

Instilling Islamic character in early childhood through Quranic learning: a phenomenological study

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Abstract. Character education in early childhood is an effort to foster students to develop all the potential of students in exploring understanding and instilling attitudes and behaviors into habits so that these values are embedded in the souls of students until adulthood. Therefore, this study aims to determine how to instill character in early childhood through learning the Qur'an. The research method used is qualitative with a phenomenological approach. Data collection techniques use observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis techniques are used through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, drawing conclusions, and verification. The study results show that implementing character education based on the Qur'an can effectively shape children's personalities with good character, emphasizing monotheism, morals, and worship. Educators' systematic approach and mature learning concept planning have been proven to play a significant role in the success of character education. Teachers who succeed in instilling Islamic values such as honesty, politeness, and manners in the daily lives of their students can create a young generation that is not only intelligent but also has noble morals.

Keywords: Education, Islamic Character, Al-Qur'an

Abstrak. Pendidikan karakter pada anak usia dini merupakan usaha pembinaan peserta didik untuk mengembangkan seluruh potensi yang dimiliki peserta didik dalam menggali pemahaman, penanaman sikap, dan perilaku menjadi suatu kebiasaan sehingga nilai-nilai tersebut melekat dalam jiwa peserta didik hingga dewasa. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana penanaman karakter pada anak usia dini melalui pembelajaran Al-Qur'an. Pendekatan penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan metode fenomenologi. Teknik Pengumpulan data menggunakan observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Teknik analisis data melalui tahapan: reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan dan verifikasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan pendidikan karakter yang berbasis Al-Qur'an secara efektif dapat membentuk pribadi anak yang berkarakter baik, dengan penekanan pada tauhid, akhlak, dan ibadah. Pendekatan sistematis dan perencanaan konsep pembelajaran yang matang oleh pendidik terbukti berperan signifikan dalam keberhasilan pendidikan karakter. Guru yang berhasil menanamkan nilai-nilai Islami seperti kejujuran, sopan santun, dan adab dalam keseharian anak didik, mampu menciptakan generasi muda yang tidak hanya cerdas, tetapi juga berakhlak mulia.

Kata Kunci : Pendidikan, Karakter Islam, Al-Qur'an

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Introduction

Education is a long-term investment that has a significant impact on the future of a nation; when carried out effectively, education can create a knowledgeable, competitive society capable of facing global challenges in the future (Ilyasa et al. 2024; Napitupulu and Situmorang 2022; Rambe, Dwietama, et al. 2024). Early childhood education (PAUD) serves as the primary foundation in shaping the character and personality of children, which will determine the direction of their development in the future (Latief 2020; Rahardja, Ilyasa, et al. 2024). At this stage, children are in a critical phase where they are highly susceptible to the influence of their environment and the learning experiences they receive (Dian Andesta Bujuri 2018; Rahardja, Fahrudin, et al. 2024; Rambe, Supriadi, et al. 2024). Therefore, it is important to ensure that education at this stage focuses not only on cognitive aspects but also on the formation of moral values and character. This statement is reinforced by various alarming facts, where children have already become involved in criminal activities. Among these facts is what was conveyed by the Head of LPKA Class II Jakarta, stating that 83 children were involved in cases of brawls and drug-related crimes (Agustino 2024). Additionally, the 2020 SPPA Implementation Report presents data as of August 27, 2023, indicating that 933 children are facing legal issues and have been detained across Indonesia, with the majority located in North Sulawesi (Ratri and Sidik 2024). A similar narrative was shared by the National Legal Development Agency, which noted that cases of child and student criminality have been increasing in Indonesia (Humas 2023). Given these worrying facts, the instilling of character and morality from an early age becomes a crucial matter that must be addressed by all supporting elements, including in education. In the context of Islamic education, the early instilling of Islamic character through Quranic learning is one of the most important approaches to shaping a generation with noble character (Adawiyah, Rahardja, and Hasibuan 2024; Akmal et al. 2024).

The Quran, as the primary source of Islamic teachings, contains universal values that can serve as a guide in character formation (Ayu et al. 2023; Rudi Ahmad Suryadi 2022). Through Quranic learning, children are not only introduced to religious teachings but are also taught to internalize these values in their daily lives (Yusuf 2021). Pertiwi Early Childhood Education (PAUD), as an educational institution committed to the development of children's character, has implemented this approach by emphasizing the importance of Quranic learning as one of the main methods in instilling Islamic values in early childhood.

The Quranic learning approach at PAUD Pertiwi is designed to be developmentally appropriate for young children. Starting from the introduction of the hijaiyah letters to the memorization of short surahs, each stage of learning is designed to ensure that children can learn in an enjoyable and developmentally suitable way. With an interactive and participatory approach, children are encouraged to actively engage in the learning process and are motivated to develop a love for the Quran from an early age.

The instilling of Islamic character through Quranic learning at PAUD Pertiwi not only focuses on academic aspects but also on the formation of attitudes and behaviors. Children are taught to practice values such as honesty, patience, and respect in their daily interactions, both at home and in the school environment. Thus, Quranic learning becomes not only a means of religious education but also a tool for shaping strong character and noble morals. The success of instilling Islamic character in early childhood is also greatly influenced by the involvement of parents. PAUD Pertiwi recognizes the importance of synergy between school and family in

educating children. Therefore, effective communication between teachers and parents is always encouraged to ensure that the character education provided at school can be continued and reinforced at home. This collaborative approach aims to create a consistent learning environment that supports the holistic development of children's character.

However, the instilling of Islamic character through Quranic learning at PAUD Pertiwi is not without challenges. The development of technology and the strong influence of media often serve as distractions that can hinder the learning process. To address this, PAUD Pertiwi strives to continuously innovate in the teaching methods used, by incorporating technology positively into the teaching and learning process, as well as instilling a critical attitude toward external influences that do not align with Islamic values. In addition to external challenges, there are also internal challenges such as varying levels of acceptance and the children's ability to understand the material being taught. Therefore, PAUD Pertiwi applies a flexible and individualized learning approach, where each child is treated as a unique individual with different needs and abilities. This ensures that every child is given the opportunity to develop according to their potential, without neglecting the fundamental principles of Islamic character education.

The importance of instilling Islamic character through Quranic learning at PAUD Pertiwi is also supported by various studies that show religious education provided from an early age can form a strong moral foundation in children. Children who grow up with a solid foundation of Islamic values tend to have the ability to make good decisions and act in accordance with religious teachings in various life situations. As a result, they not only become academically successful children but also individuals who contribute positively to society.

In an era of globalization, filled with moral and ethical challenges, the instilling of Islamic character in early childhood becomes increasingly relevant. PAUD Pertiwi is committed to continuously developing teaching methods that can effectively and enjoyably instill Islamic values, so that children can grow into a generation that is not only intelligent but also possesses noble character. This commitment is realized through an integrative curriculum that not only teaches knowledge but also instills spiritual values that will guide their lives.

Ultimately, the importance of instilling Islamic character through Quranic learning at PAUD Pertiwi not only impacts the individual development of children but also the moral development of society as a whole. Children who are equipped with Islamic values from an early age are expected to grow into a generation that is capable of maintaining and practicing Islamic teachings in their daily lives. Therefore, Quranic learning at PAUD Pertiwi plays a vital role in shaping the character of the nation based on religious values. For this reason, this study aims to examine in depth the strategies and methods applied by PAUD Pertiwi in instilling Islamic character in early childhood through Quranic learning. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of effective character education models, particularly within the context of Islamic education in Indonesia.

Method

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method. This method focuses on research conducted in the field to directly understand the phenomenon (field research) with a phenomenological approach. The aim of this method is to describe how a person's life experiences are generally understood within the context of concepts and phenomena occurring in the field. In other words, this study seeks to understand and explain the meaning of life experiences related to the phenomenon being studied, based on observations and analysis at the scene (Sugiyono 2023).

This research was conducted at PAUD Pertiwi in Wonorejo village, Sungai Sentang, Kualuh Hilir, North Labuhanbatu, North Sumatra. The study took place from July 22 to 27, 2024, during the odd semester of the 2024/2025 academic year.

The data used in this study consists of two types: primary data and secondary data. Primary data is obtained directly from sources in the field, such as the school principal, teachers, and students. In this research, primary data is used to gather information regarding the instilling of Islamic character in early childhood through Quranic learning at PAUD Pertiwi. Data collection techniques in this study include direct observation, interviews with respondents, and the collection of relevant documents, to observe directly, explore deeper information, and obtain valid and concrete physical evidence based on field conditions, which will be carried out during interviews to gather further information related to the research. Documentation is done as proof that the research has been conducted at the school.

The data presentation technique in this study involves the use of direct observation results in the field, as well as quotations from literature, journals, and other documents. The collected data will serve as guidance and references for this journal, based on expert opinions and various relevant media sources to assist in the process of writing the journal.

Data analysis is conducted using the Miles and Huberman technique, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Additionally, data analysis techniques involve data triangulation and member checks to ensure the validity and reliability of the data obtained from the research and observations with the informants in the field (Miles & Huberman 2014).

Result and Discussion

Forms of Instilling Islamic Character in Early Childhood Through Quranic Learning

According to the definition of language, “character” refers to a person’s nature, traits, and disposition, which describe the personality or distinguishing characteristics of an individual (Musrifah 2016). A person with character has behaviors or actions that can be recognized as distinctive traits of themselves. Based on the definition provided by the Language Center of the Ministry of National Education, character encompasses inherent aspects such as heart, soul, personality, ethics, behavior, traits, disposition, and temperament, all of which are components of an individual’s personality (Dapip Sahroni 2017). Character can also be understood as morals or personality formed through the internalization of various values of goodness that are believed and applied by individuals as the foundation for thinking, behaving, and acting (Zulfatus Sobihah 2020). The Ministry of National Education (Kemendiknas) adds that character is behavior based on values originating from religious norms, culture, law or constitution, customs, and aesthetics (Raihan Putry 2018). This means that a person’s character is not only determined by internal aspects such as the heart and soul but is also influenced by external factors such as the social and cultural environment, which teaches certain values that are then internalized and become part of the individual’s personality. Thus, character is a reflection of how a person understands and applies the values they believe in their daily life.

Meanwhile, Islamic character refers to behaviors, traits, disposition, and morals built on the values of Islam, which are sourced from the Qur’an and Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The essence of Islamic character is *akhlak al-karimah*, which means noble character that reflects a harmonious relationship between the individual and Allah (the Creator)

and with fellow creatures (Yuliharti 2018). *Akhlak al-karimah* is not only about how someone behaves towards others but also includes how individuals interact with Allah through worship and obedience. The values of Islam underlying this character include honesty, patience, gratitude, social concern, and love, all of which aim to create a balance between vertical relationships (with Allah) and horizontal relationships (with fellow human beings and other creatures) (Mursal Aziz et al 2024). Thus, Islamic character forms individuals who are not only ritualistically obedient but also possess noble morals in all aspects of life, always striving to live according to Islamic teachings.

The instillation of Islamic character in early childhood is an essential step in shaping a generation with noble morals. Four character traits exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad that we should use as guidance in everyday life include honesty, trustworthiness, diligence, and the ability to communicate (Nadjematul Faizah 2022). These four characteristics should be taught and instilled in students at school. At least, there are five arguments that support the importance of instilling Islamic character from an early age, including: (1) Formation of Noble Morals, Islamic character education guides children to adhere to the noble morals and ethics outlined in the Qur'an and Hadith. This alignment ensures that children grow into individuals with virtue in their lives (Ikhwanisyah et al. 2023); (2) Development of Ethical Behavior, instilling Islamic character educates children about right actions and behaviors that benefit themselves and the broader society (Madum and Daimah 2024), including treating others with kindness, mutual respect, and maintaining good relations with fellow human beings, regardless of race, ethnicity, or religion (Nurhikmah 2024); (3) Spiritual Growth, emphasizing Islamic character helps children develop a deep spiritual relationship with Allah. This closeness fosters humility, gratitude, and obedience to Allah's commands, leading to spiritual maturity (Dwiaryanti 2018); (4) Positive Impact on Society, individuals raised with Islamic character are more likely to contribute to the communities they are part of. They offer harmony by practicing tolerance, which is a value taught by Islam (Nurhikmah 2024); and finally, (5) Personal Integrity, Islamic character education builds internal strength by emphasizing qualities such as patience, perseverance, and sincerity. These attributes prepare children to face challenges and maintain their integrity and identity against external challenges (Mulyani 2018). Thus, the early instillation of Islamic character in children has a significant impact on their intellectual, emotional, and spiritual success in the future.

As seen in the character education process at PAUD Pertiwi Wonorejo, this is carried out systematically and structured through activities appropriate to the child's development. The appropriateness of character implementation according to the child's age is something that must be considered (Barrouillet 2015). This institution considers early childhood as the golden period for character formation. This is supported by Jean Piaget's theory, which outlines at least four stages of human cognitive development. During this period, children have unique characteristics, including: (1) Semantic Function, where children's cognition begins to develop their thinking through symbols expressed in a real-world context; (2) Egocentrism, where children believe that their way of thinking is the correct one; (3) Decentration, where children begin to see from multiple perspectives; (4) Animism, where inanimate objects are imagined to be alive and able to perform activities like humans; (5) Seriation, where children still struggle to categorize things into groups; and finally, (6) Conservation, where children understand that certain properties of an object remain the same even though physical changes occur (Pakpahan and Saragih 2022). With

a holistic and integrative approach, PAUD Pertiwi Wonorejo aims to create an environment that supports the comprehensive learning of Islamic character, namely:

1. The instillation of Islamic character at PAUD Pertiwi Wonorejo begins with embedding fundamental Islamic values that serve as an important foundation in the formation of noble morals. Values such as honesty, discipline, and respect for parents are the main focus of the learning process. For example, to instill the value of honesty, children are taught the importance of being truthful in every situation through Islamic stories that contain moral messages. These stories are presented in an engaging way, appropriate for the children's understanding, so that they can easily grasp the meaning. The habit of greeting before starting and ending activities is also part of instilling the values of discipline and respect. Every time children enter the classroom or meet an older person, they are taught to say greetings as a form of respect and awareness of the importance of politeness in daily interactions. Building the habit of greeting during learning activities is crucial in fostering social-emotional development and enhancing the overall conduciveness of the classroom environment. The argument supporting this understanding is based on the fact that greetings serve as a fundamental aspect of communication. They encourage children to express themselves both verbally and non-verbally, helping them learn effective ways to initiate conversations (Inayah and Wiyani 2022). Additionally, greetings serve to develop students' empathy, teaching them to welcome others and understand the emotions of their peers (Dini 2022).

In addition, the instillation of Islamic character at PAUD Pertiwi Wonorejo is also carried out through routine activities that encourage children to always remember Allah in every activity. Prayers before and after activities, such as eating or playing, become part of the daily routine introduced from an early age. Through this activity, children are not only taught the importance of praying, but they are also introduced to the concept of gratitude for the blessings given by Allah. This teaching is reinforced with activities that teach children to recognize Allah as the Creator and His extraordinary creations. In these activities, children are encouraged to be grateful for everything they have and are taught to share with others, whether with classmates or people around them. With a consistent and loving approach, these basic Islamic values are expected to be deeply ingrained in the children, thus forming a strong character with noble morals. Prayer activates the semantic function in children as described in Jean Piaget's theory (Pakpahan and Saragih 2022). The presence of prayer in the students' learning activities allows them to express their thoughts and feelings (Akhyar and Sutrawati 2021). Not only does it affect self-expression, but prayer also helps children manage stress and anxiety. Prayer provides a moment of tranquility where they can release their worries and feel supported. This impact has implications for their ability to concentrate on learning activities (Dini 2022). Moreover, the habitual practice of prayer helps students understand the importance of spiritual practices in their lives. It encourages them to reflect on broader concepts such as morality, integrity, and the impact of their actions on others (Akhyar and Sutrawati 2021).

PAUD Pertiwi Wonorejo employs a learning method that combines theory and practice. Children are not only taught religious concepts but are also given the opportunity to practice them in daily life. For example, through activities such as sharing food with friends or giving charity to those in need, children are encouraged to practice the values of generosity and social concern. The presence of practice and display of reality makes it easier for students to transfer knowledge from the cognitive dimension to the affective dimension. Learning

activities that involve direct experience and practice are known in learning theory as “learning by doing,” a concept introduced by John Dewey. The distinctive characteristic of Dewey’s approach to learning is that it is based on direct experience. He argued that the best learning occurs when students actively engage with their environment and participate directly in activities (Jacobsen, Koustrup, and Madsen 2024). When students are directly involved in learning activities, their interest in the subject increases (Apetrei et al. 2024). Direct learning experiences also encourage critical thinking and problem-solving skills as students face challenges and work to resolve them, fostering their independence in the learning process (Thomassen and Jorgansen 2021). Thus, when awareness and independence are established through this habituation process, students will become accustomed to developing independent learning habits, both in formal institutions like schools, at home, or anywhere else, making them active learners.

2. The instillation of Islamic character at PAUD Pertiwi Wonorejo is carried out through structured daily worship activities that are an integral part of the children’s learning process. One of the regular activities is congregational Dhuha prayer. In this activity, children are not only encouraged to perform the prayer, but they are also introduced to the correct procedures of prayer, starting from the intention, the movements, and the supplications. Through this approach, children are taught to understand the meaning of worship as a form of communication with Allah, while instilling a sense of reverence and appreciation for the time dedicated to worship. The teachers at PAUD Pertiwi Wonorejo also provide guidance with patience and love, making the children feel comfortable and motivated to participate in the prayer with sincerity. This congregational prayer activity becomes an effective means to strengthen togetherness and foster a sense of unity among the children, as well as providing them with direct experience in performing one of the pillars of Islam.

In addition to prayer, the children at PAUD Pertiwi Wonorejo are also trained to memorize daily prayers and read the Qur’an regularly. The memorization of daily prayers is carried out through enjoyable approaches, such as singing or games, so that the children find it fun and easy to remember. The prayers taught include those before and after meals, before sleeping, and other short prayers relevant to daily activities. The teaching of the Qur’an is done using age-appropriate methods, where children are introduced to the Arabic letters and taught to read them with proper pronunciation (*tartil*). The activity of reading the Qur’an aims not only to introduce children to their holy book but also to habituate them to fulfilling religious obligations from an early age. The creation of a spiritual atmosphere in PAUD Pertiwi Wonorejo’s learning practices will have an extraordinary impact on the emotional intelligence growth of the students. A positive spiritual atmosphere can foster feelings of peace, joy, and hope. When the environment is filled with uplifting energy, individuals tend to experience improved mental health and emotional stability (Akeke et al. 2024). Additionally, a strong spiritual atmosphere can act as a buffer against negative influences or unpleasant surroundings. By cultivating an environment that prioritizes spirituality, it also strengthens an individual’s sense of transcendence and devotion to God, making them more prepared to combat fear, doubt, or despair (Martin and Cleveland 2024).

The continuous inculcation of basic Islamic values and the habituation of religious practices among the children at PAUD Pertiwi Wonorejo will significantly contribute to the

development of Islamic character in the students. In the process of information transfer and habituation, a crucial figure is needed to bridge this process, and that figure is none other than the teacher. Therefore, the role of the teacher in instilling Islamic character at PAUD Pertiwi Wonorejo is vital. Teachers play an essential role in educating children, far beyond just transmitting knowledge. Their influence extends to not only academic success but also the personal and social development of the child. Additionally, teachers act as role models, serving as examples for their students. The behavior, attitude, and values they demonstrate can significantly impact the students, making it crucial for teachers to embody positive qualities and ethics (Ye and Wang 2024).

Through a gentle and compassionate approach, teachers at PAUD Pertiwi Wonorejo strive to create a pleasant and conducive learning environment for the development of the children's character. The efforts of the teachers at PAUD Pertiwi Wonorejo align with the functions and position of the teacher in the learning process (Ye and Wang 2024), particularly in creating a safe space for learning, where professional and qualified teachers must foster a welcoming and inclusive classroom atmosphere. This positive environment encourages students to take risks in their learning and fosters a sense of belonging, creating a feeling of safety, especially for young children (Jia et al. 2024). Once a sense of comfort is established, students will feel valued and understood by their teachers, fostering a strong relationship between the teacher and students. This relationship, in turn, helps to engage students actively in their learning (Li and Bai 2024).

Furthermore, parental involvement is also a crucial factor in the instilling of Islamic character at PAUD Pertiwi Wonorejo. The institution recognizes that character education is not solely the school's responsibility, but also requires support from the family (Jia et al. 2024). This understanding is based on the role and position of parents as the primary educators (Elizarov, Benish-weisman, and Ziv 2023). Parents are often the first teachers in a child's life, laying the foundation for learning by instilling values (Jia et al. 2024). Their involvement also provides a nurturing environment that supports emotional well-being. Their encouragement helps build self-esteem and resilience, which are essential for developing perseverance in academic challenges (Ye and Wang 2024). Given the central role of parents in the child's growth process, this important role is recognized by all educators at PAUD Pertiwi. Therefore, PAUD Pertiwi Wonorejo capitalizes on this opportunity to strengthen the character of the children from an early age by regularly holding meetings with parents to discuss the children's development and ways to support the instillation of Islamic character at home.

Moreover, the holistic approach applied at PAUD Pertiwi Wonorejo has a positive impact on the development of the children's Islamic character. The children not only learn Islamic values but also apply them in their daily lives. The instilling of Islamic character from an early age is expected to serve as a strong foundation for the children to navigate life in the future, equipped with noble character and solid Islamic values.

Learning Materials for Cultivating Islamic Character at PAUD Pertiwi Wonorejo

The learning materials play a crucial role in the educational process, serving as the foundation for what students will learn, understand, and apply (Supriadi 2015). These materials function as a structured guide, directing students toward the educational goals they aim to achieve (Dedi Sahputra Napitupulu et al. 2023). The importance of learning materials lies in their ability to

shape foundational knowledge, skills, and attitudes relevant to the students' needs and the demands of their social and professional environments (Nanang Gusril Ramdani et al 2023).

At PAUD Pertiwi Wonorejo, the learning materials involve teaching the stories of the Prophets, their exemplary behavior, and their noble qualities as the main method for instilling Islamic values in young children. The stories are carefully selected for their rich moral lessons, especially in terms of good character, which is key to shaping children's values from an early age. Through these stories, children can learn to emulate noble traits of the Prophets such as honesty, patience, bravery, and compassion, which are expected to be internalized and applied in their everyday lives.

The selection of Prophet stories is based on the belief that the Prophets embody perfect examples for living, offering practical guidelines for human life. By narrating these stories, the educator provides concrete examples from the lives of the Prophets that children can easily understand and absorb. The storytelling method not only captivates children but also conveys strong moral messages, making it an effective tool for instilling good character traits within the educational process at PAUD Pertiwi Wonorejo. Storytelling offers numerous benefits, particularly for cognitive and emotional development. It introduces children to rich, varied language, helping them acquire new words and phrases that improve their communication skills. Furthermore, storytelling encourages children to listen attentively, enhancing their focus and comprehension of spoken language (Lenhart et al. 2020).

From a cognitive perspective, listening to stories prompts children to think critically about the plot and characters, which develops their analytical skills (Bernstein et al. 2024). Another interesting advantage of storytelling is that it strengthens children's long-term memory, as they remember details about events and characters from the stories (Lenhart et al. 2020). Additionally, storytelling stimulates children's imagination, allowing them to visualize characters and settings, which fosters creativity and problem-solving skills. The development of critical thinking, long-term memory, and creativity will naturally enhance their narrative abilities, helping them understand and retell stories with coherent structures (Lenhart et al. 2020).

In terms of emotional development, storytelling engages children in processes of identification with characters and their experiences, helping them develop empathy and a better understanding of emotions, which are vital for social interactions. Group storytelling enhances social skills and communication abilities as children engage with one another, fostering teamwork and interpersonal connections (Bernstein et al. 2024). Moreover, storytelling can employ a "copying mechanism," where children learn how to cope with emotions by observing characters navigating difficult situations. This narrative model provides lessons in resilience and emotional regulation, teaching children how to manage their feelings effectively. From an anthropological perspective, storytelling introduces children to various cultures and traditions, expanding their worldview and fostering appreciation for diversity (Lenhart et al. 2020).

In addition to the stories, the Islamic character education at PAUD Pertiwi Wonorejo is designed with a comprehensive approach, integrating Islamic values into every aspect of children's activities. The program starts with the introduction of noble character traits such as honesty, discipline, respect, and caring for others. These values are not only communicated verbally but also applied in daily activities. For instance, children are taught to speak honestly through Islamic stories with clear moral messages. The routine practice of greeting others, especially parents and teachers, also plays a key role in teaching children respect and proper etiquette.

Moreover, the curriculum includes teaching daily prayers in a child-friendly and engaging way. Through these activities, children learn to remember Allah in every aspect of their daily routine, whether before eating, sleeping, or starting and finishing their activities. This practice aims to establish prayer as a habitual expression of gratitude and reliance on Allah, fostering a sense of dependence on Him in all aspects of their lives.

Obstacles and Solutions in Instilling Islamic Character in Early Childhood in PAUD Pertiwi

In any educational institution, there are inevitably obstacles in the learning process. This is also true for PAUD Pertiwi Wonorejo, which faces challenges in the process of instilling Islamic character. One of the key obstacles is the lack of educators with a bachelor's degree, which limits their ability to understand the individual characteristics of each child.

Educators, as a crucial component of education, should be able to comprehend, master, and implement the indicators of student characteristics into the learning process in the classroom. Teachers need to understand the unique traits of each child, as we know that children have different personalities and temperaments. When a child has good character and personality, they are more likely to be obedient to the lessons taught at school.

Another challenge faced at PAUD Pertiwi Wonorejo is the lack of creativity in the learning process. This becomes a barrier for teachers, as creative and engaging teaching methods are essential for fostering a stimulating learning environment.

Educational institutions always face challenges in their learning processes. However, these challenges can be overcome depending on how effectively the institution handles and seeks the best solutions to ensure the learning process runs smoothly. By addressing these obstacles—through training teachers, encouraging creativity in lesson planning, and fostering a deeper understanding of each child's character—the institution can create a more effective and nurturing learning environment.

The most complained about obstacles are:

1. Differences in Family Background

The obstacles for children come from various family backgrounds with different levels of understanding and practice of Islam. This can affect consistency in the application of Islamic values in early childhood education. The solution that can be done is to conduct training and guidance for parents to equalize perceptions and increase understanding of the cultivation of Islamic character. This program includes workshops, regular meetings, and counseling on parenting based on Islamic values.

2. Lack of Support from the Surrounding Environment

The social and cultural environment that is less supportive can affect the acceptance and application of Islamic values taught in Early Childhood Education (PAUD). Therefore, the solution is to build partnerships with the community and local groups to create an environment that supports the instillation of Islamic character. Involving community leaders and religious figures in PAUD activities can help strengthen the messages of Islamic values.

3. Lack of media in learning, so educators are required to adjust to the existing situation

Learning media also plays an important role in improving the quality of education and teaching, as it helps teachers explain lesson material more easily and facilitates students in understanding the content. However, there are still many obstacles faced, yet the school continues to make every effort for the smooth progress of the learning process. This is done

to provide the best education for students so that the learning process can succeed according to shared expectations. Challenges in the learning process are always experienced by educational institutions. However, these challenges can be overcome depending on how skilled the institution is in responding to and finding the best solutions to ensure the learning process runs as it should.

4. Difficulty in order during lessons

When teaching children, it is sometimes difficult to control their behavior and maintain order, but there are also children who are disciplined and always follow the rules without being told. The most challenging part is dealing with children who use foul language when they play and argue with their friends. Based on interviews and observations, the author concludes that the obstacles in the process of instilling Islamic character at PAUD Pertiwi Wonorejo include children frequently using harsh words toward their peers, children being obedient at school but not applying the same behavior at home, and sometimes being difficult to manage in terms of maintaining order during lessons. These bad habits can be changed by advising, habituating, and educating children about the behaviors they engage in. Although these obstacles may be minimal, they can be addressed, even though not perfectly, but at least the challenges can be reduced so that the learning process runs smoothly and achieves its intended goals.

Conclusion

The Qur'an is a source for education, especially for Islamic character education. Character education is integrative and comprehensive. The Qur'an has already outlined this character education, and it is up to humans to apply it in their daily lives. The educator's role is to educate students to become individuals with good character. Character education lasts a lifetime. A teacher must strive to instill values such as faith (*tauhid*), morality (*akhlak*), and worship (*ibadah*) in students so that they grow into complete individuals (*insan kamil*). The success of a learning process is closely related to the educator's ability to plan the learning concepts.

Character education involves efforts that are systematically designed and implemented to help students understand values of human behavior related to Allah, themselves, others, the environment, and the nation, which are reflected in their thoughts, attitudes, feelings, words, and actions, based on religious norms, laws, manners, culture, and customs. Steps taken in forming good character in children include: saying "thank you" when receiving something, apologizing when wrong and forgiving others, washing hands before eating, sitting while eating without making noise, shaking hands with teachers, parents, and friends when meeting, and speaking softly without raising one's voice.

In character formation, teachers are expected to provide knowledge (teaching), for example, explaining honesty, why honesty is important, until the child understands the message. Thus, the child will realize the importance of these values, which will then become deeply rooted in the child's heart. Early childhood is the foundation period for a child's growth and development.

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