

AFFIRMING MORAL EXCELLENCE: STRENGTHENING CHARACTER EDUCATION THROUGH HABITUATION AND INNOVATIVE LEARNING MANAGEMENT

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Abstract :

This study investigates the positive impact of the management of strengthening moral character education through habituation programs and educational learning in early childhood on their moral development. This approach is designed to reinforce noble values and ethics in children's daily lives at an early stage of development. The research site was conducted at Al Munir Kalianget Islamic Kindergarten Banyuglugur Situbondo. The research methodology uses a qualitative research approach of the case study type involving the implementation of the Habituation Program specifically designed to improve the understanding and application of moral values. Data was collected through observations, interviews, and questionnaires given to teachers and parents of children involved in the program. The results showed a significant improvement in early childhood children's understanding and moral behaviour after participating in the Habituation Program and educational learning. The collaboration between the school environment and the family proves its effectiveness in forming a strong character and high morale in children. This finding has important implications in the context of early childhood character education. It highlights the strategic role of management in strengthening moral character education in shaping the next generation who are qualified, with integrity, and full of responsibility. This research contributes to the practical and theoretical understanding of increasing children's moral excellence through integrated character education interventions.

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui dampak positif pengelolaan penguatan pendidikan karakter moral melalui program pembiasaan dan pembelajaran pendidikan pada anak usia dini terhadap perkembangan moral mereka. Pendekatan ini dirancang untuk memperkuat nilai-nilai luhur dan etika dalam kehidupan sehari-hari anak pada tahap awal perkembangannya. Lokasi penelitian dilakukan di TK Islam Al Munir Kalianget Banyuglugur Situbondo. Metodologi penelitian menggunakan pendekatan penelitian kualitatif dengan jenis studi kasus yang

melibatkan pelaksanaan Program Pembiasaan yang dirancang khusus untuk meningkatkan pemahaman dan penerapan nilai-nilai moral. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan kuesioner yang diberikan kepada guru dan orang tua anak yang terlibat dalam program. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya peningkatan yang signifikan pada pemahaman dan perilaku moral anak usia dini setelah mengikuti Program Pembiasaan dan pembelajaran edukatif. Kolaborasi antara lingkungan sekolah dan keluarga terbukti efektif dalam membentuk karakter kuat dan semangat kerja yang tinggi pada anak. Temuan ini mempunyai implikasi penting dalam konteks pendidikan karakter anak usia dini. Hal ini menyoroti peran strategis manajemen dalam penguatan pendidikan karakter moral dalam membentuk generasi penerus yang berkualitas, berintegritas, dan penuh tanggung jawab. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap pemahaman praktis dan teoritis peningkatan keunggulan moral anak melalui intervensi pendidikan karakter terpadu.

INTRODUCTION

Management is a strategy to achieve a goal. Management has nine essential tasks in achieving strategic management, namely mission formulation, internal condition analysis, assessing external environments, choice analysis, profit identification, long-term goal planning, developing long and annual goals, implementing choice strategies and evaluation (Nurvita et al., 2020; Nurhadi, 2020). With programmatic management in a sequential manner, an institution can improve the quality and quality that can optimize the programs carried out.

The world of education requires strategic management in setting strategies that are made and planned to be achieved. Through management, it is expected to realize a quality institution (Karna, 2022). In the general community, the quality of education can be measured through graduation. Quality schools have knowledgeable graduates with skills, values, and a demonstrable competitive attitude (Siswanto, 2020). The function of education is to develop the ability and shape the character and civilization of a dignified nation in order to educate the nation's life, have faith, be devoted to God, have a noble character, be knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become a democratic and responsible citizen. To realize this goal, extra attention is needed to cultivate character education, which is carried out at every primary education level.

Character problems are one of the problems that have always been the concern of every nation, both in developed and developing countries (Cahyono, 2021). In this era, the Indonesian nation has great enemies, namely poverty, ignorance, corruption, lack of law enforcement, student brawls, pragmatism, and instant culture that are increasingly strengthened. The number of deviations and negative behaviours in our society must be observed together. These problems arise because of the fading of the values of the nation's character. Character is the values of human behaviour related to God Almighty, oneself, fellow humans, the environment and nationality manifested in thoughts, attitudes, feelings, words, and deeds based on religious norms, laws, manners, culture and customs (Michael Johan. H Louk, 2022).

Character is not just taught but must be instilled and grown through habituation (Nurhadi, 2020). Character education for early childhood is intended to instil good values so that they can become habits when they grow up or at the next level of education (Cahyaningrum et al., 2020). By producing a generation with character, an institution has balanced the inequality of the times, which is now increasingly damaging the morals and behaviour of the nation's next generation.

Strengthening Character Education is a continuation and revitalization of the national character education movement that began in 2010. Character education or moral education in this period needs to be implemented to overcome the moral crisis currently sweeping this country (Maisaro et al., 2021). Character education should be instilled as early as possible in children. Especially education based on religion and morals. These two educations will be the foundation for children's lives. Early childhood education is instrumental in channelling children's talents and interests. In early childhood education, children can explore themselves and prepare for education, and the next life is passed on to them (Hasanah & Munastiwi, 2021).

The increasing problem of moral cases at the adolescent level yearly is undoubtedly a big challenge for all parties. Moral character education has become one of the solutions that can be done to reduce the growth of mental conflict in children. Therefore, moral character education needs to be done as early as possible. One of the characters that must be instilled today is the character of *akhlakul karimah*, which is packaged in a program by producing an exemplary habituation program because it helps build children's awareness of the causality relationship, namely the existence of God as the creator and his relationship with his creation as a servant. In the context of the school curriculum, strengthening character education is needed to deliver students to become people who believe and fear God Yang Maha Esa, have noble morals, are always orderly and disciplined based on existing regulations, have courtesy to teachers and parents and care for their environment (Khotimah 2016).

Here, character education is widely promoted to realize and instil character in the nation's solid/sturdy young generation. They hope they will not be shaken by the conditions of the age of both globalization and modernization that accompany momentary worldly pleasures and sacrifice future pleasures as a lasting future. In this case, educational institutions or madrasahs should be pioneers of awareness in cultivating character education (Damanik & Sumarni, 2020). The development of the times from time to time has resulted in many changes in life in society. Perceptions, situations and conditions change with the development of the times (Sobri, 2023). Morals influenced by association continuously erode moral character by following the flow of the times.

So, the growth of character education is expected to overcome problems not easily realized by this new phenomenon. This phenomenon requires special handling because early childhood growth and development must focus on laying the right foundations (Zamroni et al., 2021). Minimizing adverse impacts requires character management, especially in early childhood. Early childhood is unique and requires stimulation and management (Sandrawita, 2022).

The problems that occur in the field are in Al Munir Kalianget Banyuglugur Situbondo Islamic Kindergarten, the declining moral character of students is characterized by a decreased level of discipline, indifference to friends who need help, lack of interest in participating in religious activities, this is due to various factors, and the dominant trigger factor is the impact of Strengthening of less dominant role models and lack of proficiency in character cultivation.

To anticipate the inequality of character, efforts are needed to overcome novelty in stimulating character education for students. Islamic Kindergarten teacher Al Munir Kalianget Banyuglugur Situbondo made a new management development by involving parents/parents in implementing character cultivation as early as possible through an excellent program. The excellent program is good moral habituation, implemented by playing methods.

Therefore, this study refers to several previous studies that can be used as references and comparisons in research, namely Trimuliana & Dhieni, (2019). Education is the most systematic and effective medium to strengthen the character-building of students. Therefore, character education should be a joint commitment of all parties in educational institutions and parents. The research conducted by Rosikum, (2021) said the family environment contributed 83.0% to the formation of student character. The family has a vital role in the formation of akhlakul karma. The family will shape the character of students and will affect their environment.

Furthermore, Syarifah et al., (2021) conveyed that parental involvement has a vital role in character education because it contributes to the provision of a safe and stable environment, intellectual stimulation, parent-child discussion, a good model of constructive social and educational values and high aspirations related to personal fulfilment and good citizenship. Then Wahyuni & Putra, (2020) revealed that there is cooperation between teachers and parents by being active in every meeting held by the school, fostering children through Islamic education, planting tawhid, holding outing class programs, getting used to praying dhuha, gathering with students' families, activating communication books, being examples of positive habits for daily activities. This effort effectively forms students who are more mature and responsible for shaping Islamic character.

Widodo & Nursaptini, (2020) also emphasized that character education can be provided in the educational environment through examples and parental support. The example in the context of this study is, of course, the example of the teacher and the closest people in the child's environment. The example of teachers plays a vital role because teachers are central figures in education, so all their actions and words become role models for all school stakeholders (Septaningsih et al., 2020). Examples provide examples and serve as moral reinforcement for students in behaving and behaving (Sihotang, 2019).

From several descriptions, researchers say that character education can be stimulated by cooperation between parents and educators. The expected character will be created by establishing good cooperation between educators and parents. What is the research focus on managing habituation programs at Al Munir Kalianget Islamic Kindergarten Banyuglugur Situbondo?

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses qualitative research methods, including a case study approach that examines the state of an object naturally by conducting research that intends to describe and analyze the problems that occur. The research location is the Islamic Kindergarten Al Munir Kalianget Banyuglugur Situbondo institution with data collection techniques including in-depth interviews, observations and collection of documents related to the research topic. Informant sources were obtained from the principal, curriculum, public relations, teachers and parents of Al Munir Kalianget Islamic Kindergarten Banyuglugur Situbondo.

Furthermore, observations were made in four meetings to observe directly about the proper management in overcoming the strengthening of character education through good moral habituation programs. The latter analyzes documents that can corroborate the results of the study. Data related to the research were collected, then data selection was carried out, then the presentation of research data, and the final stage was concluded. Through the stages, researchers can analyze and conclude the research conducted.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Habituation Program Planning

Planning habituation programs and innovative learning are critical steps in shaping the character of early childhood children through the Management of Strengthening Akhlakul Karimah Character Education. This process includes several stages carefully designed to achieve the goal of character building. As stated by the principal, the planning of the habituation program is a critical stage to realize the Management of Strengthening Akhlakul Karimah Character Education at Al Munir Islamic Kindergarten, considering that in this increasingly modern era, morals are increasingly eroded.

School program planning has many significant benefits in managing and improving the quality of education. Program planning assists schools in formulating clear and specific educational goals. Thus, schools can focus more on efforts to achieve these goals (Arifin et al., 2023). Program planning helps schools to identify and allocate resources efficiently. This includes determining budgets, allocating teaching staff, and optimal use of facilities. By planning educational programs, schools can develop effective learning strategies, relevant curricula, and teaching methods that fit students' needs. This can contribute to improving the quality of teaching and learning (Maisyaroh et al., 2023).

The program planning process involves a series of mature and strategic steps to support the program effectively to achieve goals (Bora et al., 2023). In launching the program, an internal meeting was conducted, as revealed by the curriculum section, and all school components held an internal meeting in a meeting room. Our team of habituation program planners gathered to detail the steps to create a meaningful character education experience for early childhood in Al Munir Islamic Kindergarten. First of all, we focus on determining the core values we want to instil in the minds and hearts of these golden agemen. We recognize the importance of choosing values reflecting cultural identity and our

community's desired moral values. After ensuring a solid foundation of values, the next step is to design a program to bring those values into an indispensable part of children's daily lives.

The school's public relations also emphasized that preparing program plans includes various habituation and learning activities. Habituation activities include 5S programs (smiles, greetings, courtesy, courtesy), religious programs, and garbage collection programs. Meanwhile, learning activities range from moral stories to interactive games and creative arts supporting character-building. All components of the school strive to create fun and meaningful experiences, ensuring that children can internalize these values through hands-on experience.

The information was also obtained through group A teacher informants that the strengthening of karakul Karima character education through habituation programs in early childhood was also carried out by involving parents or guardians of students. In contrast, teachers were the key to pouring character education. The school component realizes that character education is not only the school's responsibility but also a cooperation between the school and the family. Therefore, the school component integrates participatory elements in the program, invites parents to engage in activities and supports children's understanding of those values at home.

The school also facilitates this activity by training teachers to ensure they have a deep understanding of the management concept, strengthening Akhlakul Karimah character education, and implementing it well in the classroom. By preparing teachers as facilitators of character learning, the principal believes that the children's learning experience will be more optimal. Emphasized by the headmaster, Our team also established a monitoring and evaluation team responsible for monitoring the program's progress. We recognize that periodic evaluations are vital in identifying successes and necessary improvements. Thus, we can make adjustments and improve the program continuously.

During the planning process, all components of the school felt the spirit and determination to create a young generation who were not only academically intelligent but also of noble character. The entire team believes that careful and directed habituation program planning is a solid foundation to shape the character of early childhood children positively and sustainably.

Strengthening Character Education

Al Munir Islamic Kindergarten School is committed to forming children's character through several steps. The management of the Akhlakul Karimah character education strengthening program is implemented at the Al Munir Islamic Kindergarten institution with several steps, including;

Role Model Excellence

Exemplary becomes a concrete manifestation of positive values and attitudes in one's actions and behaviour. It is not just words or concepts but an actual practice that inspires and motivates others. Exemplary involves consistency between what is said and done, creating inspiring examples and guiding others towards good and success (Sujatha et al., 2023). A role model is

someone who is considered an example or example because of his attitudes, actions, and achievements that are respected and recognized by others. A role model inspires and guides others, especially those who want to succeed or develop positive character (Siahaan et al., 2023)

In the planning, an internal meeting was discussed procuring a character education program for akhlakul karimah. This resulted in a consensus that all school components had agreed to synergize in supporting school programs by making all components become role model aspects that students can exemplify.

In Al Munir Islamic Kindergarten, the example of role models is a strong foundation for strengthening moral character education for students. The school's teachers, staff, and religious leaders actively act as role models to guide children in instilling Islamic moral and ethical values. As stated by group B teachers, the teachers try to create an atmosphere that is always full of joy and enthusiasm for learning. Each day begins with bright smiles from teachers who teach and become role models for children. They bring positive energy and warmth as an example in carrying out the teachings of Islam.

The accompanying teacher of group A also emphasized that all components in Al Munir Islamic Kindergarten provide striking examples. The principal, teachers, and staff not only teach children about the importance of akhlakul karimah, but also become role models in everyday life. By frequently demonstrating discipline in dress, modesty, and concern for others, all components of the school provide concrete examples of how Islamic values can be implemented in real life.

The 5S program is one of the character education innovations implemented in Al Munir Islamic Kindergarten. All components apply 5S, namely smiles, greetings, and courtesy in behaviour from welcome to return. Discipline that is applied daily becomes a habit embedded in students. Not just teachers, principals are actively involved in maintaining attitudes, thus creating a culture where everyone has a 5S attitude.

The religious program at this school is not only a routine activity but also involves religious leaders who set a profound example. Ustadz and Ustadzah are often present at school to give lectures and ta'lim assemblies with children. Through Islamic stories and hands-on teaching, he provides concrete examples of how to involve religious values in every aspect of life.

Parents at Al Munir Islamic Kindergarten also act as role models. In each parent-teacher meeting, they discuss the children's academic development and how to support character-building at home. Parents actively participate in school programs, creating a consistent environment between school and home in shaping moral values.

Thus, Al Munir Islamic Kindergarten proves that role models are not just rhetoric but also become the main foundation in shaping children's characters. Through concrete examples, this school's teachers, staff, religious leaders, and parents have a profound positive impact in shaping the next generation with charity.

Habituation and Innovative Learning Programs

The habituation program can stimulate students to understand and practice their understanding of the subject matter and solve problems found during the learning process (Saparia & Fuadi, 2022). The habituation program is a learning model that applies habituation to students continuously and programmatically. Through this habituation, they eventually become able and accustomed, just like discipline, where discipline will be embedded in students if applied continuously (Arief, 2023).

The principal said that habituation at Al Munir Islamic Kindergarten involves habituation and learning activities so that the child's character can be managed and formed as early as possible. The habituation has been arranged and scheduled by the agreement of school components so that implementation is more straightforward. Several activities to strengthen moral character education were implemented in Al Munir Islamic Kindergarten as a strengthening of moral excellence carried out by the principal and all components of the school. The following activities are implemented in this institution;

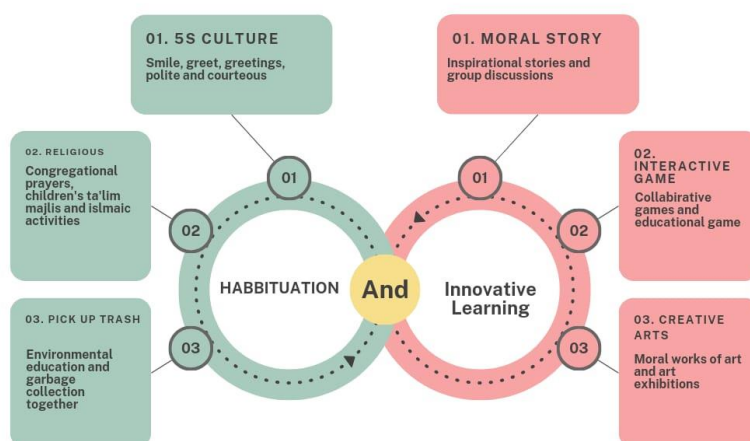


Figure. Habituation and Innovative Learning Programs

Culture of Smile, Greeting, Greeting, Courtesy, Courtesy (5S)

Smiles: Every day starts with smiles from teachers and school staff, creating a friendly and positive environment. Say hello: Children are taught to greet classmates and teachers in a friendly manner, building good interpersonal relationships. Greetings: Applying polite greetings teaches children about the importance of greeting respectfully. Polite: School teachers and staff set an example in speaking and behaving politely, teaching good etiquette to children. Courtesy: Cultivate courtesy and respect for the opinions of others, creating an environment full of mutual respect.

Religious Programs

Congregational Prayer: Involving children in congregational prayer at school is like habituating dhuha prayer, familiarizing them with carrying out religious obligations together. Child Ta'lim Assembly: Holds a special ta'lim assembly for children to learn about religious values and moral goodness. Islamic

activities: Integrate Islamic values in daily activities, such as reading short verses, Asma ul husna, hadiths of daily prayer and Islamic nasyid.

Garbage Collection Program

Environmental Education: Teaching children about the importance of keeping the environment clean through education and lectures. **Collective Waste Collection:** Involving students and teachers in garbage collection activities, creating awareness of environmental responsibility.

Moral Story

Moral Story

Inspirational Stories: Using moral stories that provide lessons about kindness, honesty, and empathy. **Group Discussion:** Encourage children to have group discussions about moral lessons that can be drawn from the story.

Interactive Games

Collaborative Play: Using interactive play that encourages cooperation, honesty, and positive communication. **Educational Games:** Develop games that teach moral values like honesty and togetherness.

Creative Arts:

Moral Artwork: Engaging children in creative arts activities that express moral values through paintings, crafts, or small plays. **Art Exhibitions:** Organize moral art exhibitions to showcase children's works and motivate them to continue developing positive creativity.

With a combination of positive habituation programs and deep learning activities, Al Munir Islamic Kindergarten forms a young generation who are academically intelligent and have a superior character based on akhlakul karimah. These programs create an environment that supports and motivates children to become responsible, empathetic, and high-integrity individuals.

Parent Involvement

Engagement refers to active participation or attachment to an activity, project, or relationship. It covers various aspects, both physically and emotionally. Engagement can occur in various contexts, including the workplace, education, family, and community (Valentyna et al., 2023). The involvement of parents in children's education significantly impacts children's development and character building. In Al Munir Islamic Kindergarten, the involvement of parents is not just a formal responsibility or obligation. However, it is considered an active partner in forming a generation of character.

Based on information from resource persons, namely the principal and teachers, the school held a parent-teacher meeting at the beginning of each school year, which parents and teachers attended. This meeting is to provide information related to academic programs and as a forum for dialogue to discuss the development of children's character and ethics. Parents are invited to participate in extracurricular activities like arts, sports, and social activities. Through this participation, they not only support the development of children's skills but also convey the message that character education takes place in schools and the family environment.

The school also implements an open-door policy, inviting parents to visit classes and see the children's learning process first-hand. This involvement allows parents to understand better the teaching methods and learning activities

implemented in the school. In addition, the school conducts special activities involving parents, such as social service events, family day celebrations, and educational workshops for parents. Through active participation in these activities, parents feel their involvement is valued and are directly involved in shaping a positive atmosphere at school.

Parents at Al Munir Islamic Kindergarten also have access to a digital platform that provides information about their children's academic development and character. Thus, they can continue to communicate with teachers and better understand how they can support children's character education at home.

The open attitude and warm welcome from the school create an environment that supports and invites the participation of parents. Their involvement is as monitors or spectators and as active partners in providing their children with moral support and character education. Thus, Al Munir Islamic Kindergarten builds a strong synergy between schools and families to achieve the common goal of forming a superior generation and charity.

Follow-up Evaluation

The principal is responsible for completing the program by seeing whether the program that has been implemented is successful or requires improvement (Zamroni et al., 2021). The next step in seeing the program's success is to conduct a follow-up evaluation. Efforts to evaluate inequalities must be corrected or maximized (Rozi et al., 2022). This follow-up evaluation is a stage of improvement in making decisions that use a set of measurement results and refer to predetermined goals.

It was conveyed by group A teachers that evaluation activities carried out by all programs and components involved were carried out to improve program implementation techniques or increase competition with the components involved, such as teachers or employees. This evaluation is not done to drop the menu to correct deficiencies or errors so that the *desired feedback* results are achieved optimally.

It was affirmed by the curriculum section, which said that if inequality is found, the principal makes improvements by confirming with the relevant parties and then deliberating to find better results. The principal of Al Munir Islamic Kindergarten prioritizes deliberation to respect all opinions of school components so that we are more comfortable voicing our aspirations for the school's progress.

on interviews with several informants, the follow-up evaluation was carried out not solely to provide reprimands or sanctions but to provide improvements with various agreed training. With this evaluation, schools are better prepared to regenerate the strengthening of moral excellence in management, strengthening character education *akhlakul karimah* through habituation and innovative learning.

Assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of a program in an activity is very important. Follow-up evaluation becomes essential feedback and information for evaluators to overcome existing shortcomings; this can be used

as a reference for further decision-making so that the run program produces maximum results.

CONCLUSION

Strengthening moral excellence through management and strengthening moral character education through habituation and innovative learning is a holistic approach that has proven successful in shaping children's character. Integrating habituation programs and innovative learning creates a strong synergy in shaping children's character. Habituation provides a consistent foundation, while innovative learning provides an engaging and meaningful learning experience. Akhlakul Karimah character education is the main motor in moral strengthening. Early habituation and innovative learning become concrete containers for transferring positive values and morality to children. Innovative learning involving creativity and interactivity positively impacts the understanding and acceptance of moral values. This approach creates a fun and memorable learning experience. The role models of role models, including teachers and religious leaders, are crucial elements in shaping children's character. They teach and practice the moral values of karimah in everyday life. Parental involvement through habituation programs and innovative learning is an important aspect. The synergy between school and family creates a holistic environment for forming resilient character. Thus, the concept of strengthening moral excellence through managing moral character education through habituation and innovative learning confirms that holistic character education is the key to forming a future superior, ethical, and competitive generation.

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