Islamic Education in the Family as the Basis of Civil Society: A Philosophical and Empirical Study in Asahan Regency

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Abstract

This study aims to deeply analyze the role of Islamic education in families as a basis for strengthening civil society through a philosophical and empirical approach, using a case study in Asahan Regency. This study uses a qualitative approach with descriptive-analytical methods. The philosophical study is conducted through an analysis of classical and contemporary literature on the concept of Islamic education and civil society, while the empirical study is carried out through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation in several Muslim families in Asahan Regency. Data are analyzed thematically to find the relationship between Islamic education practices in families and the formation of civil society values such as justice, tolerance, social participation, and collective responsibility. The results show that Islamic education in families in Asahan Regency plays a significant role in shaping the character of individuals who are religious, have noble morals, and have social concerns. Islamic values instilled from an early age through role models, habituation of worship, educational communication, and strengthening a culture of deliberation have been proven to encourage the emergence of individuals who are active in social life and contribute to strengthening civil society. However, the challenges of modernity, digital media, and changes in family interaction patterns are factors that influence the effectiveness of this education. This study concludes that Islamic education in the family serves not only as a means of spiritual and moral development but also as a strategic instrument in building the foundation of civil society. Therefore, strengthening the role of the family in Islamic education needs to be a priority in social and religious policies to create a civilized, inclusive, and competitive society.

Keywords: Islamic Education, Family, Civil Society.

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Introduction

Education is a key instrument in shaping individual character and developing society. In modern society, education is not limited to cognitive aspects but must also encompass moral, spiritual, and social education. In Indonesia, where the majority of the population is Muslim, Islamic education plays a crucial role in shaping behavior, values, and social identity. Islamic education is not solely the responsibility of formal institutions such as madrasas or schools, but fundamentally begins with the family as the smallest social unit.(Inayati, Fajriah, 2024) Although formal educational institutions play a crucial role in imparting systematic religious knowledge, the primary foundation of Islamic education actually begins within the family. The family is the smallest social unit and serves as the "first laboratory" for children in learning life values. It is here that children are first introduced to religious norms, ethics, and teachings through daily interactions, habits, and concrete examples from parents or other family members (Bahri & Muzaki, 2021).

Within the family, the process of Islamic education occurs naturally and consistently. For example, daily activities such as praying together, reading the Quran, sharing with others, and cultivating honest and polite behavior are effective means of instilling moral and spiritual values. This aligns with the philosophical view that true education is the internalization of values, not simply the transfer of knowledge (A. Mulyana, 2019). Children accustomed to living in an Islamic family environment tend to develop character based on noble morals, social awareness, and moral responsibility principles that form the foundation for a civilized society.

Sociologically, the role of the family in Islamic education is also closely linked to strengthening civil society.(Mubit, 2016) Families that instill Islamic values from an early age produce individuals who are not only personally religious but also concerned about their social environment. Such individuals tend to actively participate in social activities, uphold norms and ethics, and build solidarity within the community (Putnam R.D, 1993). In other words, the family is not just a place where children are raised, but also the initial foundation for the formation of a strong, tolerant, and responsible civil society.

Thus, the family plays a strategic and fundamental role in Islamic education. Education in schools and madrasahs will be more effective when accompanied by consistent moral, spiritual, and social education at home. The family is not only a place where children are born and grow up, but also the primary and primary space where Islamic values are lived, internalized, and practiced, shaping the character of individuals who will later become part of a civilized and dignified society.

In Asahan Regency, Islamic education within the family plays a crucial role and is relevant to the daily lives of the community. This region is known for its strong adherence to local wisdom, where religious values guide social and cultural life, and even family interactions. In this context, the family serves not only as a residence or biological unit, but also as a center for early education. Children first learn about Islamic norms, ethics, and teachings within the family environment through parental role models, religious traditions, and daily habits.

The process of Islamic education within families in Asahan encompasses various aspects, from introducing basic worship and fostering discipline, to developing strong moral and social character. Families that consistently instill religious and moral values shape a young generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also possesses social awareness, empathy, and responsibility for their surroundings. Thus, Islamic education within families impacts not only the individual but also the quality of social interactions and solidarity within the community.

Given this, this research aims to examine Islamic education within families in Asahan Regency holistically. A philosophical approach is used to understand the basic principles of Islamic education, the moral values instilled, and their relevance in shaping individual character. Meanwhile, an empirical approach will examine actual practices within families, how these values are implemented, and how they influence community social participation. With

this dual perspective, the research is expected to illustrate how Islamic education within families serves as a solid foundation for the formation of a sustainable civil society, equipping the younger generation to become active, responsible citizens and contribute significantly to community development.

Literature Review
2.1   Islamic Education in the Family Environment

Islamic education within the family is the primary foundation for the development of a child's character, morals, and religious identity. The family serves as the "first school" where children learn to understand religious values, ethics, and social norms through daily interactions with parents and other family members (Ara Hidayat, 2015). Through simple habits such as praying together, practicing Quranic recitation, teaching good manners, and modeling parental behavior, children begin to build a strong moral foundation before they face the outside world. According to (A. Mulyana, 2019)(Wati et al., 2022), Islamic education within the family is holistic, encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. Cognitively, children acquire knowledge of Islamic teachings; affectively, they internalize moral and spiritual values; and psychomotorically, they learn to express these values through daily actions. Thus, families not only transfer knowledge but also shape behavior and character aligned with Islamic teachings.

Empirical studies show that families that consistently implement Islamic education have a positive impact on the development of children's social behavior. (Majid, 2005) found that children from families active in religious practices such as congregational prayer, regular Koran study, and the habit of sharing tend to have higher social awareness, cooperative skills, and active participation in society. This demonstrates that Islamic education in the family not only shapes religious individuals but also prepares them to become responsible and caring citizens of the community.(Harahap & Siregar, 2020)

Furthermore, (Supriyadi et al., 2022) emphasized that Islamic education in the family is a crucial foundation for the formation of civil society. The values taught at home honesty, justice, responsibility, and social concern equip children to participate constructively in social life. Thus, the family plays a strategic role in shaping a civilized, tolerant, and harmonious society, while also emphasizing that Islamic education cannot be completely replaced by formal institutions.

Based on these theoretical foundations and empirical findings, it is clear that Islamic education in the family is a crucial pillar in developing individual and societal character. Education that begins at home not only shapes religious identity but also creates a generation capable of contributing to social life and strengthening the structure of a healthy civil society.

2.2   The Family as a Primary Educational Institution

The family is the first and smallest social unit and plays a strategic role in a child's education. From an Islamic educational perspective, the family is not only a place for children to grow and develop, but also serves as a primary educational institution that instills moral, spiritual, and social values (Riadi, 2024). Early family education forms the foundation for a child's character development and social readiness to interact with the wider community. Educational theory emphasizes that education does not only occur in school but begins from the moment a child is born into the family (Nurdin, 2022). The family is the first place a child learns to understand social norms, ethics, and behavior. Through daily interactions, children imitate and practice the behavior of their parents and other family members, ensuring that the learning provided is personalized, contextual, and holistic. Family education encompasses three main dimensions:

1. Cognitive Dimension: Children learn basic knowledge, including religious teachings and social norms. For example, learning daily prayers, understanding Islamic moral concepts, or understanding etiquette in interacting with others.
2. Affective Dimension: Children internalize moral values, such as honesty, patience, and empathy, through the role models and emotional guidance of their parents.
3. Psychomotor Dimension: Children express moral values in concrete actions, such as helping others, sharing, or disciplined religious practices.(Azyumardi Azra, 2012)

Family education has a significant long-term impact on the development of a child's character, social behavior, and moral awareness. Children raised with consistent religious and moral education at home tend to become caring, tolerant, and responsible individuals, capable of actively participating in society (Somad, 2021). Thus, families not only shape religious identity but also contribute to the development of a healthy and civilized civil society.

Research Methodology

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach. This approach was chosen because the research objective was to deeply understand the practice of Islamic education within families, the role of parents, and their impact on children's character development and social participation in society. Qualitative research allows researchers to explore real-life experiences, perceptions, and practices within the context of family life in Asahan Regency. The research subjects consisted of parents and children who were purposively selected based on the following criteria:

1. Families actively implementing Islamic education at home.
2. Children aged 5–15 years old.
3. Willingness to participate in in-depth interviews and observations.

A total of 15 families were selected as primary respondents, with varying socioeconomic backgrounds and parental education levels to obtain a comprehensive picture. Data collection was conducted using observation, interviews, and documentation methods. Data analysis used the stages of data reduction, verification, and drawing conclusions.

Results

Based on the research results, almost all respondents confirmed that parents are the primary source of religious education at home. One mother stated, "I always teach my children to recite prayers before meals, pray in congregation, and remind them of morals. This is my responsibility as a mother." Observations indicate that parents actively serve as role models for their children. Children imitate their parents' behavior in worship, sharing, and being polite to others. This aligns with Islamic educational theory, which emphasizes ta'dib (religious practice) through example and practice.

4.1 Instilling Moral and Social Values from an Early Age

Daily activities at home focus not only on worship rituals but also on social and moral values. For example, some families instill in their children the habit of helping family members or neighbors in need, maintaining a clean home environment, and sharing their wealth with others through small donations. An interview revealed that one father stated, "I always encourage my children to help their neighbors, reminding them that it is part of Islamic teachings. Children learn about caring from a young age." These findings show that moral and social education in the family takes place continuously and naturally, not only through verbal teaching.

4.2 The Family as the Foundation for Civil Society

Many parents emphasize that Islamic education at home aims to prepare children to become caring and responsible individuals. Interviews indicate that children who are

accustomed to religious practices and social values tend to be active in community activities, such as religious study groups, community service, and religious events in the village. One local religious teacher observed, "Children who are educated with Islamic values at home are usually more socially engaged, disciplined, and involved in social activities. They learn the value of responsibility from an early age." This confirms Putnam's (1993) theory that the quality of civil society is strongly influenced by the values and moral education received early in the family.

Research shows that the family truly serves as a child's first school, a place where they learn to understand the world, interact with others, and instill values from an early age. This is where children first encounter Islamic teachings, not only through words, but also through the concrete examples of their parents. Parents serve as guiding educators, role models, and facilitators, helping children develop good behavior. For example, through simple routines like congregational prayer, reciting prayers before meals, or sharing with others, children gradually learn to internalize moral and religious values. This process enables them not only to understand Islamic teachings but also to practice them in their daily lives, from honesty and discipline to caring for the environment and others.

In other words, Islamic education within the family is not merely formal instruction, but a life experience integrated into a child's daily life, thus forming a consistent and solid character from an early age.(Sangkot Sirait, 2010) The family, with its warmth and emotional closeness, is an effective space for instilling a strong moral and spiritual foundation, which will continue to influence a child's behavior and attitudes throughout life. Islamic education within the family not only shapes individual religiosity but also fosters social awareness and responsibility. Children learn to interact ethically with their social environment, respect others, and participate in community activities (Zannatunnisya, Abdi Syahrial Harahap, Asmidar Parapat, 2024). This confirms that the family serves as the initial foundation for the formation of a civil society, where moral values, ethics, and social concern are continuously passed down.

Furthermore, the practice of Islamic education within the family is holistic, encompassing spiritual, moral, and social aspects. In other words, the family serves as the first laboratory where children learn to internalize religious values and apply them in daily social interactions. This finding aligns with that of (Suharyanto, 2019), who emphasized the importance of the family as a foundation for children's morals, (Solikhah et al., 2024), who demonstrated the close relationship between family education and the formation of a healthy civil society.

Conclusion

The family plays a central role as a primary educational institution in instilling Islamic and moral values in children from an early age. Parents serve not only as teachers but also as role models and facilitators of habituation, enabling children to internalize and consistently practice Islamic teachings in their daily lives. The practice of Islamic education in the family extends beyond formal worship to the instillation of social values, such as honesty, discipline, empathy, and concern for others. This process shapes children's character as religious, responsible, and socially conscious. Furthermore, Islamic education within families in Asahan Regency serves as the foundation for the formation of a sustainable civil society. Children who are accustomed to moral and social values from an early age tend to become active, caring, and constructive individuals in society. Thus, the family serves not only as a place for children to grow and develop but also as a strategic foundation for building a harmonious, civilized, and religious society.

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