

STRENGTHENING THE RELIGIOUS CHARACTERS OF YOUNG LEARNERS AT ISLAMIC INTEGRATED PRESCHOOL OF MON KUTA BANDA ACEH

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Abstract

This study describes the strategies carried out by teachers in strengthening the religious character of young learners at Islamic Integrated Preschool of MON KUTA Banda Aceh. The techniques of data collection were directed through observation in the school environment on how the strategies carried out by teachers in strengthening religious character and interviewing teachers and principals about the programs held by schools in strengthening religious character to students. The data in this study were analyzed by using descriptive qualitative. The results of the study show that the strategies applied in strengthening religious character in Islamic Integrated Preschool of MON KUTA Banda Aceh are daily programs, weekly programs, monthly programs, and yearly programs. The daily programs are in the form of habits in daily activities such as greeting when coming and going home from school, reading prayers before and after doing an activity, repeating the hadith and the name of the Prophet and loving one another. The weekly activities are in the form of performing the Dhuha prayer which is held every Friday and giving Infaq. The monthly activities in the form of visiting the mosques around Banda Aceh depend on the theme being studied in order to introduce children to houses of worship and practice worship directly in the mosque. The annual activities are in the form of Hajj rituals which held at the Hajj hostel, celebrations of Islamic holidays such as the 1 Muharram's carnival, and the celebration of the birthday of Prophet Muhammad SAW.

Keywords: Strengthening, Religious Character, Early Childhood

INTRODUCTION

A child is a gift from God that is bestowed upon parents. Children will develop and grow with behaviors instilled by parents from an early age. Early childhood is a child who is aged 0-6 years. Where at an early age, children have high curiosity and very rapid development. Then something taught to children is more attached when taught at an early age, especially religious characters. Moral building through character education as early as possible to children is the main key to build a nation and children will grow into a character. All of that will happen if the child's growth is in a characteristic environment. The nature of the child can be developed optimally, and of course, this really requires the participation of all parties, such as the school, the teacher, the environment and most importantly the participation of parents who are the first educators of children.

In the Republic of Indonesia's Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning National Education System Article 1 states that education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process so that students actively develop their

potential to have religious, spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and skills needed by him, society, nation, and country.

Mulyasa (Cahyanigrum et al., 2017, p. 204) argues that character education for early childhood has a higher meaning than moral education because it is not only related to problems right-wrong but how to instill habits about various good behaviors in life so that children have awareness and commitment to apply virtue in everyday life. A child who has been introduced to and inculcated in character education from a young age is expected to become a habit for him as an adult. Therefore, the active role of parents, educators, and the communities to jointly promote the values of character education at every opportunity, especially for early childhood both in the family and in their environment.

Murniyati (2017, p. 108) states that religious value is a form of human relations with their creator through religious teachings that have been internalized in a person and reflected in their daily attitudes and behavior. If someone has a high religious value, then they will have attitudes and behaviors that are obedient in carrying out the teachings of the religion, as well as tolerant of the implementation of worship of other religions, and living in harmony with those of other religions. What is meant by religious value is appreciation and implementation of religious teachings in everyday life. The religious value is a value derived from religious teachings that are adopted by one and applied in daily life.

Religious is an attitude and behavior that is obedient in carrying out the teachings of the religion it adheres to, tolerant of the implementation of worship of other religions and living in harmony with followers of other religions. According to Woodworth (Hasnida, 2016, p. 21) babies born have had several instincts, one of which is religious instinct. The not yet seen religious action in children is because some psychological functions that support the maturity of the functioning of the instinct are not perfect. According to Ernest Harm's research, the development of children's religion has several phases (levels) as follows:

1. The Fairy Stage

This level starts at 3-6 years old. At this level, the concept of God is more influenced by fantasy and emotion. At this level of development, children live the concept of God in accordance with the level of intellectual development. Today's life is still heavily influenced by fantasy life so that in response to religion even children still use the concept of fantasy so that in responding to religion any child still uses a fantastic concept that is filled with tales that do not make sense.

2. The Realistic Stage

This level starts when the child enters elementary school until the age of adolescence. At this time, the idea of a child's divinity has reflected realist-based concepts. This concept arises through religious institutions and religious teaching originating from other adults.

3. The Individual Stage

At this level, children have the highest emotional sensitivity as they age. One effort to instill religious value to early childhood is by early childhood education which can stimulate the various potentials that children have in order to develop properly. As mentioned in the 2003 National Education System Law which states that early childhood education is an effort aimed at developing children from the age of six years through the provision of educational stimulation to help the growth of

physical and spiritual development so that children have readiness in entering further education.

On this basis, the importance of strengthening religious character education in early childhood in maximizing the abilities and potential of children and as a preparation for the lives of children in the future by becoming mature human beings with character. Therefore, by strengthening the value of religious character from an early age, it can be expected to produce a generation of people who benefit themselves, others, and the nation.

Cahyaningrum et al. (2017, p. 205) states that the teacher is responsible for passing down the value system to students and translating the value system through his personal life. Instilling the values of character education for early childhood means that the teacher in addition to transferring knowledge and training skills. The teacher is also expected to be able to educate early young learners with character, culture, and morality. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to find out how to strengthen the religious character applied by the teacher to students at Islamic Integrated Preschool of Mon Kuta Banda Aceh.

METHOD

The study used a qualitative method. Qualitative research methods are referred to as new methods, because of their popularity not long ago. They are called post-positivistic methods because they are based on post-positivist philosophy. This method is also called an artistic method, because the research process is more artistic (less patterned), and is called the interpretive method because the research data is more concerned with the interpretation of the data found in the field. Qualitative research methods are often called naturalistic research methods because their research is carried out in natural settings (Sugiyono, 2016).

Qualitative research according to Bogdan and Tylor (Moleong, 1990, p. 3) is a research process that produces descriptive data in the form of written or oral words from people and observable behavior. Meanwhile, Kirk and Miller define that qualitative research is a particular tradition in social science that is fundamentally dependent on observing humans in their own region and relating to these people in their language and events. In qualitative research, data is obtained from various sources, using various data collection techniques (triangulation), and carried out continuously until the data is saturated.

The object of the study included the teacher's strategy in applying religious character reinforcement of young learners at Islamic Integrated Preschool of Mon Kuta Banda Aceh. Data collection techniques are carried out through observation and interview. Observations were carried out by researchers when children and teachers entered the school gate as well as all activities carried out by teachers and children when both in class and outside the classroom. Interviews are conducted face-to-face in person by preparing interview instruments in the form of question and answered questions to collect the information of the study. Through events that have been researched and observed, the authors describe the results of the study by using good and correct language so that the results of the study are easy to understand.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ki Hadjar Dewantara (Zubaedi, 2011, p. 13) states that character actualization in the form of behavior as a result of a combination of biological characters and the results of relationships or interactions with their environment. A character can be formed through education because education is the most effective tool to make individuals aware of their human identity. In education will be produced the quality of human beings who have the subtlety of mind and soul, have the brilliance of thought, dexterity of the body, and have an awareness of his creation. Compared to other factors, education has two or three times more impact on the formation of human qualities. So the school should implement character strengthening in early childhood, especially religious characters.

Before children can think logically and understand things that are abstract and have not been able to determine which ones are good and which are bad, what is right and what is wrong, the examples, exercises, and habituations have a very important role, in the formation of personal children. Al-Ghazali put forward the method of educating children by giving examples, training, and habituation then advice and advice as an educational tool in order to foster a child's personality in accordance with the teachings of Islam. The formation of a number of positive behaviors is actually one of the main goals of education. Because basically behavior is the result of processed education. Humanitarian qualities concerning behaviors such as self-esteem and self-confidence and noble character are not inherited from birth but are instilled by parents and the child's environment such as in school. Argyle (Khuluqo, 2014, p. ix) states the importance of strengthening and selecting experiences through modeling or modeling. He said someone, especially children, behaved based on the model seen. For early childhood teachers to be children's idols, teachers should be good models and role models for children, especially in their religious character.

Elfindri, et al. (2012, p. 90) The living environment is a very strong influence on character formation. If the environment is judged to give negative results, special conditioning needs to be done, for example, corrupt life, life under pressure so that the rights are not noticed, the condition of being lazy to work harder, and so on. School is one environment that influences the character of children, especially religious. At school, the child will get a strengthening of religious character with the program prepared by the school as well as habituation in the daily activities of the child.

The results of the study indicate that the strategies applied in strengthening religious character at Islamic Integrated Preschool of Mon Kuta Banda Aceh are through daily programs, weekly programs, monthly programs, and yearly programs.

Daily Program

Daily programs are programs or activities that are routinely carried out every day. Daily programs in the form of habituation in daily activities such as greeting when coming and going home from school, reading prayers before and after doing an activity, repeating the Hadith and the name of the Prophet and teaching to love one another. Habits, in essence, contain experience. Therefore the core of habituation is learning. In fostering attitudes, habituation is very effective to use because it will train good habits for children from an early age.

Weekly Program

The weekly program is an activity carried out every once a week based on a predetermined time or day. The weekly program is in the form of performing the *Dhuha* prayer which is held every Friday and giving alms (*Infaq*). Where on Fridays the students perform the *Dhuha* prayer in congregation and giving *Infaq*. The results of the *Infaq* will be donated to the nearest mosque. Then the money will be used to purchase *Qurban* animals.

Monthly Program

The monthly program is an activity carried out every month in the form of visits to mosques around Banda Aceh depending on the theme being studied to introduce children to houses of worship and practice worship directly at the mosque.

Yearly Program

The yearly program is an activity carried out every year in the form of visiting Mecca (*Haji*) rituals simulated in the *Haji* dormitory, and celebrating Islamic holidays such as the 1 Muharram's carnival, and the celebration of the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad SAW.

CONCLUSIONS

Early age is a very good age for applying character values to children. At an early age, children have high curiosity and very rapid development. One effort to instill religious value to young children is by providing early childhood education which can stimulate the various potentials that children have in order to develop properly.

The importance of strengthening religious character education in early childhood in maximizing the abilities and potential of children and as a preparation for the lives of children in the future by becoming mature human beings with character. At Islamic Integrated Preschool of Mon Kuta Banda Aceh strengthening the value of religious character through daily programs in the form of habituation in daily activities, weekly programs in the form of performing of *Dhuha* prayer and giving *Infaq*, monthly programs in the form of visiting to mosques around Banda Aceh, and yearly programs in the form of *Haji* simulation rituals, carnival of 1 Muharram and the celebration of the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad SAW.

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