



Religious Character Building In Early Childhood Through Independent Learning

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Abstract. *This study aims to determine the planning and implementation carried out by TKIT Baitul Hijrah Binjai City in the formation of religious characters in early childhood through independent learning. This research method uses qualitative research methods with a descriptive approach. The data collection technique is the results of observations made on umar bin khattab class children totaling 15 children, direct interviews with 1 principal, 2 teachers and 2 parents, as well as documentation sourced from the TKIT Baitul Hijrah Kota Binjai education unit curriculum and child development records. Data analysis is carried out through data condensation, data display and conclusion drawing or verification which is arranged into a sentence that contains the findings obtained from the research. The result of this research is that planning for the formation of religious characters through independent learning is carried out by compiling school programs in the form of extracurricular programs and teaching modules that support the formation of religious characters, while the application is carried out using learning methods that are fun for children such as singing, storytelling, role playing and involving parents in learning at home.*

Keywords Religious Character, Early Childhood, Independet Learning

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is a golden age stage in child development that starts from the age of zero to six years or also known as the golden age period. At this time the intelligence of the child's brain in receiving stimulation or stimulation from the environment develops very optimally. This stimulation can be obtained by children through formal, informal and non-formal education, where teachers and parents are responsible for providing stimulation or stimulation and guidance to children so that a strong and characterful generation is formed (Ananda, 2017).

As time goes by and the rapid development of science and technology brings changes to the attitudes and behavior of children. These changes not only have a positive impact, but also have a negative impact. Currently, there are many cases such as bullying cases committed by kindergarten children by hitting their friends so that their friends are traumatized and afraid to go to school, children who fight their parents, children tell lies, children who steal, and so on. The problem of children's character deterioration is a problem that occurs in the world of education and shows that the formation of children's character in the school and home environment still does not show good results in accordance with the objectives of national education.

Early childhood education has an important influence on the formation of children's character in the future. Early childhood education is an effort to provide knowledge before children enter the stages of basic and further education. This education aims to develop the stages of child development and explore the child's potential. This is in accordance with the objectives of education in early childhood listed in law number 137 of 2014 concerning national education article 1 paragraph 14 which states that Early Childhood

Education (PAUD) is an effort to foster children from birth to six years of age which is done by providing educational stimuli to help children's growth and development so that they can develop according to their interests and talents and children have the readiness to enter basic and further education (PERMEN, 2014).

Apart from being a development for children, national education also has the aim of building children's character. This is stated in the 2003 national education system law article 1 which states that among the objectives of national education is to develop the potential of students to have intelligence, personality and noble character (Nabila, 2022).

In realizing these educational goals, a learning design is needed that can be done to stimulate or provide stimulation to children. Providing educational stimulation is different from teenagers and adults. Because the world of children is a world of play, where children gain knowledge and education through their play experiences. Learning that is independent and fun can be a solution in providing knowledge and education to children. Through this kind of learning, children can learn and explore with their environment. This is in line with the independent learning program launched by the Minister of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemendikbud RI).

According to Nadiem Makariem as the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, freedom of learning in early childhood is freedom to play. In this case, teachers must have the essence of freedom of thought in order to innovate to create an active, creative, and fun learning for children. So that children are able to learn from their play activities and can provide stimulation in improving aspects of growth and development in children according to the interests and potential of children and shaping children's character (Hendri, 2020).

Character building is very important to do as early as possible, because a person's character will affect his life in the future. Character is a word derived from Greek which means marking and focusing on how to apply good values in the form of actions or behavior (Supriadi, 2023). Islam as a religion of Rahmatan Lil Alamin views character as spiritual values found in humans in building relationships with God, self and others. Character by applying spiritual values is often referred to as religious character.

Based on initial observations made by researchers at TKIT Baitul Hijrah Binjai City, the concept of independent learning has been implemented by TKIT Baitul Hijrah Binjai City. It can be seen that TKIT Baitul Hijrah is one of the movers of batch II where the programs implemented have included an independent curriculum and the learning activities are guided by the independent curriculum for early childhood. In learning, children are given freedom in carrying out their play activities. However, sometimes the child's mood becomes an obstacle in carrying out this activity. Independent learning means giving children freedom in the learning process. The freedom given is not necessarily without supervision and evaluation from the teacher, at TKIT Baitul Hijrah Binjai City the teacher prepares and compiles teaching modules that have activities according to children's interests and talents and there are many educational game tools that can support learning and shape children's religious character.

Research related to this study is a thesis research by Rahmah Setiawati with the title of early childhood religious character formation in religious activities at Bina Insan Mandiri Scholl Purwokerto Kindergarten, Banyumas Regency. The study aims to determine the formation of early childhood religious character in religious habituation. In contrast to the research that the author is doing which discusses the planning and implementation of independent learning in early childhood for the formation of religious

characters at TKIT Baitul Hijrah, so the author is interested in conducting research with the title of religious character formation through independent learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Religious Character

There are 18 character values in Indonesian education that must be inserted in the learning process, one of which is religious character. In Indonesia, character education is identified based on four sources, namely religion, Pancasila, culture and national education goals (Kurniawan, 2014). Religious values are the most important and fundamental values to be taught because they have the strongest truth compared to other values because they come from God. A character that reflects a person's attitude based on religious values or religious character is an attitude and behavior that is obedient in carrying out the religious orders he adheres to, tolerant of the teachings of other religions and living in harmony between religious communities.

Religious character comes from two different words but has a close relationship, namely character and religion. Aristotle defines as quoted by Lickona that good character is when someone does the right actions to others. Where character has a close relationship with the environment and habits that are carried out or practiced (Ningsih, 2015).

In the Big Indonesian Dictionary, character is character, psychological traits, morals or character traits that distinguish a person's nature from others (DPN, 2012). Character can also be interpreted as a person's personality or character. Self-personality is a characteristic, characteristic, original trait that exists in a person. Character can be formed from the surrounding environment, such as family, school, and so on (Musrifah, 2016).

Religious comes from the word religion which means obeying and obeying religious teachings. Religion is a belief and belief in humans towards God. In Islam, religion is behaving or having a character in accordance with religious teachings sourced from the Qur'an and hadith. According to Ulil Amri Syarif, religion is also referred to as an attitude or behavior that is obedient to the teachings of the religion that is adopted, tolerant of the teachings of other religions and establishes good relations or lives in harmony with adherents of other religions (Syarif, 2012).

So it can be concluded that religious character is a character or personality of a person who makes religion the basis for every action, both in behavior and speech. So that there is awareness in the child to carry out the commands and stay away from the prohibitions of his God.

2. Early Childhood

According to Hurlock, what is categorized as early childhood or early kindergarten age is preschool age which is between two and six years of age (Priyalnto, 2014). According to Ahmad Susanto, following the opinion of Bachraruddin Musthafa, early childhood is a child who is at the limit of developmental psychology which includes infancy (infancy or babyhoof) aged zero to one year, early childhood aged one to five years, late childhood (Susanto, 2018).

Early childhood is someone who is undergoing a process of rapid development and is fundamental to later life. Early childhood is in the age range of zero to 8 years. At this time, the process of growth and development in various aspects is undergoing a rapid process in the span of human life development. The learning process is a form of treatment given to children and must pay attention to the characteristics of children at each stage of development (Sujiono, 2013).

According to NAEYC (National Association Education For Young Children) defines early childhood as a group of individuals who are in the age range between zero

and eight years or often referred to as the golden age. This occurs only once in the process of a child's life, where the growth and development of early childhood needs to be directed at morals and religion, physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, language and balanced creativity as the right basic foundation for the formation of children's character (Priyanlnto, 2014).

From some of the expert opinions above, it can be concluded that early childhood is a child who has an age of zero to eight years where at this age the child experiences very rapid development and growth for the next life.

3. Independent Learning

The concept of independent learning launched by the Minister of Cultural Education Nadiem Makariem is a reflection of the philosophy of the father of national education Ki Hajar Dewantara. The goal of independent learning in education is not only for intellectual intelligence, but also to form character in children, especially religious character, which is very important for children to have for their future.

Independent Learning according to Nadiem Makariem is the freedom of thought and autonomy given to educational elements, which aims to provide space for children to develop their potential according to their interests and talents (Hendri, 2020).

Independent learning is a combination of two words, namely independence and learning. The word merdeka in the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) has several meanings, namely: free, not exposed to or free from demands, not independent of others, free (DPN, 2012). Meanwhile, learning according to Sanjaya is a mental process that occurs in a person, thus causing changes in behavior, where mental activity occurs due to the interaction between children and their environment (Sanjaya, 2010).

According to Tritanto, learning is a change that occurs in a person through experience and not due to the growth or development of his body or the characteristics of a person from birth (Triantono, 2010). Meanwhile, according to Djamarah and Zain, learning is a process of changing behavior, both concerning knowledge, skills and attitudes due to experience and practice (Djamarah, 2010). Therefore, independent learning means providing opportunities in a manner that is independent of learning.

So independent learning means providing free and comfortable opportunities for children to be able to learn calmly, relaxed, happily without stress and pressure by paying attention to the natural talents of children, and without coercion to learn or understand a field of knowledge outside the interests and abilities of children. So that children are able to properly implement the values of freedom in the community environment.

METHODS

1. Approach and Type of Research

This research uses qualitative research with a descriptive approach. Qualitative research is a research method that produces findings that cannot be obtained using statistical procedures or other ways of measuring data. In general, qualitative research is used for research on community life, history, social activities, and others.

Qualitative research has the main objective, namely to understand social phenomena by providing an opinion or opinion that clearly describes the social phenomena that occur in the form of words which will ultimately produce a theory (Sujarweni, 2014).

2. Place and Time of Research

This research was conducted at TKIT Baitul Hijrah Binjai City which is located on Cut Nyak Dien Street No.128 Tanah Tinggi Village, Binjai City, North Sumatra Province. The selection of TKIT Baitul Hijrah as a research site on the grounds that TKIT Baitul

Hijrah is one of the second generation of driving schools that uses an independent curriculum for the implementation of learning with an independent learning system in early childhood. This research was conducted from November 2022-July 2023.

3. Data Source

Primary data in this study are children from the umar bin khattab class of TKIT Baitul Hijrah Kota Binjai, totaling 15 people, in order to see the religious character of children based on independent learning carried out at TKIT Baitul Hijrah Kota Binjai.

Secondary data is a supporting source of primary data. Secondary data used in this study are in the form of TKIT Baitul Hijrah Kota Binjai education unit curriculum, child development records and teaching modules, as well as the results of interviews conducted with 1 principal, 2 teachers and 2 parents of TKIT Baitul Hijrah Kota Binjai students.

4. Data Collection Techniques and Data Analysis

The data collection techniques in this study were observation, interviews conducted with 1 principal, 2 teachers and 2 parents and documentation in the form of TKIT Baitul Hijrah Kota Binjai's education unit curriculum, child development records, and teaching modules. Data analysis is carried out by condensing data, displaying data and drawing conclusions or verification which are arranged into a sentence that contains the findings in the study.

RESULTS

Planning for Religious Character Building in Early Childhood through Independent Learning

Independent learning is independent play, where playing and learning are fundamental activities in early childhood development so that they can develop optimally. Through play, children can gain knowledge and explore their environment. In determining planning for the formation of religious character in early childhood through independent learning at TKIT Baitul Hijrah Kota Binjai, teachers must understand the character and abilities of children before formulating learning objectives, compiling a flow of learning objectives and designing learning modules. In planning independent learning, it is carried out through several stages, namely:

a. Analyzing Children's Characteristics and Abilities

Every child has different characteristics and abilities. Every child is not the same. In this case the teacher must see and analyze the ability of each child in Islamic literacy. So that the teacher can determine the right learning method to be applied to children.

b. Determining Learning Objectives

Learning objectives are determined by considering several things, namely: the results of analyzing children's abilities at TKIT Baitul Hijrah Binjai City and the curriculum used at TKIT Baitul Hijrah. The curriculum used at TKIT Baitul Hijrah is an independent curriculum so that the learning objectives carried out are for children to be able to understand their religion, care about the surrounding environment, form religious characters so that children have spiritual intelligence and can perform daily worship through their play activities.

In the formation of religious character through independent learning, TKIT Baitul Hijrah Kota Binjai has an Infant and Toddler Tahfizh Program (PROTABA) which is an extracurricular activity and is included in the independent curriculum applied at school. This program is a form of Islamic religious literacy for the formation of religious characters, where learning uses multimedia so that learning Islamic religious literacy is fun for children, there are other extracurricular programs that can support the formation of religious characters through independent learning such as,

carrying out dhuha prayers in congregation, Hajj manasik activities and cheerful Ramadan which is carried out during the month of Ramadan.

c. Develop a teaching model

In developing teaching modules, you should consider the selection of methods, media and materials to be carried out at the beginning. Compiling teaching modules must also consider the ability of children to do so. At TKIT Baitul Hijrah for the formation of religious characters through independent learning, stimulation or stimulation in the formation of religious characters is included in extracurricular and intracurricular school activities. In intracurricular activities carried out by schools by compiling teaching modules consisting of opening activities, core activities, and closing. And conduct evaluations every day to see the development of children's religious character. TKIT also conducts other assessments carried out through competitions held every independence celebration and Islamic holiday celebrations.

Planning for the formation of religious character in early childhood at TKIT Baitul Hijrah Binjai City is in accordance with the planning of independent learning promoted by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia in order to create a pleasant learning atmosphere for children.

DISCUSSION

Formation of Religious Character in Early Childhood Through Independent Learning

Based on the results of research conducted by researchers, the formation of religious character in early childhood through independent learning at TKIT Baitul Hijrah Kota Binjai, there are several things that are done, namely:

a. Determining learning methods

The learning method is a method used to implement the learning plan that has been designed so that it can be carried out so that optimal learning objectives are achieved. There are several learning methods used in the formation of religious character in early childhood at TKIT Baitul Hijrah, namely:

1) Singing Method

Through the singing method, the formation of religious character in children is more effective and fun. Through singing, messages for the formation of religious character can be conveyed to children. This learning method is usually carried out at TKIT Baitul Hijrah Binjai City during opening activities, both in the classroom and outside the classroom. Children will sing rhythmically, sing songs with Islamic themes, and so on.

2) Storytelling Method

The storytelling method is a learning method in early childhood that uses storytelling techniques about a story, story. Fairy tales, legends that have certain moral or intellectual messages in them. The storytelling method applied at TKIT Baitul Hijrah Binjai City is by the teacher telling the book that the child wants to read and then the teacher will make a lighter question so that the child can retell the story that has been told. The books of choice are books about asmaul husna, selected hadiths, and stories of 25 prophets and companions and other Islamic story books. So not only get a moral message that can form a religious character but children can also mention 99 asmaul husna, retell the story of 25 prophets and friends of the prophet and selected hadiths with children's language.

3) Role Play Method

The role-playing method is a method used in early childhood learning by acting out a certain character. The role-playing method at TKIT Baitul Hijrah Binjai City is carried out by children choosing to act out the character that the child likes. Then the teacher guides the role play by mentioning the title of the story. Here the child uses his own language so that the child is expected to be able to distinguish his actions that are good and not.

b. Involving parents in learning activities at home

Not only teachers, parents also have an important role in independent learning in early childhood in the formation of religious characters in early childhood through independent learning. This can be done by parents by doing habituation - habituation at home that has been done at school. For example: reading children's reading books, reciting the Koran together, praying together at home, and so on.

Independent learning in early childhood can be done at home and at school. Give children freedom in determining their interests and talents so that children continue to innovate and explore the creativity that exists in themselves. Parents and teachers become facilitators who support children to do independent learning.

CONCLUSION

1. Planning in the formation of religious characters in early childhood through independent learning at TKIT Baitul Hijrah Binjai City is carried out by analyzing children's characters, determining learning objectives and compiling teaching modules that are fun for children. By compiling a school program in the form of intracurricular and extracurricular activities. Intracurricular activities are carried out by carrying out activities that have been arranged in the teaching module while extracurricular activities are supporting activities such as infant and toddler tahfizh programs (PROTABA), dhuha prayers, cheerful Ramadan.
2. In the formation of religious characters in early childhood through independent learning, TKIT baitul hijrah uses several learning methods of singing, storytelling, role playing and traditional games in learning activities and involves parents in learning activities at home.

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