symbolic stratification, not as the rigid structural stratification found in society in general. In student interactions, social stratification is formed through social judgement and recognition among individuals, such as popularity, involvement in friendship groups, and the status attached to particular behaviors. This stratification consists of several hierarchical layers that are dynamic and interrelated.

Based on the field findings, this layered structure can be identified as several social layers of students that show differences in the position and meaning of dating behavior in school interactions. **The first layer** is occupied by students who are dating and also belong to a peer gang. In this layer, dating is interpreted not only as a personal emotional relationship but also as social capital that strengthens an individual's position in the structure of peer relations. A grade IX female student said that since she started dating she has felt better known at school: "Yes, *kak*, I've become better known, because my boyfriend is friendly, so a lot of people know I'm his girlfriend." This statement shows that the romantic relationship functions as a means of social validation that widens popularity for both the individual and her group. In this context, dating serves as a symbolic strategy for enhancing social existence, in line with Soekanto's concept of

[34] Soerjono Soekanto, *Sosiologi Suatu Pengantar* (Raja Grafindo Persada, 2012).

social stratification, which emphasizes prestige and recognition as sources of differentiation in social position.

The second layer is occupied by students who are dating but do not belong to a peer gang. This group interprets dating more simply as a personal relationship without any orientation towards strengthening group status. A grade IX male student stated that for him dating is simply "liking each other" and does not need to be shown off to those around him. Nevertheless, dating status still has psychological effects in the form of self-confidence and enthusiasm for going to school. However, the absence of gang affiliation means that the social recognition they obtain is limited and does not grow significantly in the dynamics of school interaction.

The third layer is occupied by students who are not dating but belong to a friendship gang. In this structure, social recognition is obtained not through romantic relationships but through affiliation with a popular group. A female student said that she had become known because of her closeness to popular friends: "Yes, *kak*, because my friends are quite famous, I'm also fairly well known because I hang out with them." The social identity of students in this layer is formed through group solidarity and the intensity of togetherness, showing that gangs function as an alternative source of symbolic status for students who are not dating.

The fourth layer is occupied by students who are neither dating nor part of a peer gang. This group tends to be outside the center of school social dynamics. Some students consciously choose this position out of religious values and academic focus. One female student stated, "From religion class I know that dating is not recommended, so I try to keep myself in check." The consequences of this choice are low popularity and certain social labels, such as being seen as uncool. Nevertheless, this attitude reflects value-based resistance to the dominant norms of student peer culture. Overall, this division into social layers shows that dating behavior at SMP "Peony Putih" is related not only to affective relationships but also functions as a mechanism of social status formation. Dating, gang membership, and the level of social recognition form a hierarchical system that influences how students understand themselves and position themselves in the school's social environment.

The structure of social layers formed in student interactions does not develop freely but exists within the institutional space of the school, which has its own norms, rules, and control mechanisms. Therefore, to understand the dynamics of dating behavior fully, it is important to examine how the school responds to and manages this social practice through the roles of teachers and the prevailing system of guidance. The school's response to students' dating behavior shows a pattern of guidance and control carried out through teachers' different roles in the school structure. Field findings show a relational distance between the senior Islamic Religious Education teacher and the students, while the junior PAI teacher has closer interaction with

students because of more frequent involvement in daily school activities, so students tend to be more open in sharing personal problems. One student said, "With the younger teacher it's usually easier to talk, because she's more relaxed and doesn't scold you right away." However, in the context of rule violations, particularly those related to dating, the senior PAI teacher holds a more dominant controlling position because she has the formal authority to record violations and give corrective advice. In practice, the senior teacher directly reprimands students found dating on school grounds, especially when it is done openly and considered disruptive. If the behavior is repeated or exceeds the limits set by the school, control continues through the issuance of a stamped warning letter (*surat peringatan*, SP) and summoning parents for joint guidance. This pattern shows that guidance on dating behavior at SMP "Peony Putih" proceeds through a graduated control mechanism that combines a persuasive relational approach with formal administrative authority according to the level of the violation.

Dating as a Common Tendency among Students of SMP "Peony Putih"

Learning at school is essentially directed at shaping students' attitudes and behavior so that they are in harmony with moral and religious values, including in regulating relationships with the opposite sex. In school life, however, students' behavior is determined not only by the normative understanding gained through formal learning but also by the social dynamics that develop in everyday interaction. In early adolescence, peer influence, examples of behavior visible in the school environment, and mechanisms of social acceptance play an important role in shaping students' patterns of interaction.[35] It is in this context that dating behavior needs to be understood as a social phenomenon that does not stand alone but is closely related to the culture of peer interaction, social recognition, and practices of tolerance that develop in the school environment.

From the time they enter grade VII, new students are gradually exposed to a school social climate that has normalized dating, both through practices visible in students' daily lives and through unwritten norms that develop in peer groups. This climate shapes students' early perception that dating is a normal part of school peer culture, even before they have a critical understanding of the religious values and school rules that govern it. In this context, dating behavior does not emerge as an individual phenomenon but develops as a social pattern passed down from one cohort of students to the next through imitation of older students' behavior, which is perceived as a normal practice in school social life.

In this study, dating behavior is understood as a form of social relationship between adolescent boys and girls that involves emotional closeness and the recognition of a certain status

[35] Gilang Ramadhan et al., "Dinamika Psikososial Dalam Perkembangan Remaja: Studi Kasus Pada Pengaruh Teman Sebaya," *Religi: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 3, no. 1 (2025): 1–8.

within the peer environment. Dating is an adolescent interpersonal relationship marked by affection, emotional closeness, and a desire to be recognized by the social environment.[36] In the school context, dating relationships are not only personal but also laden with social meaning because they relate to an individual's acceptance and position within the peer group.

The results show that dating behavior at SMP "Peony Putih" does not emerge as an isolated individual phenomenon but develops as a social pattern passed down from one cohort of students to the next. Students perceive dating as a practice that has long existed and keeps recurring from one cohort to the next. This understanding is formed mainly through direct observation of older students displaying dating relationships at school. One respondent stressed that dating "has been around for a long time, it's been passed down," and that younger students consider the behavior acceptable because they are "imitating the older students". This finding is reinforced by students' experience of seeing older students visit their partners' classrooms during break or display physical closeness in the school canteen, which is then interpreted as normal and acceptable behavior.

Analytically, this condition shows the workings of social imitation (*observational learning*), a process of behavioral learning that occurs when students observe the actions of others who are considered more influential or of higher social standing, without having to experience the consequences of that behavior directly.[37] At SMP "Peony Putih", older students function as role models because they are perceived as more experienced and as holding symbolic authority in the school's social structure. When the dating behavior they display is seen repeatedly in daily school life, accepted by those around them, and not met with firm consequences, younger students interpret it as normal and worth imitating. This process explains how dating is learned not through formal instruction but through concrete examples in everyday social interaction, so that it is reproduced repeatedly across cohorts.

This condition is also consistent with Cialdini's theory of social norms, particularly the concept of *descriptive norms*, namely the tendency of individuals to adjust their behavior to what appears common and dominant in their social environment.[38] In a situation where many students, especially older ones, are frequently seen dating, this behavior creates the perception that dating is a common and accepted practice, even though it contradicts the school's written rules. The descriptive norm formed through what is "often seen" then becomes more influential than *injunctive norms* in the form of prohibitions or formal advice, encouraging students to follow

[36] Andi Tiara Nurul Izzah Fathia and Erna Herawati, "Pengalaman Dan Makna Pacaran Pada Mahasiswa: Studi Fenomenologi," *Umbara Indonesian Journal of Anthropology* 8 (2023).

[37] Sisin Warini et al., "Teori Belajar Dalam Pembelajaran," *Anthor Education and Learning Journal* 2 (2023): 566–76.

[38] Robert B. Cialdini, "Descriptive Social Norms as Underappreciated Sources of Social Control," *Psychometrica* 72 (2007): 263–68.

behavior considered normal among their peers. This mechanism explains why dating can persist and strengthen as an informal social tradition in the structure of school peer relations.

As this pattern grows stronger, dating becomes increasingly normalized through the use of language and symbols in students' everyday interactions. Terms of endearment, relationship-status posts on social media, and couple symbols function as symbolic practices that mark students' identity and social status. Language serves not only as a means of communication but also as a medium that constructs a social reality in which dating appears normal, modern, and expected. From the perspective of Berger and Luckmann's social construction of reality, such symbolic practices strengthen the legitimacy of dating as part of school youth culture while creating social expectations for students who are not yet dating.[39]

This normalization is then reinforced by mechanisms of appreciation and social recognition. The data show that students who are dating tend to be better known and receive more attention from their peers. Dating status is interpreted as a symbol of maturity, courage, and personal attractiveness, while students who are not dating risk being labeled "*kurang gaul*" (uncool). Sociologically, this phenomenon can be explained through Soekanto's concept of social stratification, in which dating functions as a form of symbolic capital that differentiates students' social positions. Dating is thus not only a personal relationship but also a means of gaining social existence, which encourages students to maintain their relationships in order to keep their status in the peer group.

Although dating has been normalized as a dominant social practice among students, the field findings show that not all students engage in it. The non-involvement of some students in dating is influenced by a number of individual and structural factors. One prominent factor is the strong bulwark of family norms that instill religious values, moral control, and limits on social relationships from an early age, giving students value resilience in the face of the peer culture that has developed at school. In addition, some students socially lack access to dating relationships, whether because they lack the physical attractiveness considered ideal by student standards, lack outstanding academic or non-academic achievements, or have limited economic capital. This condition indirectly places these students outside the mainstream dating culture, even though they remain in a school social environment that normalises the practice.

On the other hand, the strengthening of dating culture is also influenced by school rules and the sanction mechanisms applied. Interviews with the guidance and counseling teacher showed that dating is normatively categorized as a violation of school rules because the students are still pupils. Violations are handled through a graduated system of warning letters (*Surat*

[39] Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Penguin Books, 1991).

Peringatan, SP) as a form of formal school control. At the first stage, students involved in dating receive a first-level warning (SP 1) in the form of a summons to the guidance and counseling room, a reprimand, and advice accompanied by religious assignments such as memorizing surahs and writing out Surah Yasin. This stage is intended as initial guidance so that students realize their mistake and stop dating without involving their parents. If the violation is repeated, the school applies a second-level warning (SP 2), marked by summoning the parents and signing a stamped statement letter, together with closer supervision of the student's behavior. A third-level warning (SP 3) is then applied if the student continues to violate the rules after the two previous stages, with the most severe sanction being expulsion from school. Although the sanction mechanism is structurally graduated and clear, students' experiences show that dating continues, often in secret after a reprimand.

Analysis of this condition reveals a gap between formal and informal norms. Handling that initially emphasizes persuasive guidance and is not always accompanied by directly felt social consequences leads students to interpret dating as not a serious violation. From the perspective of Herbert Jacob's deterrence theory (1980),[40] the effectiveness of behavioral control depends heavily on the certainty and consistency of sanctions, not merely on the severity of punishment. When sanctions are not perceived as certain, students' informal norms become more dominant. Research on school discipline in Indonesia also shows that inconsistent enforcement of rules can reduce student compliance and encourage hidden violation strategies, thereby indirectly creating a space of social tolerance for dating. This condition shows that behavioral control through formal school rules has not been fully able to counter the strong influence of students' social norms, so that the moral and religious values taught through Islamic Religious Education face structural challenges in being internalised into students' actual behavior.

In this context, the influence of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning faces structural challenges. Although students understand the prohibition of dating cognitively, PAI values, which are normative and individual, are often overpowered by the collective current of peer culture. This is in line with Hurlock's view that adolescents are in a phase of emotional development and identity search and are therefore more susceptible to the influence of the social environment. Research in Indonesia also shows that peer conformity has a significant influence on adolescents' relational behavior, including dating.

Overall, dating behavior at SMP "Peony Putih" appears as a common tendency because it is passed down through intergenerational imitation among students, normalized through the language and symbols of peer interaction, reinforced by social recognition, and sustained by implicit tolerance in the enforcement of school rules. These findings show that although Islamic

[40] Herbert Jacob, "Deterrent Effects of Formal Sanctions," *Law & Society* 2, no. 1 (1980).

Religious Education has been delivered structurally and cognitively as it should be, the normative messages it contains have not been able to counterbalance the strong current of dating culture that has developed among students. Dating can therefore be understood as a structured social phenomenon with a collective influence that outweighs the internalization of religious values at the level of students' everyday practice.

CONCLUSION

Islamic Religious Education at SMP "Peony Putih" is structurally and pedagogically well implemented, as shown by the orderliness of the learning process, the competence of the educators, the variety of methods, and students' academic achievement in the cognitive domain. However, the findings show that these achievements have not fully translated into successful internalization of values in the affective and ethical domains. The field reality shows that dating remains a common and accepted practice in student peer culture. Dating is interpreted not only as a personal relationship but functions as a social practice that shapes students' recognition and position in the structure of peer relations, creating a gap between the normative religious understanding taught through Islamic Religious Education and students' behavior in everyday practice.

An important finding of this study is that the culture of dating at SMP "Peony Putih" is strong and collective in nature, forming a dominant norm in student interaction. Under these conditions, the value messages contained in Islamic Religious Education have not been able to stem this strong current of dating culture, even though students understand them cognitively. Peer normative pressure, imitation across cohorts, and the normalization of dating as a symbol of social prestige mean that PAI values, which are individual and normative, are often overpowered by the collective force of peer culture.

The factors that make dating a common tendency among students stem from the strong influence of the social environment, especially the collective norms of peers and the mechanism of imitation across student cohorts. The normalization of dating is reinforced by symbolic practices, the use of peer language, and implicit tolerance in the enforcement of school rules, so that dating is perceived as a normal and prestigious practice. The novelty of this study lies in interpreting dating as a social practice that forms symbolic stratification among students, rather than merely as individual moral deviance.

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