



## **The Role of Al-Qur'an Hadith Teachers in Fostering Students' Curiosity Character at MAS Muhammadiyah 01 Medan**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to analyze the strategies employed by Al-Qur'an Hadith teachers in fostering students' curiosity character and to evaluate the outcomes of this character development at MAS Muhammadiyah 01 Medan. Character education, particularly the development of curiosity, is a crucial aspect in shaping students to become critical and independent learners. This research adopts a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. The research subjects include Al-Qur'an Hadith teachers and 14 students from Grade XI of the Science and Social Studies streams. The findings indicate that the implemented strategies include active learning methods such as Inquiry-Based Learning and Problem-Based Learning, the creation of a conducive learning environment, the provision of appreciation and motivation, as well as religious programs such as the Intensive Islamic Studies Program (Kajian Islam Intensif/KII). The development of students' curiosity shows significant results, evidenced by increased activeness in asking questions, independent information seeking, and greater enthusiasm for learning. Approximately 70% of students demonstrate high indicators of curiosity, although challenges remain among students with low learning motivation and limited financial resources to support varied learning activities. The implications of this study suggest that integrating active learning models with religious-based programs can serve as an effective approach for strengthening students' curiosity character in Islamic education contexts. This study also provides practical guidance for teachers and educational institutions in designing student-centered learning environments that foster critical thinking, intrinsic motivation, and sustainable character development based on Islamic values.

### **Keywords:**

Al-Qur'an Hadith;  
Curiosity;  
Character;  
Teacher's Role

### **INTRODUCTION**

Character education is a system of instilling values that encompasses components of knowledge, awareness, and action in implementing those values toward God Almighty, oneself, others, the environment, and the nation (Citra et al., 2019). In accordance with Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System Article 3, national education functions to develop capabilities and shape the

character and civilization of a dignified nation in the context of educating the nation's life (Depdiknas, 2003).

There are 18 character values that need to be instilled in students, derived from religion, Pancasila, culture, and national educational goals, one of which is the character of curiosity. However, among these values, curiosity holds a fundamental and strategic position because it serves as the driving force for the development of other cognitive and affective competencies in the learning process. Curiosity encourages students not only to receive knowledge passively but also to actively question, explore, and construct understanding independently.

According to Silmi and Kusmarni (2017), curiosity is a natural human disposition characterized by a desire to investigate and learn more deeply about a subject. Conceptually, curiosity is closely related to intrinsic motivation, critical thinking, and lifelong learning skills, which are essential competencies in 21st-century education. In the context of Islamic education, curiosity also plays a crucial role in deepening students' understanding of Al-Qur'an and Hadith, as it encourages them to explore meanings, contexts, and applications of religious teachings rather than merely memorizing them.

Therefore, focusing on the development of curiosity character is not only relevant but also essential, as it acts as a foundational element that supports the formation of independent, critical, and reflective learners in both general and religious educational contexts.

Curiosity drives human beings from an early age to continuously question various things that are not yet known and understood (Naim, 2012). As individuals grow older, curiosity can be addressed in more systematic ways. Curiosity can be cultivated through learning and must be nurtured, developed, and answered correctly. In the context of Al-Qur'an Hadith learning, fostering curiosity character is particularly important as it encourages students to understand Islamic teachings more deeply—not merely memorizing but also studying and applying them in daily life.

Based on initial observations on November 19, 2023, at MAS Muhammadiyah 01 Medan, it was found that many students were still distracted by other things during the learning process. This indicates that students still have low curiosity character. Therefore, teachers need to make efforts to cultivate students' curiosity character so that learning objectives can be achieved.

Teachers play a strategic role in shaping students' character. According to Gunawan (2014), teachers' efforts in instilling character values are intentional efforts aimed at nurturing character values to support the development of students both inwardly and outwardly toward a better direction. The instillation of character values requires a long and continuous process with a broad scope, involving all components such as curriculum content, lesson plans, assessment mechanisms, the quality of teacher-student relationships, learning management, and the effective use of facilities and infrastructure.

However, previous studies have predominantly focused on general character education or the implementation of active learning models without specifically examining how Al-Qur'an Hadith teachers integrate these approaches to foster students' curiosity character in Islamic educational settings. In addition, limited research has explored the combination of pedagogical strategies and religious-based programs in strengthening curiosity as a key character trait among madrasah students. This indicates a gap in the literature regarding context-specific strategies and their measurable outcomes in developing curiosity character. Therefore, this study seeks to address the following research questions:

- (1) What strategies are employed by Al-Qur'an Hadith teachers in fostering students' curiosity character at MAS Muhammadiyah 01 Medan?
- (2) How are the outcomes of students' curiosity character development reflected in the learning process.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach intended to provide a systematic and objective description of events. The research location is MAS Muhammadiyah 01 Medan, located at Jalan Mandala By Pass No. 140 A Medan, Medan Tembung District, Medan City, North Sumatra Province. The research subjects consist of Al-Qur'an Hadith teachers and 14 students from Grade XI of the Science (IPA) and Social Studies (IPS) streams, selected using a purposive sampling technique. The selection of 14 students is based on qualitative research principles that prioritize depth of data rather than statistical generalization. The participants were deliberately chosen to represent diverse academic backgrounds and levels of learning motivation, enabling the researcher to capture varied perspectives regarding the development of curiosity character. In

addition, data collection was conducted until reaching data saturation, where no new significant information emerged from additional participants. Therefore, the sample size is considered adequate to provide rich, in-depth, and meaningful insights into the research problem within its specific context. Data collection techniques include: (1) in-depth interviews with teachers and students, (2) participatory observation of the learning process, and (3) documentation including school data, lesson plans, and activity photographs.

### **Research Design**

The data analysis technique follows the Miles et al.'s (2014) model, comprising three stages: (1) data reduction, namely focusing and simplifying data obtained from the field, (2) data presentation in the form of organized narrative text, and (3) drawing conclusions based on findings that align with the research questions and objectives.

### **Instruments and Procedures**

The interview protocol was designed in a semi-structured format, allowing flexibility for participants to express their experiences while still focusing on key research themes. The interview questions covered several aspects, including: (1) teachers' strategies in fostering curiosity character, (2) students' responses to learning methods, and (3) perceived outcomes of character development. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' consent, then transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Participatory observation was conducted during the learning process in the classroom. The researcher used an observation guideline focusing on indicators of curiosity character, such as students' activeness in asking questions, engagement in discussions, and initiative in seeking additional information. Field notes were systematically recorded during and after each observation session to capture both verbal and non-verbal interactions. Documentation was collected to support and validate the data obtained from interviews and observations. These documents included lesson plans, teaching materials, school programs, and photographs of learning activities.

## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis followed the Miles et al.'s (2014) interactive model encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the coding process, the researcher applied thematic analysis by categorizing data into initial codes, which were then grouped into broader themes such as learning strategies, student engagement, and curiosity development outcomes. The coding process was conducted iteratively to ensure consistency and depth of interpretation. Data were validated through methodological and source triangulation, cross-checking information across observations, interviews, and documentation from multiple informants. This process ensured the credibility, reliability, and trustworthiness of the research findings.

## **FINDINGS**

The findings of this study are presented in two main parts: (1) the strategies employed by Al-Qur'an Hadith teachers in fostering students' curiosity character, and (2) the outcomes of curiosity character development among students at MAS Muhammadiyah 01 Medan. The data are derived from triangulation of interviews, participatory observation, and documentation.

### **Strategies of Al-Qur'an Hadith Teachers in Fostering Curiosity Character**

Based on data triangulation from interviews, observations, and documentation, several key strategies were consistently identified in fostering students' curiosity character as summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1. Strategies Employed by Al-Qur'an Hadith Teachers in Fostering Students' Curiosity Character**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Evidence from Data</b>
1	Encouraging Critical Questions and Reflection	The teacher encouraged students to ask critical questions about the meanings of Qur'anic verses and Hadith and to explore their interrelationships.	Observation showed that around 8–10 students actively asked questions during reflective tasks.

2	Interactive Learning Methods	Discussion, debate, and case studies were used to create an interactive and participatory classroom climate.	Students were more engaged in group discussions than in lecture sessions, as indicated by higher participation, peer interaction, and longer attention spans.
3	Challenges and Exploratory Projects	Students were assigned exploratory tasks, such as comparing interpretations from different tafsir sources, to stimulate analytical thinking.	Documentation of student work showed variation in argumentation and references, indicating independent information seeking.
4	Inquiry-Based and Problem-Based Learning Models	Inquiry-Based Learning and Problem-Based Learning were applied to shift instruction toward student-centered learning.	Observation showed students actively consulting textbooks and digital sources when responding to open-ended questions.
5	Teacher as Facilitator and Motivator	The teacher provided equal opportunities for participation and responded positively to students' questions.	Observation indicated that this approach created a psychologically safe environment that encouraged students to express ideas more confidently.
6	Madrasah Religious Programs	Religious activities such as KII, Dhuha prayer, and seminars supported curiosity development beyond classroom instruction.	Documentation and observation showed that students actively prepared materials for religious presentations, reflecting independent exploration of Islamic knowledge.

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First, the teacher systematically encouraged critical questioning and reflection by inviting students to explore the meanings of Qur'anic verses and Hadith and to examine the relationships between them. Observational data showed that during classroom sessions, approximately 8–10 students actively raised questions when prompted with reflective tasks, indicating that questioning behavior was not merely reported by participants but was also visibly enacted in the learning process. This finding supports Kurniawan's (2014) argument that openness to new ideas contributes to the development of curiosity. Second, interactive learning methods such as discussion, debate, and case studies helped create a more participatory classroom environment. Observations revealed that students were more engaged during group discussions than during lecture-based sessions, as reflected in higher participation, stronger peer interaction, and longer attention spans. Third, the use of challenges and exploratory projects, including activities such as comparing interpretations from different tafsir sources, promoted students' analytical thinking. Documentation of student assignments demonstrated variation in

argumentation and the use of references, suggesting that students were involved in independent information seeking.

In addition, the implementation of Inquiry-Based Learning and Problem-Based Learning contributed to a shift from teacher-centered to student-centered instruction. During classroom observations, students were seen actively consulting textbooks and digital sources when responding to open-ended questions, providing behavioral evidence of increased learning autonomy. The teacher also played an important role as a facilitator and motivator by managing classroom interaction in a way that ensured equal opportunities for participation and by responding positively to students' questions. Such practices created a psychologically safe learning environment in which students felt more confident expressing their ideas without fear of making mistakes. Finally, madrasah religious programs, including the Intensive Islamic Studies Program (Kajian Islam Intensif / KII), Dhuha prayer activities, and seminars, contributed to the development of curiosity beyond the formal classroom setting. Documentation and observation showed that students actively prepared materials for religious presentations, indicating independent exploration of Islamic knowledge. Taken together, these findings suggest that students' curiosity was cultivated through the integration of pedagogical strategies, supportive teacher roles, and religiously grounded learning experiences across both formal and non-formal educational contexts.

### **Outcomes of Curiosity Character Development**

The development of students' curiosity character demonstrated notable progress, as evidenced by triangulated data from observation, interviews, and documentation in Table 2.

**Table 2. Outcomes of Students' Curiosity Character Development**

No.	Outcome	Description	Evidence from Data
1	Activeness in Asking Questions and Seeking Information	Students increasingly asked both factual and higher-order questions during lessons, indicating growing curiosity and initiative in seeking knowledge.	Observations showed improvement in the frequency and quality of student questions; this pattern was consistent with interview data and classroom documentation.
2	High Enthusiasm Toward Contextual Materials	Students were more engaged when learning materials were linked to	Observation revealed stronger attention, participation, and

No.	Outcome	Description	Evidence from Data
		real-life situations and contemporary issues.	discussion intensity during contextualized learning sessions.
3	Deeper Understanding and Meaning-Making	Students connected lesson content with everyday life, showing that learning had moved beyond memorization toward comprehension and application.	During discussions, students related Islamic learning content to real-life situations, indicating curiosity-driven meaning-making.
4	Success Rate	Approximately 70% of students demonstrated high indicators of curiosity, including active participation, independent information seeking, and critical questioning.	The percentage was derived from triangulated evidence across observation, interviews, and documentation rather than self-report alone.
5	Challenges Encountered	Despite overall progress, a small number of students remained passive and participated minimally in classroom activities.	Observations confirmed passive behavior in some students, while interviews suggested that internal motivation and limited financial resources affected their engagement.

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First, students showed greater activeness in asking questions and seeking information during the learning process. Classroom observations revealed not only an increase in the frequency of student questions, but also an improvement in their quality, as students moved beyond factual inquiries to pose analytical and reflective questions. This pattern was consistent with interview findings and was further supported by documentation of classroom activities. Second, students displayed high enthusiasm toward contextual materials. Their engagement became more visible when learning content was connected to real-life situations and contemporary issues, as indicated by stronger attention, more active participation, and more intense discussion during such sessions. These findings suggest that contextualization plays a crucial role in stimulating curiosity within Islamic learning environments.

Furthermore, students were observed demonstrating deeper understanding and meaning-making by relating lesson content to everyday life during discussions, indicating that learning had moved beyond memorization toward comprehension and application. Based on triangulated data, approximately 70% of students exhibited strong indicators of curiosity, including active participation, independent information seeking, and critical questioning. Nevertheless, several challenges remained. A small number of students

continued to show passive behavior during classroom activities, even when interactive methods were employed. Interview data suggest that these differences were influenced by both internal motivation and external constraints, including limited financial resources, which affected students' opportunities to engage more fully in curiosity-driven learning. Overall, the findings indicate that curiosity development among students is evident and meaningful, although its strength varies according to individual and contextual factors.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Character Formation Through Active Learning Strategies**

The findings of this study indicate that the development of students' curiosity character is not merely the result of instructional strategies, but rather the outcome of an interaction between pedagogical design, classroom climate, and student internal motivation. While the findings show increased questioning behavior and independent learning, this should not be interpreted solely as evidence of successful character formation. Instead, it reflects an early stage of what Lickona (2012) conceptualizes as moral knowing, which still requires reinforcement at the level of moral feeling and moral action.

Observational data revealed that although many students actively participated, a number of students remained passive despite being exposed to the same strategies. This suggests that active learning approaches such as Inquiry-Based Learning and Problem-Based Learning do not automatically produce uniform outcomes. This finding challenges the assumption that student-centered learning is universally effective and highlights the importance of individual differences in shaping curiosity development.

Furthermore, while students demonstrated increased engagement, this engagement was often situational—appearing stronger during interactive or contextual sessions but declining during less stimulating activities. This indicates that curiosity, as a character trait, is still context-dependent rather than fully internalized.

### **Learning Strategies and Student Engagement**

The effectiveness of interactive learning strategies should be interpreted beyond students' self-reported enthusiasm. Observational evidence showed that student

engagement was significantly influenced by the structure of the learning task and the teacher's facilitation style. In line with Hattie and Donoghue (2016), dialogic learning contributes to deeper understanding; however, this study reveals that such effectiveness is contingent upon how consistently these strategies are implemented.

Interestingly, some students reported that certain methods were less engaging, indicating that not all forms of active learning are equally effective. This contradiction suggests that variation in instructional design is necessary to accommodate diverse learning preferences. While Mercer and Dawes (2014) emphasize the role of dialogue in learning, this study shows that dialogue alone is insufficient without proper scaffolding and teacher guidance.

In addition, the increase in student participation observed in this study supports Hmelo-Silver's (2004) constructivist perspective. However, the findings also reveal that without adequate support, some students struggle to engage in inquiry-based tasks. This indicates that inquiry learning must be accompanied by structured guidance to ensure inclusivity and effectiveness.

### **Psychological Safety and Self-Determination Theory**

The findings suggest that psychological safety plays a crucial mediating role in the development of curiosity. While Ryan and Deci (2000) highlight autonomy, competence, and relatedness as key drivers of intrinsic motivation, this study demonstrates that these elements are not equally experienced by all students. Observational data showed that students who perceived the classroom as supportive were more willing to ask questions and express ideas, whereas others remained hesitant.

This aligns with Edmondson and Lei (2014), who argue that psychological safety is essential for risk-taking in learning. However, this study adds nuance by showing that psychological safety is not only shaped by teacher behavior but also by peer dynamics and individual confidence levels.

### **Contradictions and Constraints in Curiosity Development**

Despite the overall positive findings, several contradictions emerged. First, although approximately 70% of students demonstrated high curiosity indicators, the remaining students showed minimal engagement. This indicates that the implemented strategies

were not equally effective for all learners. Second, external factors such as financial limitations were found to restrict students' access to learning resources, thereby limiting opportunities for independent exploration. This finding highlights a structural constraint that is often overlooked in theoretical discussions of curiosity development, which tend to focus primarily on internal motivation. Third, while religious programs such as KII were effective in promoting curiosity in some students, their impact varied depending on students' prior interest in religious studies. This suggests that such programs may reinforce existing curiosity rather than generate it among less motivated students.

### **Role of Religious Programs in Character Development**

The integration of religious programs into the learning process provides an important contribution to character education. However, rather than viewing these programs as inherently effective, this study suggests that their impact depends on how they are connected to students' lived experiences. From a theoretical perspective, this finding extends Lickona's framework by demonstrating that moral and spiritual development can support curiosity formation, but only when students are actively engaged in meaning-making processes. The combination of cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions appears to create a more holistic approach to character education. Nevertheless, the variation in student responses indicates that religious-based programs should be complemented with pedagogical strategies that address individual differences, ensuring that curiosity development is inclusive and sustainable.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study shows that the strategy of fostering students' curiosity character at MAS Muhammadiyah 01 Medan was implemented through a combination of active learning approaches and religious-based programs involving Al-Qur'an Hadith teachers and the madrasah environment. The use of Inquiry-Based Learning and Problem-Based Learning, supported by exploratory projects, a conducive classroom climate, and motivational support, contributed to the development of students' curiosity within this specific educational context. The findings indicate that a majority of students (approximately 70%) demonstrated observable indicators of curiosity, such as increased questioning, independent information seeking, and the ability to relate learning materials to everyday

life. However, these outcomes should be interpreted cautiously, as they are context-specific and influenced by individual differences in student motivation as well as external constraints, including limited access to learning resources. Therefore, rather than suggesting broad generalization, this study highlights that the integration of active learning strategies and religious programs has the potential to support the development of curiosity character when implemented under supportive conditions. Further research involving larger and more diverse samples is needed to examine the broader applicability and consistency of these findings across different educational settings.

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