

Early Childhood Religious Character Building Through 5S Habituation plus Environmental Care

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Abstract

The development of religious character through environmental awareness has become an effective new method, making it important to be introduced to children from an early age. This study analyzes the implementation of the 5S habituation (Smile, Greet, Salute, Polite, and Courteous) combined with the reinforcement of environmental awareness at Darul Hasanah Kindergarten, located in Banjardowo Subdistrict, Genuk District, Semarang City. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach. The data collection techniques used in this study include observation, which was conducted while the children were engaged in activities inside or outside the classroom; interviews, which were carried out with the school principal, teachers, and parents; and documentation, which was used to analyze teaching modules and other documents related to the 5S cultural activities. The results of the study at TK Darul Hasanah show that the habituation of the 5S culture and environmental awareness in shaping children's religious character is consistently implemented through various daily activities at school. This research is expected to broaden the insights of school principals, kindergarten teachers, and parents so that they can help nurture a young generation that is courteous, religious, environmentally conscious, and well prepared to face future challenges with a strong spiritual foundation.

Keywords: Religious Character; Habits; Environmental Care; Early Childhood

History

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INTRODUCTION

The formation of children's character from an early *age* is an important aspect of the ongoing education process, especially in the early period of child development at the age of 0-6 years, or what is often referred to as the golden age. At this time, children show extraordinary learning abilities, and their brain development develops very quickly, with this placing in forming the foundation of character. It is at this age that children begin to know and understand social, moral, and spiritual values so as to shape their character and behavior in the future; besides that, character building at an early age also helps reduce the risk of negative behavior in the future (Sari & Nofriadi, 2019). Character has a crucial role in shaping children's identity. Character values such as honesty, discipline, courtesy, high empathy and responsibility need to be introduced to children from an early age in order to form children's habits and personalities.

Looking at the development of technology today, besides bringing positive impacts, there are certainly negative impacts, one of which is the decline in children's morals and character. Children who

are essentially great imitators are also affected. It can be seen very clearly that children will do whatever they see and hear through the sophistication of today's technology and the behavior of the adults around them. Bullying, immorality, lack of manners, fights, and other disgraceful actions have penetrated the world of children. Seeing this phenomenon, the role of education is very important to be applied, especially education for early childhood (Zulianti et al., 2021).

The most crucial level of education for children in the developmental stages of life is early childhood education because it is able to form the child's foundation so that the child can continue to the next stage properly. Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System (SISDIKNAS) in Article 1 Paragraph 14 states that early childhood education is a coaching process that begins from the time a child is born until the age of six. Every child has a unique character that is part of their natural nature. In the character education guidelines for early childhood, it is explained that character is a pattern of behavior or habits that reflect a sustainable commitment to do good (Akhyar & Sutrawati, 2021).

Religious character education has a very important role to be instilled from an early age because this period is a golden phase in the formation of personality and basic values of life. The introduction of religious values from an early age aims to form a strong spiritual foundation so that children grow up with an awareness of responsibility towards God, fellow humans, and the surrounding environment (Billah, 2016). Research by Purwaningsih & Syamsudin (2022) shows that religious character is closely related to religious teachings that guide children's daily behavior. This is reinforced by the findings of Sudjarwati & Fahyuni (2019), which revealed that the practice of religious habituation, such as the implementation of dhuha prayers and the habit of giving alms was able to significantly improve children's religious character, from 34% to 66%. In addition, research by Fathurahman (2021) also emphasizes the importance of integrating the environmental fiqh approach in religious character education in order to foster ecological awareness and moral responsibility for the environment. Thus, religious character education in early childhood not only forms a pious personality but also creates a generation that cares about others and the universe.

In the national education curriculum, there is a 5S culture habituation program (Smile, Greeting, Greeting, Polite and Courteous). This habit is a positive culture that educates children to be friendly, respect others, and maintain ethics in social interactions. Coupled with aspects of environmental care, this program not only focuses on children's relationships with fellow humans but also forms a sense of responsibility for nature and the environment as part of God's creation (Inayah & Wiyani, 2022).

The aspect of caring for the environment is an important approach in the formation of religious character in children. Planting the value of caring for the environment from an early age not only supports good behavior but is also in line with religious teachings that teach human responsibility as caliphs on earth to protect and preserve nature (Aulia & Hadiyanto, 2022). Through positive habituation,

such as caring for the environment, children are able to appreciate and care about the surrounding environment. Habituation of environmental care aspects in children teaches children to appreciate and preserve nature as a form of gratitude for God's blessings. This teaches children that caring for the environment is a form of worship so that religious characters who care about the environment will be formed from an early age (Fadillah & Setianingsih, 2023).

Research conducted by Syifa and Novan with the title *"Formation of Friendly Characters Through Habituation of Smile, Greeting, Greeting, Politeness (5S) in Early Childhood"* focuses on efforts to instill friendly characters in children through habituation of 5S (Smile, Greeting, Greeting, Polite, and Polite) at RA Muslimat NU Diponegoro 54 Darmakradenan, Ajibarang, Banyumas. The results of their research prove that the application of the 5S culture is effective in shaping children's friendly attitudes. This effectiveness is reflected in children's friendly behavior that is consistently shown in the school environment, family, and community. This finding has similarities with the author's research, especially in the use of the 5S habituation approach to shape children's character. However, there are differences in variable focus. Syifa and Novan examined friendly characters, while the author's research focuses more on religious character-building. In addition, the author's research also developed the 5S habituation model by adding elements of concern for the environment as part of the approach used (Inayah & Wiyani, 2022).

This research focuses on the cultural habituation of 5S (Smile, Greeting, Greeting, Polite, Polite) combined with the value of caring for the environment as a strategy for early childhood religious character formation. This approach not only instills religious teachings but also forms positive social habits and ecological responsibility so that it can produce children who are noble, care about others, and have an awareness of protecting the environment from an early age. The purpose of this study is to explore the effectiveness of the integration of the 5S culture plus environmental care in shaping children's religious character holistically. The hope is that this research can make a real contribution to the development of character education at the ECE level, as well as being a useful reference for principals, kindergarten teachers, and parents in designing and implementing effective habituation methods. Furthermore, the results of this study are expected to be able to give birth to a young generation that is spiritually strong, ethical in social interactions, and has concern for the preservation of nature as part of the manifestation of faith and moral responsibility.

METHODS

This research used a descriptive qualitative approach. According to Hastin, descriptive research is a type of research conducted to describe a particular subject, condition, behavior, or phenomenon that aims to answer questions related to the research problem being studied (Roosinda et al., 2021). This approach aims to describe how the habituation of 5S plus environmental care at Darul Hasanah

Kindergarten contributes to character building in children, especially in the formation of children's religious character. The research was conducted at Darul Hasanah Kindergarten, Banjardowo District, Genuk Village, Semarang City.

Data collection is an important stage because it is the core of the research to obtain relevant information. This process was conducted using interview, observation, and documentation methods. The researcher used the semi-structured interview method to explore information about good 5S habituation and environmental care attitudes at Darul Hasanah Banjardowo Kindergarten in depth with the resource persons, namely the kindergarten head and class teachers. The observation method is that the author observes the daily activities of children at school for three weeks to see the daily attitude of children at school, such as the attitude of children when learning in class when playing with their friends when children meet with parents and children's attitudes towards the surrounding environment. The documentation method is taken from the teaching module used by the teacher when teaching in class.

The data obtained was then analyzed using the Miles and Hubner model qualitative analysis technique, which was carried out in three stages: data reduction (Data Reduction), data presentation (Data Display) in descriptive form, and conclusion (Verification). Then, to test the validity of the data, researchers applied data and method triangulation techniques by comparing data results from interviews, observations, and documentation. This technique ensures the validity and consistency of the data obtained (Nasution, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section of the study discusses the integration between the 5S culture (Smile, Greeting, Greeting, Polite, and Courteous) and environmental care towards the formation of children's religious character by observing and then describing children's attitudes and behavior. The results of observations regarding the application of the 5S culture (Smile, Greet, Greet, Polite and Courteous) plus environmental care in the formation of religious character are shown by an increase in several aspects of child development, such as increasing children's religious character, forming positive habits through the 5S culture program (Smile, Greet, Greet, Polite and Courteous) and having a sense of awareness and concern for the surrounding environment. Some parents reported positive changes in their children's attitudes and behavior at home. Children began to dare to remind other family members to keep the environment clean, be polite, and love each other or their elders.

Religious Character Education for Children

Religious character education in early childhood has a strategic role in shaping children's identity and personality with noble character. Early childhood is a golden age period that greatly

determines the direction of children's moral, social, and spiritual development (Sukmawati et al., 2024). Therefore, character education intervention at this stage needs to be implemented in a planned, sustainable, and values-based manner that is relevant to children's developmental needs. In Darul Hasanah Kindergarten, character education is the main pillar in the learning process that is developed holistically.

The results of the research obtained through direct observation, interviews with principals, teachers, and parents, and review of supporting documents show that the formation of children's religious character at Darul Hasanah Kindergarten is carried out through habituation of structured religious activities. Children are accustomed to praying before and after activities, including when starting learning, before and after eating, and when leaving and entering the bathroom. Religious activities are also reinforced by the practice of reading short letters and hadith, as well as the implementation of ablutions and congregational prayers every Friday. This habit is not only symbolic but has become a routine that is embedded in children's daily lives.

Opinion of Mrs. Sumaryani, namely "The formation of children's character in Darul Hasanah Kindergarten is very prioritized because it is the main foundation in educating early childhood," she further stated, "character education is not just knowing good or bad in one thing, but children practice the rules obediently, queuing neatly, lining up in line, not stacking their friends' sandals and throwing garbage in its place." In addition to the habituation of worship, the application of the 5S culture (Smile, Greeting, Greeting, Polite, Polite) is an important element in strengthening children's religious values. The 5S culture is applied in children's social interactions with teachers and peers, which indirectly teaches the values of compassion, respect, and tolerance. This is reinforced by the statement of the Head of Darul Hasanah Kindergarten, Mrs. Sumaryani, who emphasized that character education does not only teach the concept of right and wrong but also forms real behavior such as queuing in an orderly manner, maintaining cleanliness, and not stacking sandals carelessly.

Data analysis shows that the habituation carried out at Darul Hasanah Kindergarten has had a significant impact on the development of children's religious character. This character is reflected in honest behavior, responsibility for tasks, discipline, empathy for others, and concern for the environment. This finding supports the concept of value internalization proposed by (Lickona, 2013), which emphasizes that optimal character education needs to include three main dimensions: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. These three dimensions appear to be integrated into the practice of character education at Darul Hasanah Kindergarten through exemplary approaches, habituation, and systematic value reinforcement.

Furthermore, the results of this study show that religious character education implemented at Darul Hasanah Kindergarten forms not only individual piety (*habluminallah*) but also social piety (*habluminannas*) and ecological care (*abluminal'alam*). Children not only learn to obey God but are

also taught to maintain harmonious relationships with others and the environment. This strategy demonstrates the effectiveness of the religious character approach as a foundation for forming a generation that is not only intellectually superior but also has moral integrity and social responsibility. Instilling the value of faith in children is to uphold the teachings of religious teachings and make it the foundation for shaping children's morals. Therefore educators and parents are expected to have professional and comprehensive expertise, especially in choosing the most effective methods (Oktarina & Latipah, 2021).

Thus, the results of this study underline the urgency of strengthening religious character education from an early age as a strategic effort to create a generation with noble character, strong spirituality, and high social and ecological awareness. The character education model at Darul Hasanah Kindergarten can be a best practice that can be replicated and adapted by other early childhood education units in Indonesia (Esmael & Nafiah, 2018).

5S Culture Habituation (Smile, Greet, Salute, Polite, and Courtesy)

The implementation of the 5S culture (Smile, Greet, Salute, Polite, and Courtesy) at Darul Hasanah Kindergarten is an integral part of early childhood character building based on religious values and social care. This habit is not only carried out in the formal context of learning but also covers all children's activities from the time they arrive at school until they return home. The school organizes learning activities in two study group sessions (rumble), namely 07.30-09.30 WIB for Kindergarten A and 09.30-12.30 WIB for Kindergarten B, each consisting of four classes.

Learning activities begin with a consistent routine, such as children lining up neatly in front of the classroom ent, entering the classroom in order, and shaking hands with the teacher. The teacher then leads an ice-breaking activity to build a positive emotional atmosphere. This activity reflects the implementation of a culture of smiles, greetings, and salutations, which is not just a social form but also plays a role in fostering emotional warmth and respect for others. Furthermore, children recite daily prayers, muroja'ah short letters and hadith, and chant sholawat, both in the classroom and in the school prayer room; on Fridays, they are invited to practice ablutions and pray dhuha in the congregation. These activities reflect the strengthening of religious values through structured and consistent habituation methods.

The habituation of the 5S culture is also evident in the daily behavior of children who are accustomed to saying polite words such as "please", "sorry", and "thank you". This attitude shows that children not only understand but have also internalized the values of courtesy. Research by Oktaviani et al (2020) confirms that the cultivation of polite language habits has an important role in shaping the child's personality so that it is easily accepted in the social environment. In addition, children are accustomed to returning borrowed items in good condition, which reflects an honest and trustworthy

attitude. This is in line with the view of Juanda (2019) that honesty is harmony between mind, heart, and action and is an important foundation in the formation of children's character.

Religious character building through the 5S culture at Darul Hasanah Kindergarten is also strengthened by the exemplary method. Teachers are important role models in children's lives who display positive behavior that can be imitated. As explained by Cahyaningrum et al. (2017), the exemplary method is the most basic approach in character education because early childhood is basically a master imitator. Teachers who welcome children in the morning, greet them and show a polite attitude become concrete examples that shape children's behavior naturally.

The habituation method applied at Darul Hasanah Kindergarten also includes strengthening the values of environmental care. Children are encouraged and guided to participate in maintaining the school environment by disposing of garbage in its proper place and caring for plants around the classroom. This supports the formation of ecological awareness which is part of the moral teachings in religion. Tsania & Rigianti (2023) emphasized that the 5S culture not only reflects social ethics but is also a manifestation of religious teachings in the form of concrete actions.

The results of observations and interviews show that the 5S cultural habituation integrated with religious values and environmental awareness has had a positive impact on children's behavior. Children become more disciplined, honest, caring, and responsible. This reinforces Amilda's (2017) view that the habituation method is an effective milestone in the formation of children's faith and morals because it involves children directly in the practice of these values.

Thus, the results of this study indicate that the application of the 5S culture combined with religious values and environmental care attitudes can consistently shape the character of early childhood as a whole. Darul Hasanah Kindergarten has succeeded in creating a learning environment that not only encourages cognitive development but also supports children's moral and spiritual development. This strategy can be used as a good practice model for other ECE institutions to strengthen character education holistically.

Habituation of Environmental Care Attitudes

Character education at Darul Hasanah Kindergarten not only emphasizes moral and religious aspects in social relations between people, but also expands it to human relations with nature as part of spiritual responsibility. The integration of environmental care values into religious character building is carried out through a consistent, contextual, and applicable habituation approach in children's daily activities.

Based on the results of field observations and documentation, teachers at Darul Hasanah Kindergarten actively instill the values of environmental care in children through various concrete

activities, such as tidying up toys after use, keeping the classroom clean, using used items such as planting media and games and throwing garbage in its place. One of the practices instilled is to familiarize children to directly carve pencils on the trash can so that the splinters are not scattered and when they see garbage on the floor, children will pick it up and throw it in the trash. This reflects the internalization of ecological awareness through simple but meaningful actions (Khoirunnisa et al., 2021).

The Clean and Healthy Friday program, which is carried out every two weeks, is also an effective medium for fostering responsibility and love for the environment. Children are involved in community service activities, cleaning classrooms and school grounds, and planting and caring for plants. This approach not only educates children to live clean and healthy but also provides a practical understanding of the importance of protecting the environment as part of God's mandate. As emphasized by Noviani (2024), in Islam, humans are appointed as caliphs on earth, so preserving nature is part of worship and a form of gratitude for God's blessings.

Environmental education that is applied also fulfills important indicators in fostering an attitude of environmental care, according to Irfianti et al. (2016), namely: a) Environmental maintenance through activities to keep the class and school clean; b) Reduction of carbon emissions, through energy and water savings; c) Sorting and handling waste according to its type, by separating organic and inorganic waste; d) Energy saving, by habitually turning off water taps and lights after use.

However, the indicator of reducing the use of plastic has not been fully achieved. Observations show that some children still bring lunch in disposable plastic packaging. Responding to this condition, the principal designed a follow-up program to reduce plastic waste by involving parents. This strategic step includes an appeal for children to bring lunch using their food containers and drinking bottles, as well as controlling plastic snacks around the school area.

The habit of waste management implemented in the school environment reflects a systematic effort to introduce the classification of waste types from an early age. As stated by Kurniati et al. (2019), the skill of sorting waste is an important foundation in building environmentally friendly behavior that can last into adulthood. This activity also supports children's cognitive abilities in classifying objects based on their function and shape while strengthening children's engagement in responsible social practices.

Furthermore, the cultivation of environmental care attitudes in Darul Hasanah Kindergarten has a close relationship with the formation of children's religious character. From the perspective of Islamic education, the religious character reflects human attachment in three main aspects, namely to Allah (*hablum minallah*), to others (*hablum minannas*), and to the universe (*hablum minal 'alam*). Therefore, environmental education is not only an ecological issue but part of the spiritual dimension that instills a sense of gratitude, responsibility, and trust in God's creation (Purwanti, 2017).

As part of a holistic character approach, cultivating environmental care attitudes in early childhood in the *golden age* is a long-term investment in creating a generation that is intellectually and emotionally intelligent while having moral integrity, social care, and deep ecological spirituality. This reinforces the idea of Adawiyah (2022) that early childhood is a crucial period in instilling fundamental values, including awareness of protecting the earth as a common heritage of God.

The urgency of religious character building holistically includes caring for God, humans, and nature developed at Darul Hasanah Kindergarten is also reinforced in Islamic teachings, namely: (1) Instilling the value of responsibility as a caliph on earth, in surah Al-Baqarah verse 30, Allah SWT establishes humans as caliphs on this earth, who must protect and manage the environment properly as a mandate from Him (Harahap, 2015). (2) Developing an attitude of gratitude reflected through speech, behavior thanking God, and protecting the environment as a form of appreciation for natural resources with wise and non-exploitive behavior (Afni & Taja, 2022). (3) Maintaining cleanliness is part of faith, such as the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. narrated by Ahmad, it reads "Annadzoofatu minal imaan," meaning that cleanliness is part of faith (H.R. Ahmad). Maintaining cleanliness is the obligation of every believer, especially Muslims, because Islam recommends maintaining the balance of nature and not doing destructive actions (Ismail, 2021). (4) Fostering compassion for fellow creatures, in Islamic teachings, humans are taught to treat plants, animals, and all of Allah SWT's creations well, not to destroy nature or hurt it without the right reasons (Fitriyah & Hasibuan, 2021).

Various efforts that have been implemented at Darul Hasanah Kindergarten show that the integration of the 5S culture (Smile, Greet, Greet, Polite, and Santun) and caring attitude towards the environment in shaping children's religious character has a positive impact. Children are not only guided to recognize, but also familiarize themselves with applying religious teachings in everyday life, but also begin to show concern for the surrounding environment. In addition, the sustainability of this habituation is highly dependent on the active role of teachers and parents. Teachers at Darul Hasanah Kindergarten try to be role models in every activity, while parents support by implementing the values taught at school into family life. Good collaboration between school and family plays an important role in the consistent and sustainable character building of children. However, there are some challenges in implementing this program, such as raising parents' awareness to reduce plastic use and ensuring that children continue to apply character values outside the school environment. Therefore, the school needs to continue to conduct socialization and education for parents so that this program can run more effectively.

Thus, the findings of this study prove that the integration of environmental care values in religious character education at Darul Hasanah Kindergarten is able to create synergy between the formation of noble morals and ecological concerns. The habituation strategy applied has proven effective in building positive habits of children that not only have an impact on daily behavior but also strengthen the foundation of spiritual values that are comprehensive.

CONCLUSION

The formation of religious character in early childhood at Darul Hasanah Kindergarten is carried out through the habituation of 5S behavior (Smile, Greeting, Greeting, Polite, and Courteous) combined with a caring attitude towards the environment. The application of the 5S culture contributes to forming positive attitudes in children's social interactions, such as respecting others, empathizing, and having a disciplinary attitude that is in line with religious norms. Meanwhile, strengthening care for the environment helps children understand responsibility, foster gratitude, and appreciate nature as part of God's creation.

These two approaches complement each other in shaping religious character as a whole. Through habituation to behave well towards others and the environment, children are formed into individuals with praiseworthy morals and environmental awareness. In the field of early childhood education, this research contributes to how simple habituation that is consistently applied to children can foster religious values and ecological awareness in children from an early age. In addition, it also contributes to the development of studies that highlight the urgency of integration between character education and environmental education. These two approaches are seen as effective holistic strategies in shaping children's personalities holistically.

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