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Strengthening Religious Characters Of Early Childhood Through Religious Practice



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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan tentang praktik keagamaan sebagai penguatan karakter religious pada anak usia dini di TK Islam Terpadu Al Asror Tulungagung. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian deskriptif dimana pada penelitian ini akan dikaji secara mendalam tentang penerapan praktik keagamaan dalam penguatan karakter religious. Teknik pengumpulan data menggunakan wawancara, observasi dan dokumentasi. Informan dalam penelitian ini adalah kepala lembaga dan guru di TK Islam Terpadu Al Asror Tulungagung. Hasil dari penelitian karakter religious yang terbentuk dalam pelaksanaan praktik keagamaan, yaitu (1) Praktik pelafalan asma'ul husna membentuk karakter religious anak taat dalam mengenal nama-nama Allah yang harus diamplikasikan di daam kehidupan sehari-hari. (2) Praktik murojaah surah-surah pendek dan Praktik doa-doa harian membentuk karakter disiplin, suka tolong menolong, sopan, ramah, jujur, serta bertanggung jawab. (3) Praktik sholat dhuhur berjamaah membentuk karakter religious anak taat dalam beribadah tepat waktu, tanggung jawab, disiplin, dan tertib mulai dari gerakannya dan bacaannya sesuai dengan syariat. (4) Praktik peringatan hari besar agama islam membentuk karakter religious anak teladan mencontoh perilaku yang baik, sopan santun, jujur, tanggung jawab, disiplin, amanah.

Abstract

This research aimed to describe religious practices as strengthening religious characters in early childhood at Al Asror Tulungagung Integrated Islamic Kindergarten. This research used a qualitative research method with descriptive type of research in which this research studies thoroughly the application of religious practices in strengthening religious characters. Data collection techniques used interviews, observation and documentation. The informants in this research included the head of the institution and teachers at the Al Asror Integrated Islamic Kindergarten, Tulungagung. The results of the research on religious characters that are formed in the implementation of religious practices are (1) the practice of pronouncing Asma'ul Husna forms the religious character of obedient children in knowing the names of Allah which must be applied in everyday life; (2) The practice of murojaah of short surah and the practice of daily prayers form the character of discipline, helpful, polite, friendly, honest, and responsible; (3) The practice of dhuhur prayer in congregation forms the religious characters of children who are obedient in worshiping on time, responsibility, discipline, and order starting from the movement and reading in accordance with the Sharia (Islamic law); (4) The practice of commemorating Islamic holidays forms the religious character of exemplary children by imitating good behavior, courtesy, honesty, responsibility, discipline, trust.



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INTRODUCTION

Integrated Islamic Kindergarten Al Asror Tulungagung is one of the ECE institutions that prioritizes religious activity programs for early childhood. This program is the advantage of Al Asror Tulungagung Integrated Islamic Kindergarten. It is different from other institutions in the vicinity, whose activity programs are the same as other public kindergartens.

Of course, this religious activity program if instilled in early childhood will form good habituation and character development. Character education is a system of inculcating character values in students which includes components of awareness, understanding, concern, and high commitment to carry out these values, both towards God The Almighty, self, neighbor, environment, and society and the nation as a whole so that it becomes a perfect human being in accordance with their nature (Mulyasa, 2012: 69). Character education is currently increasingly being discussed by many groups. There are so many cases of irregularities committed by all groups, from children, adolescents, adults to the elderly. There are low characters such as reduced morale of students, lack of respect and courtesy towards older people, honesty, loss of character in children, lack of religious value in children. This may be caused by various factors that are around the community. It does take time to form a person's character, but nothing is impossible to change and shape one's character into a character in accordance with Islamic teachings.

The success of a person in cultivating and developing his character is influenced by the consistency of the behavior of each person in accordance with what is said, done and must be based on knowledge that must be accounted for. One way to realize this is with good moral habits or character, namely by character education in schools, which must harmonize all parties, including the school system, curriculum, teachers, guardians of students, and the community to jointly build the character of ethical values. the good one.

Humans basically have two potentials, namely good and bad. Humans have two choices, namely to become believers or creatures who deny their Lord. As Allah says in Sura Al-Shams (91); 8 as the following: *Fa alhumahâ fujû rahâ wa taqwâ hâ*-then He (Allâh) inspired him (the way) of evil and piety.

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Based on the above verse, it can be concluded that every human being has the potential to be a good or bad person, depending on the individual who wants to carry out His obligations or violate His prohibitions. Education that takes place in schools should not only provide various kinds of knowledge, but also must be able to shape the character of students.

The government has also provided learning guidelines that aim to enable students to develop their potential in various aspects of their development, especially in the field of religious and moral development of children, namely the cultivation of children's character values. There are a lot of character values that must be instilled in students, but if all character values have to be given all then it will be hard. For this reason, it is necessary to choose a basic character which, from an early age, should be given to children as the starting point for instilling other character values. The basic character value that must be instilled from an early age is religious character.

Religious character is the main character determining one's life in a good direction. Religious character is the attitude of being obedient to the command to carry out the teachings of the religion he adheres to. Thus, if a person has a strong religious character, he will be directed and guided to become a better person. Because with faith, devotion to Allah SWT will guide his servants to carry out worship well. In the introduction of religious character values, it is not only in the form of knowledge but also must be integrated through the habituation of religious practice in schools and within the family. There must be cooperation and harmony between the two. Children who are accustomed to carrying out their obligations will have a sense of responsibility by themselves without any coercion elements.

In implementing religious character, it is not only dominated by religious challenges, but also children are taught to have a polite attitude, give love, honesty, cooperation, to all friends, educators or older people. This habit is absolutely necessary from an early age so that they are firmly attached as their foundation character later when they grow up to face the increasingly fast times. Therefore, it can be concluded that character education is an attempt to form

habits of positive values starting from an early age, so that they can be wise and practice them in everyday life.

Early childhood (EC) is an individual who is experiencing a developmental leap, namely a very rapid growth and development process. Early childhood has a very valuable age range because it has extraordinary intelligence (Mulyasa, 2012: 16-18). Age at this stage is the phase where the child experiences a process of growth, development, maturation, and perfection both physically and spiritually which takes place gradually and continuously. Hurlock stated that growth can include a psychological aspect if it does give rise to new functions such as the emergence of abstract thinking skills, high curiosity. Thus, it can be concluded that development includes and is broader than growth. The process of complete human development starts from the fetus in the mother's womb and until the age of six. Age ranging from 0 to 6 years is the sensitive period of children or the golden age of children (the golden age), because the increase in children's intelligence increases significantly (Mulyasa, 2012: 34).

Given that the golden age of early childhood is very important, it is necessary to have the maturation of psychological functions that are ready to respond to stimulation that is given from the environment. For that the right way is to provide education according to the stage of development and age of the child.

Early childhood education (ECE) will be the forerunner in the formation of children's character because it is the starting point or basis for the formation of quality human resources who have good manners, insight, intellectual, personality, responsibility, honest, innovative, creative, proactive, cooperative, independent, disciplined and participatory. We know that early childhood education (ECE) is indeed very important in fostering one of the children's religious characters, not only religious characters that can be developed but all good characters can be developed through habituation of religious practices that must be taught and applied so that it will become become provisions or the basis of children's life in carrying out their life later. Early childhood is still very easy to be directed and guided otherwise, if the character guidance is given when they are adults it will be hard and difficult because there are many external influences.

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Children who have received guidance and already have a strong character of faith will not be easily shaken up to adulthood.

Based on previous observations, Al Asror Tulungagung Islamic Kindergarten implements religious practice activities, which aim to strengthen or instill character in early childhood. The types of religious practice activities and the character contained in these activities are the focus of this research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Early Childhood Character

Etymologically, the term character comes from the Latin *character*, which means nature, behavior, psychological traits, manners, personality and morals. The term *character* from English which is translated into *character* means character. In Arabic, characters are defined as "khuluq, *sajiyah*, thab'u" (manners, behavior, nature).

Character education according to Burke (Muchlas samani, 2013: 43) is a part of good fundamentals and learning. Character education as a noble development (good character) of students by practicing and teaching moral values related to fellow humans and God.

Lickona (Muchlas samani, 2013: 45) defined character education as a serious effort to help someone understand, care, and act on the basis of good ethical values. Character education is designed deliberately to improve the character of students. Therefore, it can be concluded that character education is a process of giving direction to students to live a good life to become a human being who has completely good character in order to develop students' abilities to provide direction for decisions which are good and bad and realize the values of goodness in everyday life whole-heartedly.

Early childhood character education can not only be done in school, but also carried out in social activities. The foundation of an individual's personality lies at an early age. Pre-school age is the period that most determines the future, including the development of children's character. At this time the child is very sensitive to the stimuli given. The fact is that so far education has only focused on

physical and psychomotor aspects while aspects that include character education have received less attention.

Forms of character education that really need to be taught to early childhood include religious, honest, disciplined, confident, caring, independent, persistent, assertive, responsible, creative and critical. Early childhood whose spiritual intelligence is not developed will be relatively difficult to direct.

Religious Practices

According to Harun Nasution, religion based on the origin of the word, namely *al-dien*, *religi*, and agama *al-Din* (*semit*) means act or law. Then in Arabic, this word means mastering, conquering, obeying, debt, repayment, and habit. Meanwhile, from the word *religi* (Latin) or *religere* means to collect and read. Then, *religare* means binding. Religion consists of a = no, gam = leaving means *not leaving*, remaining in place or being inherited from generation to generation.

Religious practice here is defined as a conscious effort made by those who are responsible for the consult, guidance, development and direction of children's potential so that they can function and play a role as the nature of the incident. As for what is meant by being responsible in this sense is parents. Meanwhile, teachers or other educators are extending parents' hands. In addition, in its implementation, such educational activities are applied from the age of a baby in the cradle to the end of life, such as the guidance of Allah's prophet (Jalaludin, 2004: 53).

Islam is a message or messages sent by Allah to the prophets and messengers as instructions and guidelines that contain perfect laws to be used to organize the procedures for human life, namely regulating human relationships with other humans, humans with nature, and human relations with their creators. Therefore, Islam contains three main components that are structured and cannot be separated from one another, the three components are *aqidah* or faith, *sharia* and morals (Mukni'ah, 2011: 13).

According to a research by Ernest Harst (Jalaludin, 2004: 67), the religious development of the children went through several phases (levels). In his book, the

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Development of Religious on Children, he said that the development of religion in children through three levels, namely:

1) The Fairy Tale Stage (fairy tale level)

This level starts in children aged 3-6 years. This year, the concept of God is more influenced by fantasy and emotion. At this stage of development, the concept of divinity will be lived in accordance with the level of intellectual development. Life at this time is still heavily influenced by fantasy life, so even in responding to religion, children still use their fantasy concept which is filled with unreasonable fairy tales.

2) The Realistic Stage (level of reality)

This level starts from the time the child enters elementary school until the age of adolescence. At this time, the idea of a child's deity already reflects concepts based on reality.

3) The Individual Stage (individual level)

At this level, children have the highest emotional sensitivity in line with their age development.

Religious Character

Religious character is a person's attitude or behavior in terms of piety and faith. To foster a religious character, it is necessary to have cooperation between all parties, parents, educators, the community. Values in religious character are the first stage for children to recognize and learn to understand the meaning of their religion and mutual tolerance between other religions. In fostering religious character, it must be able to be internalized and accustomed to children in everyday life, one of which can be through learning at school.

Various kinds of religious values, namely:

- 1) Religious values about the relationship between humans and God
- 2) Religious values about human relations with humans
- 3) Religious values regarding human relations with nature or the environment
- 4) Religious values about human relations with religious education

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In the discussion of religious values, it can be concluded that religious values are guidelines for humans who are used as a reference in carrying out daily life in accordance with the teachings and rules of their respective religions (Indonesian Education Portal, 2016). Character education aims to shape and build the mindset, attitudes, and behavior of students so that they become positive individuals, have good morals, have a noble spirit, and are responsible.

In the context of education, character education is a conscious effort made to shape students to be positive and have good morals in accordance with graduate standards (GS) so that they can be implemented in everyday life (Agus Zainul Fitri, 2012: 20-21).

Character education can be implemented through several strategies and approaches (Agus zaenul fitri, 2012: 45-46) which includes:

- 1) Integrating values and ethics in each subject
- 2) Internalization of positive values instilled by all school members (principals, educators, and parents)
- 3) Habit and exercise
- 4) Providing examples or habituation
- 5) Creating an atmosphere of character at school
- 6) Culture

This strategy is not easy to implement because the character education process cannot be seen immediately in a short time but requires a continuous and consistent process. In realizing this, it is also greatly influenced by the behavior of educators in instilling religious character in children.

The relationship between religious values and children's character

In human life, it is inseparable from religious values that can affect a person's character. Character can be formed from habituation, because habituation is very well done in shaping the character of a child, or for students in the school environment. Although instilling the habit in children takes a long time. In the implementation of religious practice or religious values at TKIT Al Asror, this is very influential, as in congregational prayer activities, educators explain or emphasize the ability to carry out worship and muamalah properly and correctly.

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Based on the researchers' observations, the educators gave examples in unique ways, such as explaining the correct procedure for ablution through singing or clapping. The introduction to prayer procedures are also explained coherently and clearly. Therefore, according to the results of the researcher's observations, the relationship obtained from these religious activities, the child becomes disciplined when he knows that prayer is obligatory and immediately does it. This is indeed a collaboration between educators and parents to always monitor all the learning that has been implemented in school to be consistently applied at home. The existence of a book that connects daily activities, especially in religious practice when at home, everything is written in detail in it.

Another character that is formed from the activities of religious practices or religious values is during the activity of muroja'ah short surah and memorizing daily prayers. In the classroom, when the children are enthusiastic about reading these short surah, the educator will give a reward by drawing a star in the hand or a thumb. Children are taught a sense of responsibility to continue to be consistent doing murojaah at home. When at home children are taught to be honest in filling in the connecting book according to the activities that have actually been carried out. When the child does not do so, parents must give a reminder and provide motivation. Therefore, the habituation becomes a character or habit that has a good effect on the child.

Another religious activity that has become a habit to develop character is when commemorating Islamic holidays there are always activities held so that children remember them and know their history and meaning, as explained briefly by the principal of TKIT Al Asror, namely the 1st Muharram commemoration or hijriyah new year which filled with istighosah and donations for orphans and joint prayers, Eid al-adha, the Prophet's birthday. All these religious practices have always been habituation so that children can develop character, especially religious characters, and know and appreciate cultural history.

METHOD

The approach used in this research is a qualitative approach using descriptive analysis method. Data collection techniques used in this research were

observation, interviews and documentation. Observation and interview techniques were carried out in a semi-structured manner. The results of this research are presented descriptively to describe everything related to religious practices to shape the character of students at TKIT Al Asror Tulungagung as the research population. A qualitative approach is defined as a research activity that is intended to reveal symptoms holistically-contextually (as a whole and in accordance with the context /as it is) through collecting data from natural settings as direct sources with the researcher's own key instrument (Ahmad Tanzeh, 2004: 39) .

Qualitative descriptive research is data in the form of words that describe a symptom or condition under investigation as it is and is directed to describe facts, events systematically and accurately. This type of descriptive research is intended to collect information about the status of an existing symptom, namely the state of the symptoms according to what they were at the time of the study (Suharsimi Arikunto, 1990: 309). Therefore, qualitative descriptive research is described in words according to the opinion of the informant, as it is according to the research question, and then analyzed with what words motivate the informant to behave (think, feel and act) then reduce, triangulate, and conclude (Lexy J Moleong, 2009: 6).

RESULTS

Based on the results of research conducted at Al Asror Integrated Islamic Kindergarten, Tulungagung, it was obtained data that the cultivation of religious characters in early childhood was carried out through religious practices as follows:

1) Pronunciation of Asma'ul Husna

This activity was carried out at the beginning of learning before entering class. This also trains the children disciplinary to arrive on time. The purpose of reciting Asma'ul Husna, of course, is students know the attributes of Allah from an early age. The pronunciation of Asma'ul Husna was done in an interesting way, namely by singing.

2) Muroja'ah and recitation of daily prayers

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In the habituation of reading short surah, things that have been successfully implanted in this activity were carried out at the beginning of the lesson before starting the core activity. The implementation of this activity was carried out every day and was conducted together. Although it still needs to be guided by the teacher, it is necessary to have patience from the teacher. The recitation of muroja'ah and daily prayers was carried out with interesting activities, such as reciting verses in turn, reading short surah while walking hand in hand to form a train. This is so that children become accustomed to recite Quran. The teacher always explains that reciting the Quran or studying the holy Quran is very important. There is so much that can be learned starting from the pronunciation of the letters, the tajwid. And also the contents in each surah that are brought were always explained by the teacher in a simple and interesting way so that the child understood how to apply it in everyday life. The influence that the child gets is according to what I have observed and conveyed by the classroom teacher, namely becoming a good habituation for the child, namely the formation of a child's character who is religious, disciplined, diligent in studying, responsible to always recite the Quran and to always begin praying before doing something.

3) Congregational Dhuhr Prayer

All children must follow this prayer practice every day at the school prayer room. Although it still needs guidance from the teacher, and it requires the teacher's patience for children who are not yet orderly, these activities were running very well. The children practiced the prayer movements and their reading smoothly. Children who were less orderly, who were still running around when the prayers took place, can be well conditioned by the teacher. In the implementation of this activity the teacher familiarized the religious culture of students, namely the dhuhr prayer activities carried out every day. Before praying children must perform ablution first. The imam also has been scheduled. All practices of religious activities ranging from ablution, the practice of dhuhr prayer in congregation, were always guided and supervised by each class teacher so that the reading and movement are correct according to Islamic law.

4) Commemoration of Islamic holidays, such as the activities of Pondok

Romadhon during the fasting month, Halal bihalal during Eid al-Fitr, the celebration of Eid Al-Adha, Prayers for the Beginning and End of the Hijriyah Year, the celebration of Hijriyah New Year 1 Muharam, the commemoration of the Prophet's Birthday, and Isra' Mi'raj. The purpose of this routine activity is also to train children to cultivate religious character and respect for culture and traditions that exist from an early age.

DISCUSSION

Based on the presentation of data from the results of religious practice, the research findings can be explained as follows:

Pronunciation practice of Asma'ul Husna in strengthening the religious character of early childhood.

Islam is a religion whose teachings were given by Allah SWT, to humans through its prophet. Therefore, Islam is the religion of Allah that was brought by the prophets in every era that ended with the prophethood of Muhammad. If it is related to the practice of pronouncing Asma'ul Husna in strengthening the religious character of early childhood, it cannot be separated from the realm of education. Religion here refers to the process of educating students about Islam, it can be in the form of reciting Asma'ul Husna or other religious practices accustomed to in the school environment.

Muroja'ah and recitation of daily prayers.

The religious program is an effort by schools and teachers to develop the potential of students. This is to build a generation of Muslims who are faithful, pious and foster a religious spirit as the actualization of trust.

If it is related to the practice of murojaah and the reading of daily prayers in strengthening the religious character at the Al Asror Integrated Islamic Kindergarten, it is very relevant to be applied because with this practice it can develop the religious character of children making the generation of Muslims who are more faithful and cautious to get used to pray first before doing something. Characters prioritize Islam in all things.

Practicing Dhuhur in congregation

Prayer is essentially a means of communication between humans (Moslems) and Allah SWT which is composed of several words and deeds that begin with takbiratul ikhram and end with greetings, and in accordance with the terms and conditions that have been determined by syara '.

According to Mualifah, (2010: 12-17) that:

"Prayer is a pillar of religion for Muslims. You cannot become a Moslem if you have the courage to leave his pillar, which is prayer. Besides, prayer is also the first thing that must be responsible for in the hereafter ”.

Likewise with the Al Asror Integrated Islamic Kindergarten in implementing students 'religious programs, one of which is carrying out congregational dzuhur prayers at the school's mosque, to teach students to get used to carrying out practices that the Prophet has never abandoned, namely praying together. From here, it can be seen that it is very important to get used to prayer for all students, so that in their daily life they become accustomed to carrying out this core worship, namely salat. Prayer is the practice of various forms of worship in a series of prayer rituals (arranged) for each beautiful couple.

Practices of Commemoration of Islamic Religious Days

According to Suharsimi Arikunto (2010: 1-2), that the program is a planned activity, and therefore of course the planning is directed at achieving goals. Thus, the program has objectives and its success can be measured. It can be said that everyone who creates an activity program would want to know to what extent the program can be implemented. The achievement of these goals is measured with certain means and tools.

According to Marzuki (2015: 108), that: for the development of noble culture and character in schools, school programs are also needed which explicitly and in detail support the realization of this culture. These programs are designed to develop or familiarize students with everyday life, both in the experience of religious teachings and universal moral and ethical values.

If it is connected with the practice of commemorating the Islamic religious days in accordance with the purpose, through education that implements religious

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programs such as commemorating Islamic days, it can develop religious character, introduce Islamic culture, create good culture and character. Based on this viewpoint, in Al asror Kindergarten Tulungagung a religious program has been held to teach children about the history of Islam and Islamic figures who should be used as role models in behavior.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research and discussion, to instill and or strengthen religious character in early childhood at TKIT Al Asror, it was carried out through several religious practice activities, including:

1. Practice of pronouncing Asma'ul Husna,
2. Practice of Murojaah Short Surah,
3. Practicing Dhuhur Prayer in congregation and
4. The practice of commemorating Islamic days,

Based on these activities, several characters can also be formed in early childhood, including: responsibility, discipline, on time in prayer, hand in hand, being well-behaved, being polite, friendly, and honest.

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