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Analysis of Problems in Implementing Character Education at the Islamic Elementary School Level

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ABSTRACT

Background: Character education has become a fundamental component of Islamic elementary education, aiming to foster students' moral values, discipline, responsibility, and social awareness alongside academic achievement. However, its implementation often encounters challenges related to curriculum integration, teacher practices, and the consistency of character-building activities within the school environment. **Objective:** This study aims to identify the challenges and implementation of character education in Islamic Elementary Schools. **Method:** This study employed a qualitative research approach conducted at MI Al-Ittihadul Islamiyah, Ampenan, in 2022. The participants consisted of teachers and students selected purposively. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. **Results:** The findings indicate that character education has been implemented effectively through the integration of character values into school management, classroom learning, religious activities, and extracurricular programs. Teachers play a central role in modeling positive behavior, while school culture and collaborative participation strengthen students' character development. **Conclusion:** Character education in Islamic Elementary Schools is more effective when implemented through a holistic approach integrating school governance, curriculum, teacher role modeling, and student participation. **Contribution:** This study provides empirical evidence and practical insights for educators and policymakers in developing sustainable character education programs within Islamic elementary education and offers a reference for future studies in similar educational contexts.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Various solutions as alternatives to character problems have been proposed as a solution and preventive effort to overcome the nation's character problems (Yulianti & Marlianti, 2021). The study of character education is the most widely discussed study at this time. Education is considered a preventive alternative to overcome the nation's cultural and character problems because education can develop the quality of the nation's generation in various aspects. Education plays a very important role in terms of national character building (Wahidin, 2017).

The implementation of character education in schools is very important in creating a more inherent character (Utomo & Alawiyah, 2022). The application process will be successful if it can be instilled in each individual from an early age. Likewise, in educational units, character values must be an absolute necessity, such as in Islamic elementary schools must intensify character education as a provision for improving student character in the future (Humaeroh & Dewi, 2021). This is a form of support for the educational objectives of basic education in laying the foundations of intelligence, intellectual, social, emotional, and spiritual as a preparation for students in the next level

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of education. With a strong and solid character foundation, students will not be easily influenced by actions that are not by the nation's character values (Prihatiningsih, 2021).

Character education in Islamic elementary schools is very important, considering that the age of students at the Islamic elementary school level is in the concrete operational and formal operational phases, in which students will act according to what they see (Yanto, 2020). Islamic elementary school is the beginning of self-formation, so the character must also be built properly at this age (Rais, 2023). Character education in elementary schools can build character and also be able to give a pleasant impression to students because in implementing character education each school has its way that is tailored to the characteristics of students in elementary schools. Teachers play a very important role in character building, where every day students are with their teachers, and teachers know how to apply character values to their students (Lestari et al., 2021).

The role of teachers in schools has made various efforts to overcome difficulties in character education both individually (Agung, 2017). All of them are adjusted to the level of difficulty faced, as well as those that are joint in nature such as holding various activities such as student education seminars, and school activities involving parents. In dealing with students, teachers are always patient, provide understanding give students examples and/or exemplars and give reprimands and advice in a good way, always repeat teaching, and try to convey teaching through words that are easy for students to understand (Putri, et al., 2022).

On the other hand, in the practice of planning, implementation, and evaluation, there are some obstacles in the application of character education itself, so it is still often found that students are late coming to school, do not respect their teachers, leave the class when the learning process is underway. Some students like to say dirty words, fight with their friends, and other bad behavior, while all of these are manifestations of character/morals (Utomo & Pahlevi, 2022). The implementation of character education in schools is very important in creating a mo-re inherent character (Solehat & Ramadan, 2021). The application process will be successful if it can be instilled in each individual from an early age (Dini, 2022). Likewise, in educational units, character values must be an absolute necessity, such as in elementary schools must intensify character education as a provision for improving student character in the future (Saad & Hakim, 2022). This is a form of support for the educational objectives of basic education in laying the foundations of intelligence, intellectual, social, emotional, and spiritual as a preparation for students in the next level of education. With a strong and solid character foundation, students will not be easily influenced by actions that are not by the nation's character values (Nurwardani et al., 2016).

The integration of character education in education management is a government effort to develop students' positive character (Rahman & Wassalwa, 2019). School character-forming environment management is carried out so that the school environment can be a place conducive to the seeding and development of students' positive character (Putra, 2021). In addition, school characterforming environment management aims to create a school physical environment and a school psychologicalsocial-cultural environment that is conducive to the seeding and development of students' positive character (Sukadari et al., 2015).

Based on the results of preliminary observations at Madrasah Ibtaiyah Al-Ittihadul Islamiyah which is one of the madrasah ibtidaiah in Mataram City, also the oldest madrasah ibtidaiah on the island of Lombok. The implementation of education at MI Al-Ittihadul Islamiyah has used the 2013 Curriculum which upholds character values. In addition to learning, character education at MI AlIttihadul Islamiyah is applied through habituation to good character values in the school environment.

The implementation of character education in madrasah ibtidaiah is very important, not all schools that have long-organized education can implement character education to the fullest. Therefore, researchers are interested in researching the application of character education in Madrasah Ibtidaiah Al-Ittihadul Islamiyah, the results of the research obtained can be the best research on the application of character education in MI Al-Ittihadul Islamiyah. Character education is the duty of all parties, both family, school, and community environment, especially student garden schools. This research tries to find out the problems faced by schools in implementing character education and the efforts made considering that so far there has been no continuity between the character values taught at school and home. This research is expected to provide information to teachers in schools about the importance of character education in Islamic elementary school students and provide information about the obstacles faced and efforts that can be made to overcome the problems faced in character education.

This research aims to (1) find out the form of character education implementation applied by Islamic Elementary School; (2) find out the obstacles (problems) in the implementation of character education applied by Islamic Elementary School; (3) find out the efforts to overcome obstacles in the implementation of character education applied by Islamic Elementary School. The research focuses on analyzing the problems of implementing character education at the Islamic elementary school level.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

The research approach uses qualitative research, which is research that seeks to intensively study the background, current situation, and social interaction, individual, group, institution, and society. In collecting, managing, and analyzing data this research does not use statistical analysis, so this research uses a qualitative approach, namely research procedures that produce descriptive data in the form of words or oral from people or observed behavior.

This study aims to describe and explain the difficulties of implementing character education at MI Al-Ittihadul Islamiyah. In addition, in this study, researchers will reveal the phenomena of reality or real conditions while in the field.

2.2 Researcher's Role

To obtain complete data, researchers involve themselves by going directly to the field and making careful observations of the object of research. The researcher acts as a key instrument as well as data collection. This method is carried out to obtain accurate and complete data regarding "An analysis of the problems of implementing character education in Islamic elementary schools".

Character Education in Islamic Elementary School".

- a) Conducting field observations of the research location, the surrounding social conditions, and all school residents.
- b) Conducting interviews with several related parties such as the principal, curriculum deputy, teachers, and students to obtain accurate information and data.
- c) Collecting documents in the form of madrasah data and taking pictures of the social situation and activities in MI Al-Ittihadul Islamiyah.
- d) Concluding the results of observations, interviews, and documentation obtained to overcome various possibilities in the form of shortcomings at the research location, so that researchers can find the best solution. apart from several things done by researchers in the process of research activities.

2.3 Research Subject

This research was conducted at MI Al-Ittihadul Islamiyah, Ampenan, Ampenan sub-district in 2022. The research subjects were teachers and students.

2.4 Data Collection

The method used in data collection in this study uses:

- a) Observation Method. Researchers used this technique to observe and explore information about how character values have been applied by students, both characters seen from interactions with teachers, employees at school, and their environment.
- b) Interview Method. Researchers chose to use a type of structured interview, which is an interview in which researchers use interview guidelines that are arranged systematically and completely in data collection. The interview guide used is only an outline of the things that will be asked of the respondent. The data to be obtained with this method is about the problem of implementing character education in schools.
- c) Documentation method. Data collection using documents in the form of data and photographs regarding the social situation and activities carried out at MI Al-Ittihadul Islamiyah Ampenan.

2.5 Data Validity

The technique used in checking data validity is through triangulation, including (1) source triangulation. To test the credibility of the data is done by checking the data that has been obtained through several sources; (2) triangulation technique. Triangulation of techniques to test the credibility of data is done by checking data to the same source with different techniques. For example, data obtained by interview is checked by observation, documentation, or questionnaire; (3) time triangulation. Data collected by interview techniques in the morning when the source is still fresh, there are not many problems, and will provide more valid data so that it is more credible.

2.6 Data Analysis

The data analysis process consists of three steps, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

- a) Data Reduction. Data that has been reduced will provide a clearer picture, and make it easier for researchers to collect data. Clearer, and make it easier for researchers to conduct further data collection and data collection and search for it when needed.
- b) Data Display. Data displayed in the form of narrative text describing the social situation at MI Al-Ittihadul Islamiyah. In addition, researchers display the display of the network in the form of relationships or interrelationships as well as the role between school residents in the application of character education.
- c) Conclusion Drawing/Verification. The initial conclusions put forward are still temporary and will change if no strong evidence is found that supports the next stage of data collection.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

The results of the study describe several forms of character education implementation that have been carried out by MI Al-Ittihadul Islamiyah Ampenan School as follows:

a) *Implementation of Character Education in School Management*

The implementation of character education in MI Al-Ittihadul Islamiyah Ampenan can already be seen with some student activities that reflect good character values. From the results of the researcher's review of the documents in the school found that character education has been contained in the vision and mission of the school that contains character as well as several regulations or rules made to emphasize how students should behave and behave while in the madrasah.

b) *Application of Character Education in Learning Activities*

The implementation of character education in learning activities is explained by the principal, that the lesson plans developed by teachers have contained various character values. This is also justified by the character values that are inserted in the learning materials with predetermined methods, although the implementation is still not optimal. The results of the documentation review found that the Learning Implementation Plan made by the class teacher contained character values. While the results of observations made by researchers in the classroom show that learning activities run quite well, before starting learning the teacher gives rules.

Before the learning process takes place, the teacher has compiled and prepared a lesson plan that contains character values in the subject matter that will be delivered to students. Researchers say that the learning process was quite conducive, although it was a little out of the learning design that had been prepared by the class teacher, such as students not fully complying with the rules that had been agreed upon. As stated by the class teacher "the learning plan becomes the teacher's backup and guide during learning, but in the design, there must be a discrepancy with the predetermined learning plan.

c) *Implementation of Character Education through Ex-tracurricular Activities*

Extracurricular activities show the cultivation of character values as explained by the principal. In this case, the extracurricular activities of little da'i and tahfidz qur'an aim to instill religious values in students. Scouts are expected to instill the values of discipline, responsibility, and care. In extracurricular activities, it is expected to instill the value of cooperation between students. However, the number of participants who take part in these extracurricular activities is not large.

The implementation of character education through extracurricular activities at MI Al-Ittihadul Islamiyah Ampenan has been running quite well, the participation of students is also quite good, as for extracurricular activities at MI Al-Ittiadul Islamiyah, namely, Scouts, and Olympics.

d) *Constraints in the Implementation of Character Education*

The lack of teacher professionalism is justified by data on the number of teachers who have met professionalism standards in the form of certification, which is only 25% of the total number of teachers. In implementing character education in the classroom due to lack of mastering character-based learning methods. While teachers are the main component in education, especially in learning activities, teachers must be able to become professional educators who master learning methods well.

Other obstacles also arise from the community environment that is less supportive of the implementation of character education. Given the location of the school in a residential neighborhood and adjacent to the market and beach, this was conveyed by several class teachers who explained that some guardian parents work as traders in the

market and on the beach so that students are accustomed to associations that are slightly out of character values that have been instilled at school. The bad thing is then carried over at school and makes it difficult for students to become students who obey the rules. Character education is not only the obligation of teachers at school, but it needs cooperation between all parties, both cooperation between parents and cooperation with the surrounding community to form an environment with character.

e) Efforts to Overcome Obstacles to the Implementation of Character Education

To overcome obstacles in the implementation of character education, there are several steps that the principal has taken. First, improving teacher professionalism. The principal hopes that teachers will get special training to implement character education professionally, not just by socializing it. With this, the principal will carry out special evaluation activities to discuss the implementation of character education in MI Al-Ittihadul Islamiyah and its implementation strategy. In addition, the school will also re-manage extracurricular activities so that they can be carried out optimally.

Second, school cooperation with the community. Other efforts are also made to improve cooperation between schools and parents, namely by continuing to support the implementation of character education. As well as cooperation with the surrounding community by socializing school programs to create a social environment with character.

Third, reducing the adverse effects of gadget use. Efforts made by schools to reduce the adverse effects of gadget use on the character of students. The efforts made by schools are to educate students regarding how to use gadgets for students. The use of gadgets can affect the implementation of character education, especially in shifting the values of national character that students get from playing with gadgets. This can be seen from students who follow adult songs and behave like their idol stars that are not by the identity of the Indonesian nation.

3.2. Discussion

The implementation of character education at MI Al-Ittihadul Islamiyah has been integrated into school management, learning activities, and extracurricular activities. In school management, the application of character education can be seen in several documents found. Starting from the vision and mission of the school which contains character and is followed up with various rules and regulations that have been agreed upon.

In character education learning activities, the main thing is done by designing lesson plans that contain character values and using methods that can support the implementation of character education well. While in extracurricular activities the application of character education at MI Al-Ittihadul Islamiyah is evidenced by several types of extracurricular activities, such as Scouts which are expected to be able to other extracurricular activities such as religious and other activities that can shape the good character of students, as well as activities.

A professional teacher must be able to manage good teaching and learning interactions (Keay et al., 2019). Teachers must be able to understand the nature of learning, the factors that influence learning activities, as well as the teaching and learning process, and the characteristics of learning in various fields, namely knowledge, feelings, interests, attitudes, values, and skills (Lawrence & Tar, 2018). Then a teacher will find it easy to convey a material so that the interaction between teacher and student can be achieved (Puspitarini & Hanif, 2019).

Professional teachers must be familiar with the functions and programs of guidance and counseling (Atan, 2013). This is done to students so that teachers can guide their students as well as possible (Hikmah et al., 2022). This is usually done during the teaching and learning process and outside the teaching and learning process. Teachers need to have a clear picture of the tasks they will perform in guidance activities (Hwang & Chien, 2022). The clarity of this task can motivate teachers to play an active role in guidance activities and they are responsible for the implementation of these activities. Teachers' tasks in guidance activities are not limited to the teaching and learning process or in the classroom, but also activities outside the classroom (Seman et al., 2017).

Character education is carried out by parents at all times, especially during daily activities such as eating together, playing, etc. (Utomo et al., 2022). Meanwhile, teachers stated that they instill character every day when interacting with students and are done through giving direct examples to students and asking students to practice directly (Fisher & Frey, 2021). The success of character education does not only lie in the existing program at school (Isom et al., 2021). Rather, it requires cooperation between teachers and parents.

Character education at school will be meaningless if parents at home do not familiarize the character values that have been familiarized at school (Davis, 2003). Character values can be presented according to the level of understanding of early childhood characters (Pamungkas et al., 2021), educators can recognize and guide students at every step of education, so that the concept of character education begins to grow from an early age (Salasiah et al., 2018).

One of the main requirements for a successful life in the 21st century is character education (Affandy et al., 2019). Therefore, a balance between competitive behavior and collaborative behavior is needed according to the context of the life lived, students are required to be able to master various basic skills, as well as applied skills (especially in the form of soft skills) which are the basis for applying character, to be able to succeed in this challenging 21st-century life (Cimatti, 2016).

The success in education is largely due to the success of educators, parents, and society, when measured by the achievement of students' academic targets (York et al., 2019). The goal of education is mainly aimed at making students cognitively intelligent, while the internalization of character education in learning activities receives less attention, if any, only cognitive-oriented (memorization), lacking appreciation and appreciation which can then foster further student learning passion (Schneider et al., 2022). This leads to negative impacts that arise on students, ultimately students only pursue high scores because the approach used is too cognitive (Dunlosky et al., 2013). What is more concerning about the overly cognitive approach to students is the emergence of behavior that is not by character values, such as cheating, plagiarizing, getting answer keys, and so on (Burnett et al., 2016).

One of the efforts in implementing character education is to instill social values in students (Zulela et al., 2022). Social values need to be instilled in learners because they will serve as a frame of reference for interaction and behavior, and then their presence can be accepted by others (Boykin, 2020). This is in Raven's opinion that "social values are a set of society attitudes considered as a truth and it is becoming the standard for people to act to achieve democratic and harmonious life" which means that social values are a set of individual attitudes that are valued as a truth and used as a standard of behavior to obtain a democratic and harmonious community life.

The most important stage and directly in contact with daily learning is the integration of character education through the learning process (Amini et al., 2017). The integration becomes one of the models applied (Belete et al., 2017). This model is pursued with the paradigm that all teachers are character educators. All subjects are also assumed to have a mission to shape the noble character of students. In addition to this model, other models are used such as the subject matter model in the form of its subject, which makes character education a separate subject that requires a separate formulation of content standards, competency standards and basic competencies, syllabus, lesson plans, teaching materials, learning strategies, and assessment in schools. This model will increase the burden on students who have been given so many subjects. For this reason, the integration mode of education in subjects is considered more effective and efficient than the subject matter model.

The difficulty faced by parents in student character education is the presence of close relatives who have different views from parents (Aran & Naye bkabir, 2018). The results showed that parents involved close relatives such as grandmothers and siblings as well as helpers, with the three biggest reasons being more time with students, they are with students every day, and there is no one else at home.

In addition, teachers have different difficulties from parents (Ozmen et al., 2016). Teachers' difficulties are mainly due to students who do not want to apply what the teacher teaches and students who do not understand the values taught (Coman et al., 2020). The age factor and students' ability to digest character values are obstacles for parents and teachers in instilling character. Preschool students are still in the pre-operational stage so it is difficult for them to understand things that are still abstract so parents and teachers need to use methods that are acceptable to students (Ruswanto & Jupri, 2023).

Character education in schools will not succeed without the support and involvement of parents (Setiawan et al., 2020). This seems to be well understood by teachers and parents (Deslandes et al., 2015). From the data analysis, teachers and parents both stated that parents need to be involved in character education at school. Most parents stated that teachers and parents need to work together in character education, and they realized that character education is not only the teacher's job (Abbas et al., 2021). Meanwhile, teachers feel the importance of parents' involvement in character education, especially so that parents can follow up at home, parents know what is taught at school, so that character education can be carried out optimally.

This kind of awareness and cooperation between teachers and parents will make it easier to instill character values in preschool students, considering that character values are abstract things and cannot be digested by students properly because cognitive development is still at a proportional level as previously explained (Woo, 2014) so that students need help and guidance from parents or other people who are more expert to master difficult tasks. According to Vygotsky (Goswami, 2019) parents and others in the social environment will be able to direct students to achieve tasks that are too difficult for students to achieve through providing motivation, close reciprocal relationships, and learning that is practical and continuous, because learning is a social event that is interpersonal and dynamic. In the application of character education, parents and teachers must have close cooperation with

students, learning must be continuous practice learning so that students can organize and master the sequence of behaviors needed to master targeted skills.

4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

4.1 Research Implications

The findings of this study have important implications for both educational practitioners and policymakers, particularly those involved in Islamic Elementary Schools. The success of character education implementation at MI Al-Ittihadul Islamiyah Ampenan demonstrates that a holistic approach integrating school administration, curriculum, and extracurricular activities can effectively nurture students' character development. This insight encourages schools to adopt comprehensive strategies that not only focus on classroom instruction but also extend to school culture and community engagement. For policymakers, the results suggest that supporting schools in creating environments that foster character education is essential for achieving long-term educational goals. These implications highlight the need for collaboration among educators, administrators, parents, and community leaders to sustain and enhance character education programs in Islamic educational settings.

4.2 Research Contributions

This study provides a valuable reference for future research on character education, especially within the context of Islamic Elementary Schools. By highlighting the practical integration of character education into school life, this study lays the groundwork for further exploration into effective models and practices. It contributes to the growing body of literature on moral and character education in Islamic contexts, offering insights that can inform both theoretical frameworks and practical applications. Future research can build upon these findings by examining character education in diverse school environments, exploring the influence of cultural, social, and family factors, and evaluating the long-term impacts of character education initiatives. In this way, the study not only adds to academic discourse but also supports the continuous improvement of character education in Islamic schools.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

5.1 Research Limitations

A notable limitation of this study lies in its focus on single research site MI Al-Ittihadul Islamiyah, Ampenan and its use of a qualitative methodology centered on interviews, observations, and documentation. This limited scope may introduce a degree of subjectivity, as the findings are shaped by the specific context of the school, including its unique culture, practices, and community dynamics. Furthermore, the absence of data from a broader range of stakeholders, such as parents and external educational authorities, may limit the generalizability of the findings. While the qualitative approach provides valuable, in-depth insights into character education implementation, it lacks the breadth that could be achieved by incorporating diverse data sources or comparative studies across multiple Islamic Elementary Schools.

5.2 Recommendation for Future Research

Future research should expand the scope of investigation to include a larger, more diverse sample of Islamic Elementary Schools to enhance the representativeness and transferability of the findings. Additionally, future studies could employ mixed-methods approaches, integrating quantitative data to complement qualitative insights, thereby strengthening the validity and reliability of the conclusions. Exploring related variables, such as the relationship between parenting styles and character education, the impact of school leadership on character development, or the effectiveness of specific learning strategies and extracurricular programs, could offer richer and more comprehensive perspectives. By addressing these limitations, future research can build upon this study's contributions to develop more effective and scalable models of character education implementation in Islamic educational contexts.

6. CONCLUSION

To implement character education in Madrasah level schools, one of the things that teachers must do is the element of cooperation. This cooperation must be carried out continuously so that parents and teachers have insights and knowledge about the best parenting patterns in character education. Time for sharing between teachers

and parents should be a priority so that communication between teachers and parents is maintained so that the difficulties faced can be overcome together to find the right solution in character education.

The implementation of character education in MI Al-Ittihadul Islamiyah Ampenan has been running quite well by integrating character education in school management activities, learning activities, and extracurricular activities. The obstacles in the implementation of character education in MI Al-Ittihadul Islamiyah are the lack of professionalism of teachers, the adverse impact of the use of gadgets is also an obstacle to the implementation of character education in MI Al-Ittihadul Islamiyah and the state of the school environment that is less supportive of the implementation of character education. Efforts to overcome the obstacles to the implementation of character education in MI Al-Ittihadul Islamiyah are by increasing cooperation between school residents, cooperation with parents, and efforts to reduce the impact of gadget use.

The research conclusion reveals that efforts to overcome obstacles in implementing 21st-century character education in mathematics learning. Principals and teachers overcome obstacles in implementing character education by conducting meetings between teachers and parents to report children's constraints in participating in learning. Providing examples for students with the intention that students can obey school regulations. Another effort is the existence of the 'Mathur Jujur' book developed by the district government which contains daily student activities both at school and outside school. This book is also monitored by teachers and parents.

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Author Contribution Statement

The authors declare that all data presented in this article are the result of data collection in the field.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Ethical Approval Statement

The authors declares that this study was conducted in accordance with research ethics principles and has received ethical approval from the author's institution, including respect for participants' autonomy, confidentiality of data, and ensuring their safety and well-being, as outlined in the applicable research ethics guidelines.

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