



Child Character Formation Through Islamic Religious Education

Mochamad Agus Cholil *

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Grobogan, Indonesia

Email: mascholil517@gmail.com *

Abstract. *This research is driven by curiosity and public concerns about the diverse characters of children or individuals in Indonesia. Society holds high expectations for children to receive proper character education so that they develop into individuals with strong character, noble morals, and the ability to live in accordance with Islamic law. Given this situation, it is necessary to conduct a study by examining various examples from the community who are currently or have previously engaged in the process of educating their children. The researcher conducted surveys and interviews with local people, obtaining a wide range of diverse responses. To achieve these objectives, this study employs qualitative-descriptive research methods with literature review techniques. The results indicate that early character education is crucial, and selecting appropriate methods aligned with Islamic teachings helps children develop faith, knowledge, practice, broad insight, good citizenship, and noble character that benefit all of humanity.*

Keywords: *Education, Character Education, Islam.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a learning process that involves skill development and habit formation within a social group, passed down through generations via teaching. Essentially, education is an effort to develop individual potential and prepare them for life's various challenges. Therefore, education plays a crucial role in internalizing life values to shape one's character and personality positively (Parhan, 2018).

Education is considered ideal when it encompasses various dimensions, including intellectual, spiritual, and social aspects. Additionally, it must consider students' physical capacities and conditions to create effective synergy (Syam, 2016). Hence, all elements of education, including teacher development, learning environment regulation, student mental preparation, and comprehensive program planning, are essential for successful learning outcomes. Proper preparation and collaboration foster a conducive learning environment, positively influencing children's personalities.

A child's personality is significantly influenced by parenting patterns in daily life, both in the family and educational settings (Parhan & Kurniawan, 2020). Parents play a vital role in shaping children's character and must be wise in providing the appropriate upbringing. Effective parenting can harmonize with the child's environment, education, and home to create a personality rooted in strong religious values (Muthmainnah, 2012).

One critical aspect of children's education within the family and school environment is receiving proportional religious education aligned with their developmental stages. This is crucial because religious education forms the foundation for shaping children's character, personality, and way of thinking. The family environment serves as the first and foremost place for character development (Parhan & Kurniawan, 2020). Islamic spiritual values enable children to filter out negative behaviors and develop into religious individuals with noble character and good citizenship (Rufaedah, 2020).

Instilling spiritual values based on religion is an educational domain that families must prioritize. This strengthens children's moral foundations and provides a natural filter, fostering early awareness and spiritual strength (Tahang, 2010). The family's role in creating a conducive environment for instilling moral and spiritual values is essential for character formation (Azis, 2017). Thus, parents play a crucial role in shaping their children's personalities. Early religious education can serve as a primary pillar for character development based on Islamic values, fostering a generation with commendable morals (Perni, 2019).

Islamic education is a logical, systematic, and sometimes pragmatic effort to help children live according to their religious teachings (Djaelani, 2013b). For Muslim families, Islamic education is essential for children. According to Muhaimin (2012), Islamic education is an education system developed from fundamental values in the Qur'an and Sunnah. It serves as both a theoretical framework and a practical guide for achieving well-being in this world and the hereafter (Parhan & Sutedja, 2019).

Religious education in families is a process aimed at raising children to be morally, religiously, and socially responsible individuals. During adolescence, parental religious education helps reduce negative behaviors by instilling discipline early on. The prevalence of moral deviations among children highlights the insufficient emphasis on religious values from an early age. Parents' role in educating children includes prioritizing education, fostering creativity, and stimulating cognitive and social development (Novrinda et al., 2017).

Islam places great emphasis on moral and ethical development. Morality is considered a measure of faith, as Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) stated, "The most perfect believer in faith is the one with the best character" (Narrated by Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi). The integration of faith, knowledge, and practice should manifest in noble character throughout life (Alawi, 2019). Moreover, in Islam, etiquette and morality must be instilled through parental guidance and exemplary behavior.

Today, concerns about children's behavior are frequently expressed by parents, teachers, and child development professionals, particularly regarding children who are difficult to manage. Therefore, this study aims to explore the importance of religious values in Islamic education for shaping children's character. It is hoped that this research contributes valuable insights into child education based on spiritual values, enabling them to grow as individuals grounded in faith, knowledge, and noble character.

2. METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach and a survey method. Qualitative research is conducted by collecting, processing, analyzing, and interpreting data obtained through various techniques such as observation, interviews, content analysis, and other relevant methods for gathering information (Setyosari, 2016). The researcher conducted the study based on qualitative strategies, paradigms, and implementations. This approach aims to describe and explain an event, condition, or object related to specific variables, which are then quantified, elaborated with words, and deeply analyzed and interpreted.

Meanwhile, descriptive research is an approach that seeks to explain problem-solving based on available data, followed by data analysis and interpretation. This type of research can also be comparative and correlative. The goal of descriptive research is to systematically and factually address problems related to the facts and characteristics of the studied population (Hardjasujana & Ahmadslamet, 1999).

Data collection was carried out through a survey method by distributing questionnaires to respondents, specifically individuals who are married and have children. The sample of respondents was obtained by disseminating the questionnaire through a Google Form link. The purpose of this survey is to understand the significance of the role of Islam, according to respondents, in shaping children's character. Additionally, the Google Form link was utilized to gather parental perspectives on various contemporary issues, such as the increasing tendency of children to use harsh language when interacting with their peers, both directly and indirectly.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The survey results on the importance of Islamic education in shaping children's character were obtained from responses to the questionnaire distributed to parents, with a total of 22 respondents. The questionnaire consisted of five questions. First, "Do you think Islam is important in shaping a child's character? Why?" Second, "Do you believe Islamic educational institutions, such as TPA (Islamic learning centers for children), contribute to this process?"

Why?" Third, "How often do you see or hear a child using harsh language or violating established norms and rules?" Fourth, "What do you think causes a child to use harsh language or violate norms?" Fifth, "Do you have any suggestions or recommendations regarding Islamic education in character development?"

Based on the responses to the first question, the data indicate that Islam plays a crucial role in shaping children's character. Islam is considered a fundamental form of education that significantly influences a child's future. Islamic education is also vital in cultivating good character and personality in children, especially in the era of globalization. Parents are encouraged to emphasize Islamic teachings in their children's education. Instilling morals and ethics from an early age is essential, as children tend to imitate what they observe, making it easier to shape their future personalities positively.

This aligns with the Prophet Muhammad's hadith, which states, "I was sent to perfect good character" (Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim). This implies that morals and ethics are fundamental aspects of Islamic teachings, following faith, knowledge, and Shariah. By incorporating moral education early, children will develop strong humanitarian values and noble character (*akhlak karimah*). Consequently, they will grow into individuals with impeccable morals, open to virtuous values, and resistant to negative influences (Setiawan, 2017). Morality in religion is an inseparable part of human life, distinguishing them from other creatures on earth.

Morality is a crucial aspect of humanity's role as the caliph (leader) on earth. With noble character, Allah entrusts humans with the responsibility of managing the world and its resources wisely. Humans are endowed with intellect to distinguish between truth and falsehood, good and evil, and permissible and forbidden actions (Mansur, 2000). In Islamic teachings, children's moral excellence is significantly influenced by parental guidance and education. This education starts even before marriage, continues through pregnancy, and extends into adulthood. Parents play an essential role in nurturing children holistically—mentally, spiritually, physically, psychologically, socially, and educationally. Additionally, parents are responsible for instilling and internalizing religious and moral values to foster positive character development (A'yun et al., 2015).

Regarding the second question, the data reveal that Islamic educational institutions such as TPA contribute significantly to children's character development. These institutions provide additional knowledge and education that may not be available at home. At TPA, children also learn to socialize within their environment, interact with peers, and form friendships. Character

formation in children is a deliberate and rigorous effort to prepare them with good personalities through structured and well-planned educational programs (Husin, 2016).

The family serves as the primary educational unit, as it is the first and foremost school for a child's growth and development. The family plays a crucial role in strengthening religious beliefs, instilling moral values, setting good examples, and providing the necessary knowledge and skills as a foundation for interacting with society. Children are both a blessing and a trust that requires proper education from an early age (Erzad, 2018).

Early childhood education should align with religious teachings, particularly Islam. Islamic values are universal and serve as a mercy to all of creation, as their goodness and truth are comprehensive and global (Parhan, Islamy, et al., 2020). The goal of Islamic education from an early age is to provide children with a comprehensive understanding of Islamic teachings, which will be reflected in their social interactions, behavior, and daily habits. When Islamic values serve as the foundation for character development, children's actions will align with Islamic principles (Djaelani, 2013a). Thus, morality should be instilled through various means, such as reading and studying the Quran, fasting (both obligatory and voluntary), performing prayers (both obligatory and voluntary), and emphasizing the importance of maintaining strong relationships with family and the community. Children who are accustomed to these practices will find it easier to develop positive habits that shape their character (Djaelani, 2013b).

Childhood is a crucial period for instilling values, particularly those based on religious teachings. The ages between 0 and 6 years are considered the "golden age" for cognitive development, during which children absorb information optimally. During this phase, significant qualitative changes occur, including brain and physical growth, which enhance cognitive functions (Towoliu et al., 2021). Child development is closely linked to physical growth, whereas cognitive development pertains to the functionality of these physical changes.

Therefore, character education should be instilled as early as possible, as it is an integral part of Islamic teachings. Islamic morality provides guidelines for distinguishing between right and wrong, good and evil, and truth and falsehood, all based on divine teachings in the Quran and the exemplary practices of the Prophet Muhammad (Sari, 2017). When children are consistently taught and accustomed to these moral values, their actions will naturally align with Islamic principles. What is deemed good by Allah's law inherently possesses beneficial and righteous qualities, while wrongdoing leads to harmful consequences for individuals and society.

Regarding the third question, survey results indicate that 64% of parents frequently hear their children using harsh language or violating social norms, while 27% report experiencing this very often. This finding underscores the necessity of instilling Islamic education from an early age, beginning within the family environment, as the family serves as the child's first and most influential learning environment. Family education plays a vital role in preventing behaviors that contradict Islamic principles. The distribution of these responses is illustrated in the diagram below.

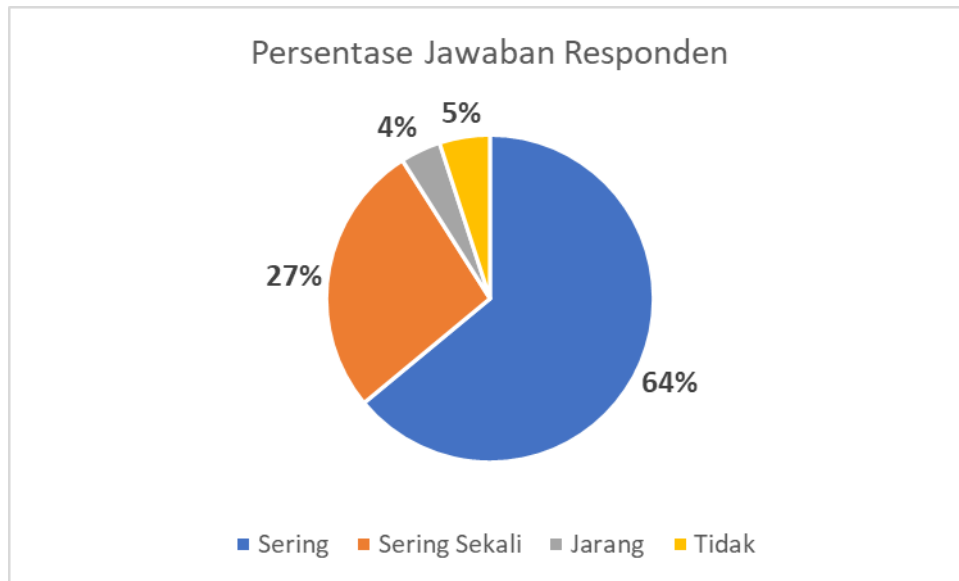


Figure 1. Diagram illustrating the frequency of parents hearing their children use harsh language.

Islamic education, instilled from an early age, is a conscious and structured effort aimed at preparing children physically and spiritually for holistic development (Sukring, 2013). Similarly, Ramayulis (2012) states that Islamic education involves guiding children's physical and spiritual growth through wisdom, nurturing, supervision, instruction, training, and direction in accordance with Islamic teachings.

4. CONCLUSION

Early education and character formation are vital as they significantly impact a child's future. Various aspects must be considered in character development, one of which is Islamic religious education. Many parents believe that instilling Islamic values in children from an early age is crucial because it provides a strong religious foundation based on the Qur'an and Hadith. The environment also plays a major role in shaping a child's character, as it consists of diverse individuals. If the environment is not conducive, it negatively affects character

development. Therefore, it is crucial for parents and children to be selective in choosing and shielding themselves from negative influences.

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