Workload and Challenges of PAI Teachers at State Junior High School 7 Bukittinggi

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Abstract

This study discusses the workload and challenges faced by Islamic Education (*Pendidikan Agama Islam*/PAI) teachers at Junior High School 7 Bukittinggi. PAI teachers bear a heavy responsibility not only in the teaching process, but also as educators, mentors, and role models for students. In the digital age, they face various challenges such as the influence of social media, moral crises, diversity in student backgrounds, and technological developments that affect students' interests and learning behaviors. Through a qualitative approach involving interviews, observations, and documentation, the study found that teachers' workloads include teaching, administration, student mentoring, and non-curricular activities. Despite their heavy workload, teachers continue to carry it out with a positive and creative attitude, considering it part of their professional duties. Teachers respond to major challenges such as students' tendency to get bored easily, differences in religious understanding, limited resources, and competency demands with adaptive and innovative strategies. Overall, this study confirms that PAI teachers continue to play a strategic role in shaping student character and require support from schools and parents to improve the quality of PAI learning.

1. Introduction

Islamic religious education teachers play a fundamental role in constructing the personality, morality, and spiritual dimension of learners. At the junior high school level, the significance of this role is increasingly prominent considering that students are in a transitional phase towards adolescence which is characterized by emotional fluctuations, moral considerations, and dynamic behavioral changes. The responsibility of PAI teachers goes beyond the transmission of learning content, but includes functions as inspirational figures, fostering facilitators, and catalysts in the comprehensive internalization of Islamic values.

However, in its implementation, PAI teachers face various workloads and increasingly complex challenges. The workload of teachers does not only include activities in the classroom but extends to the preparation of administration, personal guidance to students, religious activities, and the demands of professionalism that continue to develop (Dorji & Wangchuk, 2022). On the other hand, challenges such as technological developments, the influence of social media, the diversity of student backgrounds, limited facilities, and the moral dynamics of adolescents are factors that affect the effectiveness of PAI learning. Junior High School 7 Bukittinggi as a formal educational institution cannot be separated from this reality. PAI teachers at this school take on the heavy task of managing workload and facing various challenges that arise with the times. Therefore, this study has an in-depth urgency regarding the workload and challenges faced by PAI teachers, as well as how they respond to them professionally. The findings of this study are expected to make a

significant contribution to improving the quality of PAI learning and developing teacher competencies.

2. Methods

The researcher uses a qualitative research methodology with a descriptive design, which is a research method oriented towards depicting naturally occurring phenomena. The goal of this methodology is to produce a thorough and in-depth understanding of various phenomena, both naturally occurring and those that occur as a result of human intervention. This approach allows researchers to conduct a thorough examination of the attributes, circumstances, and intricacies of observed events, without limiting themselves to quantitative measures. The author conducted research at Junior High School 7 Bukittinggi, Aur Birugo Tigobaleh District, Bukittinggi City.

3. Results and Discussion

According to Sunarso and Kusdi, workload is defined as a set of activities that must be completed by an organizational unit or a jobholder within a specific period. In carrying out their duties, employees who serve as one of the company's key assets should receive adequate support and facilities that allow them to complete their work according to their physical and mental capacities. Workload analysis is a process used to determine the amount of working hours, human resources, and effort required and utilized to complete a particular task within a given time frame.

Webster defines workload as the amount of work or time expected or assigned to an individual or group, representing the total volume of work that must be completed by a department or team within a set duration. Similarly, the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform (Menpan) describes workload as the activities that must be completed by an organization or employee within a designated time (Fitria, 2024). Munandar adds that workload refers to tasks that must be accomplished by workers within a specific time using their skills and potential. It can be categorized into quantitative workload and qualitative workload.

Meanwhile, Hart and Staveland explain workload as an individual's assessment of the physical and mental effort required to achieve a particular performance level, emphasizing that every person has different abilities in reaching their targets. Thus, individuals may experience workload differently, even when performing the same tasks. From an Islamic perspective, the concept of workload is explained through the Qur'an and Hadith, which teach that life itself is meant for ibadah (worship). The Qur'an commands humans to work according to religious principles, viewing work as both a duty and a form of devotion to Allah. Qur'anic verses about workload:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الْهَمِّ وَالْحَزَنِ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الْعَجْزِ وَالْكَسَلِ وَأَعُوذُبِكَ مِنَ

الْجُبْنِ وَالْبُخْلِ وَأَعُوذُبِكَ مِنْ غَلَبَتِ الدِّيْنِ وَقَهْرِ الرِّجَالِ

Meaning: *"O Allah, O our Lord, I take refuge in you from the grievances of sorrow and sorrow, I take refuge in you from cowardice and miserliness, I take refuge in you from the pressure of human debt and tyranny. (HR. Abu Dawud 4/353). (RI, 2009)*

In the context of physical and psychological workloads, when a person is under significant stress, has huge responsibilities to fulfill, and feels like they are in a critical condition on an ongoing basis, everyone manages work stress in different ways. Selye categorizes stress into two types. Eustress is a healthy, positive, and constructive response to stress. Islam teaches its people to always maintain a positive attitude that the test of life or workload will be completed well. This is listed in QS. Al Insyirah verses 5-6:

فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

Translation: "*For indeed with every difficulty there is ease.*"

إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْر

Translation: "*Surely with every difficulty there is ease.*"

A good example of eusteria can be found in everyday life when a person handles a task with a set deadline, this task will be completed productively. Individuals undergo a series of quality activities in their lives. Mujib emphasized that in carrying out the command of Allah SWT to be His Caliph on this earth, achievement is a requirement. From a religious perspective, the quality of life can be seen from the achievements that have been achieved during his life (Rena, 2019). Stress is a response to stress that is detrimental to reduce stress, stress, and is the opposite of eustress. The distress is negative, explained in QS. AL Isra' verse 83:

وَإِذَا أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَى الْإِنسَنِ أَعْرَضَ وَنَا بِجَانِبِهِۦ وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ كَانَ يوسًا

Meaning: *"And when We give pleasure to a man who is not afraid to turn his back and turn his back with an arrogant attitude, and when he is afflicted with hardship, he will surely give up".*

A common example often encountered in everyday life is when an individual experiences stress due to work pressure or family problems and seeks escape through harmful behaviors, such as consuming narcotic substances or alcohol to relieve that stress (*Nursiani, 2018*). In the context of education, the workload of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers in junior high schools represents a complex and multidimensional responsibility encompassing academic, spiritual, moral, and social aspects. PAI teachers are not only responsible for delivering religious knowledge but also for shaping students' character, noble morals, and self-control in accordance with Islamic teachings.

This workload includes teaching with proper preparation, detailed learning administration, academic and spiritual guidance, religious extracurricular activities, continuous professional development, and collaboration with various parties. In terms of dimensions, the workload of PAI teachers involves physical, mental, temporal, effort, performance, and frustration levels that must be effectively managed. From an Islamic perspective, workload is not seen as a burden but as an act of worship (*ibadah*) and a test that comes with ease. Professional PAI teachers perceive their workload as a divine command to be carried out with full responsibility, sincerity, and patience.

Effective workload management is key to the success of PAI teachers. Strategies include good time management, collaboration with colleagues, continuous

competency development, maintaining work-life balance, and viewing work as worship while seeking Allah's help. Although the workload is heavy and complex, the role of PAI teachers remains noble and strategic in shaping a generation of knowledgeable, moral, and devout Muslims. With strong management, support from schools, parents, and the community, as well as a positive attitude, the workload of PAI teachers can bring both worldly success and eternal blessings. One PAI teacher at Junior High School 7 Bukittinggi even stated that the existing workload is not burdensome because they view it as a sincere responsibility (*Hidayat, 2023*).

According to Hart et al., workload both physical and mental can be divided into six dimensions. The physical workload dimensions include physical demand and effort, while the mental workload dimensions consist of mental demand, temporal demand, performance, and frustration level. Physical demand refers to the amount of physical activity required to complete a task, such as pushing, pulling, turning, driving, or running. Effort represents the physical or mental exertion necessary to achieve a desired performance level. Mental demand involves the degree of mental or perceptual activity needed for seeing, remembering, and searching, whether a task is simple or complex. Temporal demand relates to the time pressure experienced by workers during task execution whether performed gradually and calmly or quickly but exhaustingly. Frustration level refers to feelings of insecurity, irritability, or discomfort compared to feelings of safety, satisfaction, and confidence. Lastly, performance measures how successfully an individual completes their work and how satisfied they are with the results.

Workload has significant implications in organizational contexts. Macdonald explains that workload is a major source of psychological hazards, which can negatively affect employees' well-being. Research findings show that at high levels, workload tends to decrease employee performance, while moderate levels can enhance productivity. However, excessive workload often results in stress, fatigue, and declining health and welfare. Thus, maintaining a balanced workload is essential for sustaining optimal performance and employee well-being.

According to the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI), a challenge is defined as "something considered a test of ability and something that must be faced and overcome." This understanding portrays a challenge not merely as an obstacle but as a test that demands perseverance, adaptability, and effort. Prof. Dr. Sondang P. Siagian in Manajemen SDM describes challenges as "various conditions or situations that hinder or complicate the achievement of organizational or individual goals." Siagian emphasizes that challenges must be properly managed to prevent them from obstructing goal attainment. Similarly, Stephen P. Robbins in Organizational Behavior defines challenges as "situations that require adaptive responses from individuals or organizations to survive and develop in a dynamic environment." Robbins highlights adaptability and flexibility as essential responses to challenges, particularly within evolving organizations. Dr. Hamzah B. Uno, in *Teori Motivasi dan Pengukurannya*, views challenges as "conditions that motivate individuals to exert their maximum effort to achieve certain goals." Uno sees challenges positively as motivational forces that inspire individuals to strive for improvement.

John W. Santrock in Educational Psychology defines a challenge as "a task or situation slightly above one's current ability level that encourages optimal learning and development." Santrock emphasizes that a well-balanced challenge fosters intellectual and personal growth. Likewise, Dr. Dale H. Schunk in Learning Theories: An Educational Perspective describes challenges as "gaps between actual ability and task demands that require effort and strategy to overcome." Schunk highlights that bridging such gaps promotes learning and the development of new strategies. In the educational context, Prof. Dr. Wina Sanjaya in *Strategi Pembelajaran Berorientasi Standar Proses Pendidikan* defines challenges as "various problems or obstacles teachers face in implementing the learning process that require solutions and innovation." Meanwhile, Nur Cholid, M.Ag, M.Pd in *Menjadi Guru Profesional* describes challenges as "conditions that compel teachers to continuously enhance their competence and professionalism to perform effectively according to current demands." Thus, a challenge can be understood as a condition or obstacle that compels individuals or organizations to adjust, strategize, and work harder to achieve objectives. It serves both as a test of ability and as a motivational force.

In education, experts such as Santrock, Schunk, Sanjaya, and Cholid agree that challenges promote growth among students and teachers alike. Challenges stimulate optimal learning, encourage innovation, and require professional improvement. Therefore, challenges should not only be viewed as barriers but also as opportunities for progress and self-development. Islamic Education (PAI) teachers in junior high schools face various complex challenges in fulfilling their duties. One of the foremost challenges is pedagogical. The unique characteristics of

junior high school students, who are transitioning from childhood to adolescence, require special teaching approaches. Students at this stage tend to be curious, critical, and easily bored with conventional teaching. Thus, PAI teachers must create engaging and relevant lessons despite limited time allocation of only two to three hours per week.

The next challenge arises from technological and social media development. The digital age exposes students to vast information, not all of which aligns with Islamic values. Exposure to misinformation, distorted religious understanding, and negative online content competes with Islamic moral education. Therefore, teachers must be technologically literate and integrate Islamic values into digital learning. Another challenge is the diversity of students' religious backgrounds. Some come from families with strong religious traditions, while others receive little spiritual guidance. Teachers must adapt their methods to ensure inclusivity and equal learning opportunities for all. Additionally, integrating theory and practice is an ongoing challenge. Transforming PAI from rote memorization to practical application requires creativity in designing activities that encourage students to internalize and practice Islamic values daily (Hidayah, 2021).

PAI teachers also face continuous demands to improve their competence not only in religious knowledge but also in pedagogical, social, and professional domains. They must stay current with modern curricula, teaching methods, and evolving Islamic discourse. Aulia Rahman, a PAI teacher at SMP N 7 Bukittinggi, stated that teachers encounter pedagogical challenges, technological changes, diverse student backgrounds, and the need to merge theory with practice. He emphasized solutions

such as using student-centered methods, adopting technology positively, and teaching social media literacy. Teachers must also understand students' backgrounds to tailor learning strategies effectively. Furthermore, classroom teaching should go beyond theory to include direct worship practice such as shalat, dhuha, Qur'an recitation, and funeral rites. Facing the demand for competence development, teachers must embody their teachings, interact positively with students, and demonstrate professionalism (Winata et al., 2023).

According to the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI), a teacher is defined as someone employed to teach professionally. In Arabic, the term teacher corresponds to mu'allim or ustadz, meaning a person who educates. Beyond that, a teacher is a moral example a person with charisma and dignity who guides students toward intellectual and ethical maturity. A teacher consciously assumes the responsibility to educate, mentor, and instruct students toward self-realization. A PAI teacher, in particular, is an educator who conveys Islamic teachings to create harmony between physical and spiritual life, transforming students' behavior according to Islamic principles and fostering a balanced, faithful, and moral personality. Teachers must exercise independent judgment, adapt to students' needs, and assist those facing difficulties.

The Teacher and Lecturer Law No. 14 of 2005 defines teachers as "professional educators whose main duties are to educate, teach, guide, direct, train, assess, and evaluate students at early childhood, primary, and secondary education levels." Ngalim Purwanto (2019) defines a teacher as an individual who imparts knowledge or skills. Cholid (2021) states that a teacher must possess academic

qualifications, competence, and good physical and mental health to fulfill national educational goals. Nur'aini (2021) argues that teachers are professional educators who share parents' moral responsibilities in guiding children. Hence, a teacher is someone whose words are trusted, whose actions are imitated, and who carries great responsibility for nurturing learners intellectually and morally.

The core role of a teacher is to educate an endeavor encompassing teaching, guiding, and role modeling. A teacher's work succeeds when it results in positive behavioral change among students (Darajat, 2018). PAI teachers, in particular, play a crucial role in developing students' moral and religious character. As educators, they shape intellect and values; as mentors, they provide individualized guidance; as instructors, they deliver knowledge clearly and meaningfully; as role models, they exemplify moral behavior; and as leaders, they manage classrooms effectively while fostering communication and discipline (Safitri, 2019; Mujib, 2014).

In the Islamic education context, PAI teachers hold a special responsibility in building religious consciousness, moral discipline, and social awareness among students. Their work requires greater dedication than that of general subject teachers, as they must instill not only knowledge but also faith and practice. Aulia Rahman emphasizes that PAI teachers must balance pedagogical innovation, technological literacy, and moral integrity. By embodying Islamic values, they can lead by example and inspire students to internalize what they learn.

According to Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, "Religious education is organized by the government and religious communities according to prevailing regulations" (Sistem Pendidikan Nasional, 2003). Islamic

Religious Education (PAI) thus serves not only to teach Islam but also to promote mutual respect and interfaith harmony as a foundation for national unity. Sadimi (2011) explains that PAI is a systematic, planned, and comprehensive process for transmitting Islamic values, developing students' potential, and preparing them to fulfill their roles as Allah's vicegerents (khalifah) on earth. Grounded in the Qur'an and Hadith, PAI integrates spiritual, moral, intellectual, and social development, producing individuals who are knowledgeable, ethical, and devoted to Allah SWT, contributing to both worldly progress and eternal salvation.

4. Conclusion

Based on the discussion of workload, challenges, and the role of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers, several key conclusions can be drawn. The workload of Islamic Education teachers encompasses all duties that must be carried out within a specified period, both physical and psychological. According to experts such as Hart & Staveland, workload consists of six main dimensions: physical demand, effort, mental demand, temporal demand, frustration level, and performance. From an Islamic perspective, workload is regarded as part of ibadah (worship) and amanah (trust) that must be fulfilled with sincerity, patience, and faith that every hardship comes with ease (QS. Al-Insyirah: 5–6). The PAI teachers at SMP N 7 Bukittinggi even view their workload as a responsibility that does not burden them when carried out with sincere intention.

A high workload can have both positive and negative impacts. At a reasonable level, it can enhance performance and motivate teachers to be more productive.

However, when excessive, it can lead to stress, fatigue, decreased work quality, and deteriorating mental and physical well-being. The challenges faced by PAI teachers are diverse, including pedagogical difficulties, technological and social media advancements, diverse student backgrounds, challenges in integrating theory with worship practices, and growing demands for professionalism. These require teachers to be adaptive, creative, and innovative in designing learning processes.

The role of PAI teachers is strategic they are not only instructors but also educators, mentors, role models, and leaders for students. They are responsible for shaping students' morality, character, and spirituality, encompassing academic, moral, and social dimensions. To address challenges, teachers should employ varied teaching methods suited to students' characteristics, utilize technology positively, understand students' backgrounds, provide direct worship practices, and continuously improve their competence. The complex workload and challenges of PAI teachers can be effectively managed through competence development, time management, collaboration, and spiritual strengthening, supported by schools, parents, and the community to ensure optimal performance.

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