

Strengthening Character Education to Improve the Character Patterns of Second-Grade Elementary School Students

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine efforts to strengthen character education in elementary schools, using the character education pattern applied in Ibtidaiyah Madrasah. This research uses a qualitative type of descriptive research with a case study design. In this study, for data collection using observation techniques, and interviews. The results of this study concluded that: 1) Strengthening character education in students at the MI level is the responsibility of schools and parents, 2) The value of educational character patterns is applied and shown in MI Matala'ul Atfal with good habituation, such as dhuha prayer, muroja'ah, dzuhur prayer in school and others. 3) strategies used by teachers in the application of Character education can be by example, routine activities that are applied every day When learning, application of religious values, responsibility, honesty, tolerance and so on. 4) Obstacles obtained in efforts to strengthen character education, namely due to an environment that does not support the process of strengthening character education, factors of teachers who do not absorb good habituation, parents who do not teach character education at home, as well as the factors of the students themselves.

Keywords: Character Education; Elementary School; Character Education Pattern.

INTRODUCTION

The essence of character, in general, aims to help individuals become intelligent and wise. Knowledge of character is derived from social sciences that we are familiar with. One example is the scientist Aristotle, who used the term *ethē* for character, which is etymologically related to "ethics" and "morality."

Etymologically, the term character originates from the Latin words *kharakter*, *kharassein*, and *kharax*, which mean "to carve" or "tools for making" (Hidayatullah, 2010). Some also state that the meaning of character comes from the Greek word *charassein*, which means "to engrave" or "to make deep" (Wynne, 1991). This serves as a comparison (Bohlin, 2005), indicating that character takes shape and is distinct from other things. The word *charassein* was frequently used in the French language as *caractère* in the 14th century and later adopted into English as *character*, eventually becoming *karakter* in the Indonesian language. The term refers to a distinctive form that differentiates one thing from another. According to the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian Dictionary) by Poerwadarminta (Elmubarak, 2008), character is described as

an individual's inner self, personality, morals, or virtues that distinguish one person from another. Victoria Neufeld and David B. Guralink define character as distinctive trait, distinctive quality, moral strength, the pattern of behavior found in an individual or group (Muslich, 2011).

Character education is systematically structured, evaluated, and sequentially designed to help students understand moral values and human behavior related to God, themselves, others, and the environment. These values are manifested in thoughts, attitudes, speech, emotions, and behaviors that align with religious principles, legal norms, etiquette, culture, and traditions. However, character education is often limited to theoretical discussions and has not yet reached its practical and effective goals.

The development of students' personalities and character, particularly in elementary schools, is a crucial activity that must be observed, studied, and carefully considered. Character and personality are intertwined and must be taken seriously. A strong personality and character serve as vital qualities of human resources that will determine the direction of a better future.

Teachers play a crucial role in fostering character education by assigning meaningful tasks that students must complete diligently. The main focus of character education is instilling and encouraging the formation of students' character from an early age. According to Collier, Houston, Schematz, and Walsh in (Sidi. 2003), basic character education helps students develop their intellectual and spiritual dimensions, enabling them to grow as social beings, adapt to changes in their environment, and enhance their creativity.

There are three key functions in character education formation: 1. Development and enhancement of students' potential—Character education enables students to think critically, have a strong conscience, and behave according to Pancasila norms. 2. Reinforcement and improvement – Strengthening and enhancing character

education require collaboration among families, educational institutions, local communities, and the government to develop individuals' potential and contribute to national progress. 3. Filtering function – Character education helps preserve local culture and filter out influences that do not align with cultural values, norms, and ethics.

To implement character-based learning, teachers must understand classroom management approaches and foster students' enthusiasm for learning. Classroom management and motivation strategies significantly impact students' learning activities. A healthy school environment creates a joyful atmosphere that encourages students to enjoy learning. Character development is built through perseverance, rather than mere exposure to words or beliefs. Educational institutions such as madrasahs must implement structured strategies to ensure smooth execution. The active involvement of parents is also crucial to achieving the intended character development goals.

Religious character values in elementary schools play a significant role in fostering love and obedience to God's creation. These values include kindness toward friends, respect for teachers and parents, tolerance, refraining from ridicule, obedience to God, and gratitude. Parents must also contribute to character formation, as they hold a crucial responsibility in shaping their children's character. Parents must guide their children to develop strong moral values, ensuring their character formation is positive and constructive.

Educational institutions must establish harmonious relationships with parents to align efforts in nurturing students' character. Schools should leverage the significant role parents play in character development by ensuring their involvement in reinforcing students' values.

A social observer stated that children learn behaviors by observing and interacting with people in their environment. Therefore, parents must set good examples, as role

modeling is an effective method for instilling moral values in children. Research has shown a positive correlation between parental role modeling and children's positive attitudes. Education is considered character-driven when it follows normative principles holistically, leading to students with strong character, a good conscience, strong determination, and outstanding achievements. Character education must be well-planned by educators with the support of school administrators. The learning process should be independent of excessive administrative burdens. Instead, character-based education should focus on strengthening students' thinking, behavior, and actions to ensure meaningful character development.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

In this research article on strengthening character education to improve the character patterns of third-grade elementary school students, the researcher has chosen to use a qualitative research method. The purpose of this method is to understand the phenomena experienced by the research subjects, such as their behavior, perspectives, opinions, motivations, actions, and more.

In qualitative assessment, we study people by listening to their experiences, what they say about themselves and their experiences, from the perspective of those being studied, with great attention to detail. The qualitative method aims to comprehend and interpret the meaning of events for each individual in a particular situation from the researcher's perspective. The researcher employs this method to gain a broader understanding of the research object.

Another objective is to expand conceptual sensitivity regarding the problems being faced, to explain reality in relation to theory-building from the ground up, and to deepen the understanding of a phenomenon being studied. The qualitative method is also flexible, allowing openness to changing conditions and making it possible to gain striking insights. A researcher must remain

free from rigid formalities, allowing for the discovery of new findings.

A key aspect to emphasize is that qualitative research relies on first-hand data and direct experiences from the sources or research subjects. This means that data should not be obtained through third parties but must come directly from primary sources.

In its presentation, qualitative methods often use action verbs and descriptive language to help readers feel engaged and visualize the actual situation. Additionally, the qualitative method emphasizes process, as the perception of the participants plays a crucial role. Another distinguishing feature is the pursuit of deeper meaning, which requires an in-depth understanding of how people interpret things.

Essentially, individuals express themselves through symbols, each carrying its own meaning. Therefore, interviews serve as a crucial medium to capture people's understanding and interpretation of the symbols they use. The advantages of the qualitative method include:

1. **Authenticity of Data** – The data is fundamental because it is based on real facts, events, and realities rather than being manipulated by the researcher.
2. **In-Depth Analysis** – The discussion is thorough and focused, as qualitative data is explored in great depth.
3. **Openness** – This method is open to multiple perspectives, allowing for diverse insights from participants.
4. **Realistic Nature** – Researchers using qualitative methods believe in the dynamic nature of processes.

One of the primary benefits of qualitative research is that it acknowledges human beings as they truly are. Humans are noble beings, unmatched in their nature. They are not merely existing, but they are aware of their existence, capable of speaking, thinking, and determining their own future.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Based on interviews with the homeroom teacher of Class 3B at MI Mathla'ul Atfal, the designed approach to shaping students'

character in learning is implemented through various good habits, both spiritually and physically. At SDN 101340 Batang Baruhar Julu, spiritual activities such as reciting prayers before and after lessons, performing Dhuha Sunnah prayers at school, and reading Juz 30 before learning sessions are consistently practiced.

This practice aligns with the vision and mission of SDN 101340 Batang Baruhar Julu. The school's vision is:

"To produce a generation with noble character, based on faith and piety, while being intelligent in knowledge and technology."

To support this vision, the mission carried out to develop students' character at SDN 101340 Batang Baruhar Julu includes:

"Conducting effective and efficient teaching and guidance, with the goal and expectation that students will develop their talents and potential optimally."

According to the homeroom teacher of Class 3B at SDN 101340 Batang Baruhar Julu, every process comes with challenges, as each student has a different character and comes from diverse backgrounds. Family influences also vary significantly, presenting unique challenges in character development.

To overcome these challenges, it is essential for teachers and parents to maintain good communication so that students can be more easily guided and their character can be shaped effectively. Additionally, the homeroom teacher must thoroughly understand the nature and behavior of their students. Therefore, in Class 3B, students are consistently encouraged to recite prayers, memorize Juz 30, perform Dhuha Sunnah prayers, and observe the five daily prayers as part of their routine.

Discussion

Based on the results of an interview conducted on July 10, 2022, with the third-grade teacher at SDN 101340 Batang Baruhar Julu, Cilengkrang, Bandung, it was stated that the school has already implemented character education habits, focusing on aspects such as religiosity, tolerance, and others. However, there are still some students who have not yet fully

adopted character education values such as responsibility, honesty, and adherence to school rules. According to the teacher, the implementation of character education must also involve the contribution of parents, requiring collaboration between parents and the school.

The time available to instill character education at school is limited compared to at home, as students spend more time at home than at school. Research conducted at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, through interviews with third-grade teachers, found that there are various ways to introduce character education patterns across multiple aspects, such as religious values, responsibility, and tolerance. These aspects can be instilled through learning activities, school regulations, daily worship practices, and achievement competitions.

The implementation of character education must incorporate values that are not strictly regulated, but rather understood, ingrained, and expected to remain permanently embedded in students' behavior. At SDN 101340 Batang Baruhar Julu, character education is integrated into daily activities through various approaches.

The implementation of character education at elementary schools aims to develop desired characteristics and cultivate behavior that aligns with religious, social, and cultural norms. Good character education starts from an early stage, emphasizing values such as responsibility, honesty, wisdom, morality, ethics, and discipline. Schools serve as an effective medium for teaching, developing, and implementing character education, as students tend to be more obedient and disciplined while at school.

- 1) The strategy of SDN 101340 Batang Baruhar Julu for strengthening character education to improve students' character development in learning includes:
- 2) Structuring the learning process to focus on student-centered activities.
- 3) Guiding students to develop good habits and creating an environment enriched with religious knowledge (Imtaq) both inside and outside the school.

- 4) Providing facilities and full guidance to help students develop their talents in scouting, arts, sports, and other skills.
- 5) Extracurricular activities and teacher empowerment through KKG (Teacher Working Groups), along with internal and external training sessions to enhance teachers' professionalism and improve the quality of education.

Therefore, the goal of SDN 101340 Batang Baruhar Julu "To produce outstanding and independent graduates of MI Mathla'ul Atfal with a strong foundation in religious and scientific knowledge (Imtaq and Iptek), enabling them to contribute to their personal growth, family, and society, and become respected and independent individuals." can be achieved through strengthening character education to enhance students' behavior and learning patterns. However, in the process of shaping students' character through learning, challenges and obstacles inevitably arise.

CONCLUSIONS

In Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), character development plays a crucial role in shaping students' attitudes. Based on research conducted at SDN 101340 Batang Baruhar Julu, Padang Lawas Utara Regency, the school has made significant efforts to implement character education in its teaching practices.

Character knowledge is one of the fundamental aspects of the learning process. The growth and development of character awareness within students take time, and through continuous life experiences, positive character traits can be cultivated.

At SDN 101340 Batang Baruhar Julu, character education is implemented through integrated self-development programs within the school environment. The character-building process is carried out through activities such as Dhuha and Zuhur prayers in congregation, daily recitations (murojaah) of previously learned surahs at the beginning of lessons, and teaching students values such as honesty, tolerance, and responsibility.

However, challenges may arise in the character education process. Some students may struggle due to being overly pampered within their families, negative influences from friendships outside of school, and unsupportive environmental factors that do not positively shape their personalities.

As a result, some students may require a longer period to fully develop strong character values. The role of parents in fostering character development is essential, as parental involvement is crucial in helping students understand and internalize good character education principles.

Declaration by Authors

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