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A Complete Approach in Implementing Islamic Early Childhood Character Education at the Pandemic Covid 19 Era

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to describe how a unique Islamic early childhood education system, named Tahfiz Anak Usia Dini (TAUD), implemented and contributed substantially to the character education of its students. In total, 6 teachers, 50 parents of 25 students of TAUD SAQU Nurul Islam Al Husna, Indonesia were interviewed, participated in focus group discussions, and 25 students were closely observed. Findings suggest that TAUD Saqu Nurul Islam Al Husna adopts the complete approach of character education which is laid on Islamic principles. The majority of teachers and parents reported that TAUD Saqu Nurul Islam Al Husna educates and develops the character of students by conveying knowledge, providing role models, and supportive environment, then giving chances to practice and form. The paper proposes a model of character education at early childhood education, as well as other Islamic education systems which have similar characteristics on the implementation of character education. Recommendations for future research and practice are also explained.

Keywords:

character education, islamic early childhood education, pandemic Covid 19 Era

1. Introduction

The purpose of education is to build adequate human resources. The success of education is not only determined by academic achievement but must be supported by the development of good character in accordance with the needs of development (Muhtar & Dallyono, 2020). Character education is a deliberate and conditioned approach that aims to shape socio-emotional and moral development to become a better person(Badawi et al., 2020; Baharuddin et al., 2024; Berkowitz & Grych, 2000; Mustari & Nurhayati, 2024; Taufik & Nurhayati, 2023).

In the world of education, character education can provide significant changes in perspectives and movement in education. Some researchers pioneered character education, such as Lickona (Lickona, 1993), Lockwood (Lockwood, 2015), Ryan (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999), Cooley (Cooley, 2008), and Nucci and Narvaez (Nucci & Narváez, 2014). School or education becomes an alternative

as a place to shape and develop one's character. Education is a preventive effort through essential stages in growing, developing, and strengthening character of the younger generation (Erihadiana, 2019; Karwati & Nurhayati, 2024; Kusmiatiningsih et al., 2024). In this context, character education is responsibility of adults, namely teachers and schools (Benninga et al., 2003). Character education itself is critical to be instilled as early as possible to develop a strong character as an adult. According to Singh (Singh, 2019) character education should be given at the elementary education level with a greater portion than knowledge education.

Early Childhood Education is a strategic educational institution that instills religious values, especially about the good character of Islam, and fosters a religious spirit (Afifah & Suriansyah, 2019). Ideally, the learning held in early childhood institutions follows the principles and is

generally done through face-to-face, play, and fun (Burde et al., 2015). Character planting is given through understanding, examples, and habituation. However, during the Pandemic Covid 19 requires all activities to be carried out from home, including elementary school level teaching and learning activities that require teachers to be more creative and take the initiative to maintain the bond between teachers and students through online teaching and learning process by utilizing existing online channels and social media (Rachmadtullah et al., 2020).

This study will review the implementation of character education in early childhood education and other Islamic education systems that have similar characteristics in the implementation of character education.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Islamic early childhood education

Early Childhood Education (PAUD) in Indonesia is regulated in Law No. 20 of the National Education System in 2003 article 1 paragraph 14 which states that Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is a coaching effort aimed at children from birth to the age of 6 years that is carried out through the provision of educational stimuli to help children's physical and spiritual development so that they have readiness to enter further education (Purnama, 2018).

Early childhood education is the first educational institution and is a strategic place to instill religious values, especially about the good character of Islam, and foster a religious spirit so that children become obedient, familiar, and obedient to every rule that religion teaches them (Afifah et al., 2019). Early age can be said to be the most appropriate age to shape a person's character. When a person's character can be formed from an early age, they will become a generation with strong characters in This reason causes early adulthood. childhood education to be the most vital foundation for upholding the nation's future character. Thus, the better the quality of early childhood education, the stronger the nation's children's intelligence.

On the contrary, the weaker the quality of education at this level, the weaker the nation's children's character in the future. The community now understands the importance of early childhood education (Gumiandari et al., 2019).

TAUD SaQu Nurul Islam Al Husna is an early childhood education institution based on Islam with a flagship program called Tahfizhul Quran and the habituation of Qurani morals. Hopefully, aL-Quran can be the principal value in the development of early childhood.

2.2 Character education

According to the meaning language, the word character comes from the Greek charassein, which has a pleasant meaning or gives a unique mark, which becomes an important point (Agboola & Tsai, 2012; Ryan & Bohlin, 1999). According to (Izfanna, 2014) characters indicate differentiating traits based on individual's nature. The character can be interpreted as a set of distinguishing signs to ensure an individual's quality and or function, especially human behavior and nature. While in Islam, the character is called by the Arabic term khuluq (plural: akhlag) (Izfanna & Hisyam, Jamaluddin, 2013; Rahim, 2013) which also has the same root as the word al-Khāliq, meaning the Creator, the Almighty God.

In general, character education can be interpreted as the process of coaching, understanding, commitment, and students' tendency to behave following existing ethical values (Milson & Mehlig, 2002). Furthermore, Singh (Singh, 2019) stated that character education is a deliberate and proactive effort by schools, regions, and states that instill ethical values in their students, such as care, honesty, fairness, responsibility, appreciation, and others. (Benninga et al., 2003) define While character education based on relationships with others (such as respect, fairness, decency, and tolerance), or based on satisfactory performance (such perseverance, discipline, effort), or based on a combination of the two.

Douglas P. Superka, in his research, has conducted a study and formulated the typology of various values in psychology, sociology, and philosophy used in education that there are five approaches in character education (Baharun, 2017), namely:

- Approach understanding,
- Approach to cognitive moral development,
- Value analysis approach
- Value clarification approach and
- Action learning approach

Thomas Lickona developed his theory implement character education to simultaneously: First, cognitive, brain filling which means teaching a person from ignorance to knowledge, and in the later stages will grow the mind, so that he can function intelligence to be intelligent. Second, affective, related to feelings, emotions, the formation of attitudes in a person with the formation of attitudes, sympathy, antipathy, love, hate, and so forth. This attitude can all be classified as intelligence. emotional psychomotor, for actions, deeds, behaviors, and so on (Lickona, 2012).

In Islam, character education is an attitude that can be done by anyone and anywhere by instilling the values of Islamic goodness that make the heart peaceful (Jamaluddin, 2013). Islamic character education is a term used to describe values related to understanding Islam's character (Memon, 2011; Saada & Gross, 2017). Efforts to instill good values derived from Islam, by preserving Islamic culture, values and characters maintained, virtues taught and learned, information disseminated, skills trained, and instill ideology about the values of Islamic goodness (Eka, 2017).

3. Methods

This research was conducted using the case study method to explain and describe character education in TAUD Saqu Nurul Islam Al Husna involves various aspects that need to be studied in-depth and comprehensively. Researchers want to understand and find various supporting

information about the application of character education in early childhood education based on Islam.

The data sources used are the primary data source and the secondary data source. Primary data in this study was obtained through 6 teachers, 50 parents of 25 students of TAUD SAQU Nurul Islam Al Husna, Indonesia, who were interviewed, participated in FGD, and 25 students were observed closely. This study's secondary data were sourced from various books, journals, articles, and documents relevant to the research focus. Data analysis techniques using Miles and Huberman models, namely through data reduction stages, data display, and conclusion and verification.

4. Results and discussion

The concept of character education in TAUD SAQU Nurul Islam Al Husna, Indonesia, uses the concept of character education with the foundation of Islam. During the pandemic era the teaching and learning process implementing COVID 19 health protocols and also using online learning platforms such as whatsapp group, whatsapp video call and also zoom meeting. Based on the results of research, most teachers and students understand the character of Islam. All the teachers interviewed emphasized the importance of character education in early childhood to shape a well-acted child's personality so that when the child is an adult can distinguish between good and bad things.

Philosophy of Character Education in TAUD SAQU Nurul Islam Al Husna based on its vision and mission is to be an educational institution that can print generations of memorization and character of the Quran by fostering a penchant and habits of reading the Quran, providing daily practical practices following the demands of Islam, eliminate illiteracy of the Quran from an early age, instill akhlaqul karimah in interacting with parents, friends, and society, and develop the learning potential of children, as well as cultivating the tradition of Islamic learning.

Based on the interviews of teachers and FGD parents mentioned the main character built TAUD SAQU Nurul Islam Alhusna is akhlakul karimah and adab Islami against others through understanding and practice of the Quran and Hadith, daily dhikr, and practice of worship. Also, other important characters that are instilled are independent and responsible in their daily activities and have a spirit of preaching, fighting, and caring for others. The character values developed are tailored to the vision and mission of the school. According to Al Zbon & Smadi (AL Zbon & Smadi, 2017), character education must contain values that can shape a child's good character. It can be nurtured in school by offering examples of a peaceful and harmonious life. In Islam, character education should refer to the Koran and hadith for parents and teachers to consider.

The implementation of character education at TAUD Sagu Nurul Islam Al Husna adopts a whole character education approach that relies on Islamic principles. Planting adab becomes the main focus, where children are given understanding, examples, and habituation about daily attitudes and behaviors following Islamic guidance, such as wake up, the adab of eating, adab to parents, teachers, and friends. Every child's behavior from waking up until they sleep again is taught following the Ouran and Hadith. As the teacher's interview stated, the implementation of character education is carried out through sedation, giving advice that continues to be repeated until the child understands and gets used to it and provides an excellent example.

The habituation method is a very effective way to instill character values that become the soul of learners, including religious characters. Therefore, the characteristic method of habituation is an activity in the form of repetition of the same thing. This repetition is deliberately done so that the stimuli and response are strong enough. Thus, the planting of religious character can be done and assisted by this method (Muqowim & Lessy, 2019). Thus, the planting of religious character can be

done and assisted by this method. Saniapon's research shows that habituation in PAUD (Early Childhood Education) can improve discipline (Saniapon, 2012). The discipline built is the discipline in tidying up stationery, participating in learning activities, and prayer. Habituation in PAUD can also improve the manners of students (Hasnah, n.d.).

Besides, the planting of the character loves God, and the Prophet is also done by reading the Prophet's journey that reflects the activities of daily life and then take the message of wisdom. According Burhanuddin, Majid, and Hikmawan (Burhanuddin et al., 2018) character planting through the story method is expected to be able to seep into the child's subconscious so that they can remember and be able to follow the Prophet's character in children's daily lives. The results showed that the family environment, community environment, and educators contribute to the implementation of character education at TAUD Sagu Nurul Islam Al Husna family. The application of character values through religious and social attitudes will work well by involving parents' role at home and in the surrounding environment (Gondiawati & Nurhayati, 2024; Ratningsih et al., 2021; Suryani & Nurhayati, 2024; Zuwirna, 2015).

5. Conclusion

TAUD Sagu Nurul Islam Al Husna adopts a whole character education approach that relies on Islamic principles while still implementing the COVID 19 health protocol during offline meetings and also online learning platforms during the online meetings. Most teachers and parents report that TAUD Sagu Nurul Islam Al Husna educates and develops students' character by conveying knowledge, setting examples, and supporting environments, then providing opportunities to practice and shape. The family and community environment and the excellent quality of educators are also factors that support the implementation of character education can run well.

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