

Religious Character Education in Elementary Schools

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Abstract. This research aims to understand, examine, and describe the implementation of religious character education in State Elementary School 1 Kutawis, Bukateja District, Purbalingga Regency. The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach and involves the school principal, teachers, and students as participants. Data collection techniques include literature review, interviews, observations, and documentation. The data analysis techniques comprise data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of implementing religious character education in State Elementary School 1 Kutawis are carried out through the following methods: (1) creating a character education program, (2) implementing school and classroom rules, (3) conducting habituation activities at school, such as performing Dhuha prayers in congregation, reading short verses from the Quran, reciting the Asmaul Husna, and performing Zuhr prayers in congregation; (4) monitoring religious activities at home through activity logbooks; (5) involving parents; (6) engaging the school committee; and (7) creating a conducive classroom atmosphere.

Keywords: Character education, religious, and elementary school.

1 Introduction

The purpose of education, according to the National Education Law No. 20 of 2003, is to develop the capabilities and shape the character and civilization of the nation in order to enlighten the nation's life, aiming for the potential of students to become individuals who are faithful and devoted to God, noble in character, healthy, knowledgeable, skillful, creative, independent, and responsible [1]. Character education aims to shape a student's character, making them morally upright, tolerant, resilient, and well-behaved.

The implementation of character education is crucial in the current times due to the moral crisis affecting all age groups and all segments of society. This issue arises from the lack of appreciation for Pancasila values, the limited integrated policy tools in realizing Pancasila values, the shifting ethics in the nation's life, the fading awareness of national cultural values, the threat of national disintegration, and the weakening of national independence. Therefore, character education needs to be implemented from an early age, starting from the family and community environments. This aligns with the idea that some students exhibit poor character

traits, such as using inappropriate language among peers at school. During flag ceremonies, some students also display inappropriate behavior.

One of the character values that can be developed is religiosity. Religious character values are crucial for individuals to foster other character traits. This can be observed from several deviant behaviors that contradict religious character. Examples of behaviors that do not reflect religious attitudes in school include students who do not pray at the beginning of the learning session, students speaking impolitely, displaying inappropriate behavior, and not actively participating in religious activities at school. In line with the above thoughts (Lestari, Mustika: 2021), some students have poor character, as they use offensive language among their peers in the school environment [2]. During flag ceremonies, some students are also observed not participating adequately.

Hence, there is a need for a new breakthrough to revitalize character education at all levels of education. The government has taken tangible steps through the Ministry of National Education, as outlined in Presidential Regulation No. 87 on Strengthening Character Education (PPK). The implementation of PPK is tailored to the curriculum at each educational unit and is carried out through three approaches: (1) integration into existing subjects in the curriculum and Local Content (Mulok) through intracurricular and extracurricular activities; (2) implementation through extracurricular activities determined by the educational unit; and (3) habituation activities through school culture formed in routine, spontaneous, conditioning, and exemplary activities within the school [3].

2 Research Methods

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive approach, which is a method used to gather knowledge about the research subjects at a specific time. The study was conducted at State Elementary School 1 Kutawis, Bukateja, Purbalingga, for a period of five months from February 1 to June 30, 2023. The research subjects include the school principal, teachers, and students.

The data collection techniques used in this research include interviews, observations, and documentation. Sugiyono (2019) Interviews involve two individuals meeting to exchange information and ideas through questions and answers, leading to the construction of meaning on a specific topic [4]. Moleong (2013) Interviews are conducted between two parties: the interviewer, who asks questions, and the interviewee, who provides answers [5]. Interviews are carried out to obtain information about various religious character education programs implemented in the school. Observations are used to observe the implementation of religious character education both in the classroom and non-classroom settings. Documentation is used to obtain valid data related to the planning, implementation, and evaluation of religious character education in SD N 1 Kutawis.

The data analysis technique used in this research is based on Miles and Huberman's approach. According to Miles and Huberman (1984) (in Sugiyono, 2021), qualitative data analysis is an interactive and continuous process until data saturation is achieved [6]. The activities involved in data analysis include data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data reduction involves selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming raw data gathered from field notes. Researchers present the data based on the reduced information and existing facts. The final step is drawing conclusions from the obtained data.

3. Results and Discussion

According to Kemendiknas (2010) Character is defined as an individual's personality, disposition, ethics, or nature shaped by various temperaments that influence their views, thoughts, behavior, and actions. Character education, in its literal sense, means shaping or transforming a person's character, behavior, temperament, and personality according to predetermined criteria. It supports the development of children's souls, both physically and spiritually, toward human civilization [7]. Thus, character education is an effort to support the development of one's soul to transform their character, behavior, and personality toward human civilization.

Abuddin (2017) Character education, literally, means shaping or transforming an individual's character, behavior, habits, nature, and personality according to predetermined criteria [8]. Character education is an effort to support the development of children's souls, both physically and spiritually, towards human civilization. Thus, it can be concluded that character education is a human effort to support the development of the soul to change an individual's character, behavior, and personality towards human civilization.

Character education policy is implemented through three strategies: top-down, bottom-up, and program revitalization streams. The top-down strategy involves policy intervention, with the Ministry of Education and Culture taking the lead, supported synergistically by regional governments such as the Provincial and District/City Education Offices. The bottom-up strategy relies on the experiences of practitioners in the field, with initiatives coming from educational units [9]. The government provides technical assistance to schools that have developed and implemented character education in accordance with their specific school environment. The program revitalization strategy focuses on revitalizing existing character education programs, which are often found in extracurricular activities laden with character values.

According to Lickona, psychological character education should encompass moral reasoning and moral behavior [10]. Character education includes all activities performed by teachers that can influence students in forming their character or personality. Character education is built on habituation, so students know what is right and wrong and can practice good behavior and avoid bad behavior. Methods used by teachers in elementary schools for character education include guidance, habituation, role modeling, reinforcement, and punishment. Dini Palupi (2021) Values that can be developed through learning include religiousness, honesty, hard work, discipline, responsibility, love for the homeland, caring for the environment, and strong social spirit [11] .

The basis of character education is embedded in the Qur'an, Surah Luqman, verse 17: "O my son, establish prayer, enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and be patient over what befalls you. Indeed, [all] that is of the matters [requiring] determination." [12] .The Qur'an explicitly commands humans to encourage others to do good, avoid evil deeds, and be patient in facing trials and blessings. This directive from a father to his son is to always do good, perform prayers, and be patient.

Character education cannot happen instantly. All parties must participate in realizing the values of character education. Involved parties include parents, teachers, society, and the government. They must work together to foster moral, noble, tolerant, resilient, and well-behaved individuals.

Religious character education is a component of character education. Muhaimin(2008) Religious or spiritual aspects can be observed in various aspects of human life [13]. Religious activities are not limited to ritual behaviors (worship) but also extend to supernatural activities.

They encompass visible behaviors as well as internal actions. Therefore, a person's religiosity includes several dimensions.

Thontowi (2012) The five main dimensions of religiosity are: (a) the ideological or belief dimension, which relates to diversity in terms of what should be believed, such as faith in God and angels; (b) the worship dimension, which involves various religious behaviors, such as prayer rituals; (c) the experiential dimension, which relates to the religious feelings experienced by believers, or how long a person can experience religious rituals; (d) the knowledge dimension, which concerns a person's understanding and knowledge of their religious teachings; and (e) the practical dimension, which is related to the application of religious teachings in one's attitudes and behaviors in daily life. This shows that religious character education involves all actions that increase one's devotion to Allah through belief in the heart, understanding and practicing religious teachings [14] .

Andriani, Mutohar (2022) Efforts that educators can take to develop religious character include [15]: a) Exemplary method: Providing direct examples to students in speech and behavior. Actions speak louder than words; b) Habituation method: Forming relatively permanent and automatic attitudes and behaviors through repeated learning, whether done collectively, in groups, or individually. For example, praying before activities and performing daily prayers on time; c) Advice method: Educators should provide regular advice to students; and d) Development of morals/virtues: Educators should cultivate noble qualities such as patience, humility, and respect for elders.

The research was conducted at SD Negeri 1 Kutawis, Bukateja District, Purbalingga Regency, from February 1 to June 30, 2023, focusing on the implementation of religious character education. The school conducted various programs to support the success of religious character education. The school's programs were implemented through close collaboration among the school's principal, teachers, students, staff, parents, and the school committee.

3. 1. Planning of religious character education at SD N 1 Kutawis:

According to an interview with the Islamic Education teacher (Ibu F) on February 6, 2023:

"The planned religious activities carried out by students include performing duha prayers in congregation, performing Zuhr prayers in congregation, reading short surahs and the names of Allah (Asmaul Husna) before learning sessions under the guidance of their respective class teachers."

3. 2. The implementation of religi in SD N 1 Kutawis

The implementation of religious character education in SD N 1 Kutawis includes:

a. Character Education Program

This program is already part of the operational curriculum for SD N 1 Kutawis in the 2022/2023 academic year [15]. The existing religious program includes reciting prayers before and after learning, performing duha and Zuhr prayers in congregation, reciting Asmaul Husna, speaking honestly, etc. The successful implementation of this program requires cooperation among the principal, teachers, students, parents, and the school committee.

b. Setting school rules and classroom rules: School rules are formulated by the school staff and teachers during meetings, while classroom rules are developed collaboratively by teachers and students in each class. These rules are established to ensure the proper implementation of religious character education.

c. Conducting habitual activities at school

Habitual activities that are already in place at SD N 1 Kutawis include students performing duha and Zuhur prayers in congregation at the school's prayer room, reciting Asmaul Husna and short surahs before learning sessions. Through these activities, students are trained to fulfill their obligations as Muslims in an organized manner.



Picture 3.2 a. Reciting short surah on the Holy Qur'an



Picture 3.2 b. Reading asmaul husna



Picture 3.2 c. Students performing duha and Zuhur prayers in congregation at the school's prayer room

d. Monitoring religious activities at home through daily activity logs

Daily activity logs are used by SD N 1 Kutawis to monitor students' religious activities at home. The logs aim to track the intensity and regularity of performing religious acts at home and activities that support religious character. These logs are not only filled out by students but also serve as a source of information for parents to report their child's religious behavior at home to the school.

e. Involving parents

Parents play a crucial role in shaping students' religious character. As students spend around 6-7 hours at school in a day, the rest of the time is spent at home. Parents can monitor the implementation of religious activities, such as reminding and encouraging their children to perform congregational prayers, recite the Qur'an, and speak honestly. Students are provided with religious activity books to be filled out and signed by their parents.

f. Involving the school committee.

The school committee represents the community and plays a significant role in shaping students' character. This aligns with Mulyasa's (2013) view that the community environment has a positive influence on shaping students' character.

g. Creating a conducive classroom.

A conducive school environment is very important to support religious character. The environmental component consists of human resources in the school, classroom management, teacher-student relationships that are well established. A conducive classroom climate strongly supports learning activities to run optimally.

Evaluation of the implementation of religious character activities at SD N 1 Kutawis

3. 3. Evaluation of the implementation of religious character activities at SD N 1 Kutawis

Evaluation related to the implementation of religious character activities at SD N 1 Kutawis was conducted through monitoring by submitting religious activity books every 1 month. The teacher cooperated with parents in obtaining information related to the development of students' religious character done at home. This was proven by the achievement of the SD N 1 Kutawis championship and trophy.

3. 4 Factors supporting the application of religious character education at SD N 1 Kutawis

Factors supporting the implementation of religious character education at SD N 1 Kutawis came from: a) Cooperation between teachers and students at school; b) Parents were involved in the application of religious character in elementary school in the form of reminding them during fardu prayers, memorizing short letters; c) Collaboration was established between parents and class teachers in evaluating the implementation of religious character by communicating either via wa, telephone or face to face.

The inhibiting factor for the implementation of religious character education was that there were some children who did not complete the religious character activity book so that the teacher could not monitor the implementation of religious character at home.

4. Conclusion

The implementation of religious character education in State Elementary School 1 Kutawis has been optimal, as observed from the eight programs that have been implemented, including creating a character education program, setting school and classroom rules, conducting habituation activities at school, controlling religious activities at home through activity logbooks, involving parents, engaging the school committee, and creating a conducive classroom atmosphere

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