The Positive Impact of Character Learning on Early Childhood Behavior

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Abstract :

Character education in early childhood is a fundamental aspect in the formation of attitudes, morals, and social values that will be carried throughout life. In this phase, children's cognitive, emotional, and social development takes place very rapidly so that it requires appropriate stimulation from the family and school environment. This study uses a library research approach by examining various sources of literature, both print and digital, that are relevant to the theme of early childhood character education. The data collection process is carried out through a systematic review of books, scientific articles, and related publications. The findings show that character education has a significant influence on early childhood behavior, especially in aspects of emotion management, social interaction, and basic understanding of moral values. Character education that is integrated in the family and school environment is able to support the development of positive behavior of children. Character education plays an important role in shaping early childhood behavior. Therefore, parents and educators are expected to pay special attention and consistency in their application so that positive values can be embedded from an early age.

Keywords : *Character Education, Early Childhood, Behavioral Development, Moral Education.*

Abstrak :

Pendidikan karakter pada anak usia dini merupakan aspek fundamental dalam pembentukan sikap, moral, dan nilai sosial yang akan dibawa sepanjang hidup. Pada fase ini, perkembangan kognitif, emosional, dan sosial anak berlangsung sangat pesat sehingga memerlukan stimulasi yang tepat dari lingkungan keluarga maupun sekolah. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan library research dengan mengkaji berbagai sumber literatur, baik cetak maupun digital, yang relevan dengan tema pendidikan karakter anak usia dini. Proses pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui telaah sistematis terhadap buku, artikel ilmiah, serta publikasi terkait. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan karakter memiliki pengaruh signifikan terhadap perilaku anak usia dini, khususnya dalam aspek pengelolaan emosi, interaksi sosial, serta pemahaman dasar tentang nilai moral. Pendidikan karakter yang terintegrasi dalam lingkungan keluarga dan sekolah mampu mendukung perkembangan perilaku positif anak. Pendidikan karakter berperan penting dalam membentuk perilaku anak usia dini. Oleh karena itu, orang tua dan pendidik diharapkan memberikan perhatian khusus dan konsistensi dalam penerapannya agar nilai-nilai positif dapat tertanam sejak dini.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Karakter, Anak Usia Dini, Perkembangan Perilaku, Pendidikan Moral.

INTRODUCTION

Since childhood, character development has been a crucial element in the formation of children's traits and behaviors. The hero of Indonesian National Education, Ki Hajar Dewantara, emphasized that education should not only be centered on cognitive aspects but also strengthen character through example, encouragement, guidance, and connecting learning with daily life (Muthe, 2019). This is in line with the goals of national education,

which aims to produce Indonesians who are intelligent, moral, and able to face the challenges of the times.

According to Anggraeni (2023), childhood, especially early childhood, is referred to as a golden age in human development. At this age, children are very easily absorbed by the principles instilled by their environment, both at home, at school, as well as in the social environment. As a result, character education applied in childhood plays a crucial role in building a generation that is not only honest, but also independent and responsible (Character Education for Early Childhood Raras Ayu Prawinda et al., 2023).

The goal of character education for children at an early age is to instill social, religious, and ethical values that can shape their behavior later in life. Some of these values include honesty, discipline, tolerance, independence, responsibility, and concern for the surrounding environment. The process of instilling these values is carried out not only through formal teaching methods in schools, but also through the examples shown by parents and teachers in daily activities (View of Character Education in Early Childhood, n.d.).

Based on a number of researches, character formation has a beneficial influence on the behavior of preschoolers. Children who engage in character learning usually show better self-control skills, are better able to recognize right and wrong actions, and show more empathy and concern for others. Character formation also contributes to better academic outcomes and lowers detrimental behaviors such as bullying and aggressiveness (Munthe, 2019).

According to Shofwan (2021), teaching character values has advantages that are visible both immediately and in a longer time. During the adult phase, a balanced intellectual, emotional, and spiritual character will be built through children's religious experiences, good habits, and activities that involve cooperation. Thus, effective character teaching will support children to become adaptable individuals, make a positive contribution to society, and become qualified next generation for the country.

However, the implementation of character education has encountered various obstacles. These include the influence of the social environment, variations in parenting methods at home and at school, and the lack of knowledge of parents and teachers about the concept of comprehensive character education. For this reason, families, schools, and communities need to collaborate to instill character values in children at an early age (View of Character Education in Early Childhood, n.d.)

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used in this study is a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. This approach was chosen because it is relevant to explore in depth the meanings, concepts, and principles contained in the literature related to research topics. The type of research applied is library research, which is an effort to collect data through the study of various credible scientific sources, both in the form of books, journal articles, official documents, and the results of previous research. Literature research is considered appropriate because the object of study is normative and conceptual, so it emphasizes more on the analysis of text data than field observation.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data is obtained from primary literature that has authority in the field being studied, such as classical and contemporary scientific works written by experts, primary books published by reputable publishers, and related legal or regulatory documents. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from supporting works in the form of journal articles, research reports, news, and verified online sources. The combination of primary and secondary data allows researchers to gain a more comprehensive understanding and enrich analytical

perspectives.

The data collection technique is carried out through systematic literature search, both through conventional libraries and digital databases. The collected data is then analyzed using content analysis techniques, namely by identifying, classifying, and interpreting important ideas from various relevant sources. The analysis is carried out thematically to find patterns, relationships, and differences in the literature studied, so that the results of the research can present a coherent, argumentative description, and be able to answer the formulation of research problems in depth and scientifically.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Character education is very important for everyone, especially for the young generation of the Indonesian nation who are currently facing moral crises in various institutions, including in the education system (Sahlan, 2013). If education in Indonesia is still lacking in teaching education, then it is certain that the next generation of Indonesians will have poor qualities.

This study proves that character education supports them to understand and take responsibility for their behavior. Character education affects a child's development involving many elements in their lives, such as improved performance in academics and a reduction in bad behavior Children acquire character education, which makes them better individuals and better prepared to face future difficulties. Therefore, it is important for us to continue to support and strengthen the development of children's character, both at home and in the school environment.

The immediate benefits include: The child understands a variety of positive and negative examples of actions; they can distinguish between good and bad actions; as well as they know how positive and negative actions affect themselves; and they develop into individuals who live their lives according to the principles they hold.

Education can be defined as an educational enterprise that aims to develop students' learning skills while encouraging them to become active students in developing their potential so that they can develop themselves, have spiritual religiousness, intelligence, personality, and skills to provide for themselves and the community. Basically, education is a human effort to cultivate and increase personality opportunities, both physically and spiritually (Rahman et al., 2022). Education itself is related to the study of attitudes, beliefs, expertise, and other aspects related to behaviors that are beneficial for daily life (Nasution et al., 2022).

Character can basically be understood as a morality that distinguishes one individual from another. According to Hibur Tanis, character is defined as a disposition, character, morals, or ethics that function to distinguish a person from others. This view is in line with Thomas Lickona's thought that character is an innate attribute of an individual that will appear when a person is faced with a moral situation. Character, in this case, is reflected through tangible actions such as giving kindness, showing integrity, fulfilling responsibility, being fair, having discipline, and respecting others. Meanwhile, Ryan and Bohlin as quoted by Hasyim explained that character consists of three main components, namely understanding goodness, loving goodness, and embodying goodness. From these various definitions, it can be concluded that character education is an effort made, either consciously or not, by various elements in the world of education to instill moral values and goodness in students.

Good morals or ethics to the students. (Fadilah et al., 2021) Based on Law Number 20 of 2003 on page 6 regarding the National Education System Article 1, point 14 states that Early Childhood Education is an effort to support the physical and mental progress of children so that they are ready to continue to the next level of education (Arifudin et al., 2021).

By learning and applying character education, we can guarantee that our children have a strong foundation to achieve high integrity in the future. It is a valuable investment that will benefit society as a whole in the long run (Impact of Character Education on Child Development- Auliya et al. Integrated Islamic School, 2025).

Character education is very crucial for young children because it can help them build confidence and encourage positive behavior throughout their lives. The goal of character education is to instill ethical values in children, so that they can become part of their habits as they grow up. Now is the ideal time to provide moral and character education to children as they are in a phase of growth and development. We understand that parents and educators have an easier role in helping children to be directed in a positive direction, because they are still under parental supervision and have not been affected by negative aspects of the surrounding environment (Anggraeni 2023).

Character education begins when children are still young to increase awareness, understanding, evaluation, and ability to solve problems, both individually and in groups. With this character education, children will be able to develop behaviors that are in harmony with the nation's religious and moral values. By instilling good values and character from an early age, the nation's ideals and goals to create knowledgeable and virtuous individuals can be realized. Therefore, character education in the early stages of life is very crucial for the benefit of educational institutions and the life of the nation and state. However, the most essential is its usefulness for students personally to prepare them for a better future (Munthe 2019).

Therefore, educational institutions need to design a curriculum that focuses on character development from the early stages. This is an essential step to realize the nation's ideals, which is to create intelligent and ethical individuals. Thus, the teaching of character values at an early age is crucial for the good of educational institutions and the life of the nation and state. Schools need to develop an educational program that emphasizes character from the beginning because this means a lot to the students individually in order to prepare for a brighter future. The mission of Indonesia's national education along with the vision and mission of schools must be in line with strengthening character education (Munthe 2019).

According to Nuraeni (2020), there are several character values in early childhood, such as:

1) Honesty
   Honesty is very important for every individual because it affects their interactions with others. Someone who is more honest tends to be more accepted in society; On the contrary, individuals who lack integrity and are prone to cheating will be avoided by others. The value of honesty must be taught to children from an early age through the words and behavior of adults, both from teachers and parents. Cultivating honesty takes time, and the results may not be immediately apparent. Therefore, character education must start from an early age so that children grow up to be a generation that has integrity when they grow up.

2) Discipline
   Behavior plays an important role in achieving a quality life. Discipline allows individuals to organize things through timely planning and execution, leading to better and stable outcomes. Attitude formation does not happen overnight; This is a process that takes place continuously. These values can be instilled from an early age, and these formations need to be done consistently rather than just occasionally. A simple example of discipline is a teacher who always shows up on time and shows that no task

is left behind

3) Tolerance

Tolerance is an attitude that prioritizes concern for others, provides opportunities for other individuals to grow, and accepts various issues related to human values. This trait will develop even more if children are raised in an environment that emphasizes the importance of respecting others. Therefore, children need examples that can be used as a reference to develop tolerance in their lives.

4) Independence

An attitude that is crucial for every individual because it supports personal growth without having to depend on others. This increases one's courage and minimizes dependence on others. It is very important for children to start learning independence from a young age through various means, both at home and in early childhood educational institutions. This will help them learn to self-regulate (View of Character Education in Early Childhood, n.d.).

Shofwan (2021) found that the application of character education from an early age provides sustainable benefits in children's lives. The experiences gained in the Play Group, Kindergarten, and Raudlatul Athfal provide many valuable moments, especially in religious matters, which will continue to be attached in children's memories until adulthood. Through this experience, the development of traits and character can be formed gradually so as to produce harmony between intellectual, emotional, and spiritual abilities.

In addition, the variety of play activities that children do together is an important means to increase social interaction. Through togetherness, children can learn to know each other, hone their collaboration skills, and strengthen friendships. Friendships built in childhood with positive intentions can even have the potential to last into adulthood, providing a strong foundation for healthy social relationships.

Furthermore, spiritual experiences, good habits, and collaborative play activities in early childhood education institutions leave a deep and lasting impact. Children will always remember these experiences, both when they grow up and when forming their own households. Character education at an early age not only equips children with moral values, but also indirectly instills an educational pattern that they will later apply to their children. For example, simple teachings from kindergarten teachers, such as how to applaud well, can be remembered throughout life and passed down to the next generation when the children grow into parents.

Based on the previous explanation, the thing that must be considered is that adults, both parents and students, need to support children at an early age. Given that each individual only experiences this phase once in his or her life, the existence of children at this stage is crucial. A person experiences significant development in childhood. Therefore, educational institutions, parents, and the community as a whole must pay close attention to and address early childhood.

CONCLUSION

This research emphasizes that education is essentially a strategic means in developing students' learning skills while forming individual qualities as a whole. Character education at an early age has proven to have a fundamental role, because it is the foundation for the formation of positive behaviors that will be internalized in family, school, and community life. The results of the study show that the main goal of character education is to instill social principles and religious values as the basis for the formation of children's personalities. The implementation of character education in schools and

family environments not only provides religious experiences and opportunities for socialization, but also instills moral values such as honesty, responsibility, and discipline from an early age. Thus, character education in early childhood can be seen as a long-term investment that not only contributes to the formation of individuals with noble character, but also to the development of a more civilized society. These findings affirm the urgency of implementing character education consistently and integrated, both in formal educational institutions and in the family environment.

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