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**STRENGTHENING CHARACTER EDUCATION THROUGH SCHOOL CULTURE
IN THE NEW NORMAL ERA: A CASE STUDY AT AL-KARIM LAMPUNG BASIC
NATURAL SCHOOL**

Trio Saputra
Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia
[putrario086@upi.edu/085872536713](mailto:putrario086@upi.edu)

Dasim Budimansyah
Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia
budimansyah@upi.edu

ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the strengthening of character education through school culture that is implemented through the Nature School, as well as the obstacles and efforts made by schools during the current pandemic. This research uses descriptive qualitative research. The research was conducted at Alam Al-Karim Elementary School, Lampung. Based on the results of observations, interviews, and documentation, it was found that schools had implemented strengthening character education through school culture while still prioritizing health protocols which were implemented online and face-to-face. The main focus of the existing character values is Islamic morals which contain certain characters which are also one of the important curricula in the School of Nature. The obstacles that arise are the limited time available and also limited physical communication. However, in this case the school has tried to overcome it, among others, through the creation of a special curriculum in the new normal era. The conclusion of this research is that strengthening character education through the current pandemic and new normal school culture carried out by Al-Karim Nature School is an alternative concept that can be applied in order to make education effective, especially character education as an important goal in education.

Keywords:

Strengthening Character Education, School Culture, School Nature

INTRODUCTION

Education is an alternative for a nation in order to instill character in individuals. Character according to David & Shields (2011) reveals that the essence of education is character (Hill, 2017). So that for a nation, character is the basis of good governance. On the contrary, that the characterless citizen is a threat to society, nation and state. The integrity of every citizen is the only guarantee of good citizenship (Burke, 2015). In addition, through the existence of character education, it is hoped that it can create a more orderly society, have a good understanding of citizenship, and are even more productive as part of the nation and state (Smith, 2013). Therefore, the urgency of shaping the character of citizens through education must continue to be maximized, because through good character the possibility of realizing a civilized nation and state can be realized.

Meanwhile, the character education of the Indonesian nation is based on Pancasila as the foundation of the nation and the vision of life for the Indonesian nation. These characters are in line with the values of life, namely various habits that universally underlie good and harmonious relationships with one another. (Komalasari & Saripudin, 2018). This is in line with how the current grand design of character education is through Strengthening Character Education which carries the values of Pancasila as a core character value that must be instilled through education. Strengthening Character Education is a process of formation, transformation, transmission in developing the potential of students to think good, have good hearts, and behave well in accordance with the values of Pancasila. (Anshori, 2017).

One of the efforts in order to strengthen and instill character values is through habituation in school. Habit is repetition, where through habituation will practice good habits for children (Cahyaningrum, Sudaryanti, & Purwanto, 2017). According to Wibowo (2013) that "Character values need to be grown through the habits of daily life at school (habituation),

namely through school culture because school culture is an alternative to the success of character education itself. (Nurabadi, Arifin, & Andiarini, 2018).

In its application, according to Lickona (in Ace Suryadi, 2014: 99) states that there are six main elements for the process of forming a moral culture in schools, namely the principal as a pioneer, a disciplined school, a strong sense of kinship, democracy in school management, strong cooperation, as well as a commitment to take the time to solve problems (Ummah, 2018). This emphasizes that, in ⁴efforts to strengthen character education in schools, it requires ⁴the integration of all elements in schools. so, the effectiveness of strengthening ⁴character education can be maximized properly.

In 2020, ²¹the Indonesian nation will enter a new normal era where this is caused by the COVID-19 pandemic which also involves all elements of life globally. One of the areas affected by this is education. At present, education in Indonesia is directed at the online ²¹teaching and learning process and there are also several regions ²¹that have implemented face-to-face with a note that they still prioritize health protocols. With these conditions, the Ministry of Education and Culture (2020) asks principals and teachers to continue to look for effective and efficient learning models that can be used in these conditions. (Labudasari, 2020).

One school that has implemented learning with the typical concept of its school in the current new normal is the Nature School. Based on research conducted by researchers at Alam Al-Karim Elementary School, Lampung, it was found that the school had implemented learning with new concepts and curricula amid the current new normal conditions. This is implemented as a step to face learning in the midst of the current pandemic by not leaving the characteristics of schools as schools that focus on character education.

Materials and Methods

This study used a qualitative research design. The method of data collection is through primary and secondary data collection. Primary data were obtained from observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, while secondary data came from some existing literature and were relevant to this study. The data analysis process includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The informants of this study involved the Principal, Deputy Principal, and facilitator or teacher. This research was conducted at Alam Al-Karim Elementary School, Lampung, which is located on Jl. Elang Kelurahan No.RT.02, Pinang Jaya, Kemiling, Bandar Lampung City, Lampung Province.

Results and Discussion

Character Education Strengthening Program at Alam Al-Karim Elementary School, Lampung

Strengthening Character Education is an educational movement under the responsibility of the education unit as an effort to strengthen the character of students through harmonization of heart, feeling, thinking, and sports by involving cooperation between educational units, families and communities. (Perdana, 2018). Strengthening character education contains five main character values, namely religious, nationalist, mutual cooperation, independence and integrity, all of which are extracted from the values of Pancasila. Alam Al-Karim Elementary School is one of the educational concepts that is still integrated with other Nature Schools, where according to Murdiani and Suhendi (2012, they say that Nature School is not the name of a school, but an educational concept in which students not only learn in nature, but also learn. with nature (Sagala, Nuangchalerm, Saregar, Zaky, & Islami, 2019).

Based on the research, Strengthening Character Education at Alam Al-Karim Elementary School in Lampung is directed at building character values that are in accordance with Islam. This, based on the concept of the School of Nature itself, is to return to the Al-Quran and Sunnah (Safar, 2016). The strengthening of Islamic character is a characterization formed from Islamic values based on the prophetic education mission of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, which is a system that is inherent as a spirit and also a moral basis for the overall implementation of the existing educational process. (Mawardi, Shalikhah, & Baihaqi, 2020). Even so, in implementing the existing character education strengthening process also does not leave the concept of the main values that exist in strengthening character education as instructed by the government..

School Culture at Al-Karim Natural Elementary School, Lampung

School culture is a habit that is done in school to develop good habits that exist in students so that it becomes a character that is inherent in students (Labudasari, 2020). The school culture design applied at Alam Al-Karim Elementary School is in the form of habituation and exemplary processes. According to Komalasari & Saripudin (2017), habituation is a process of forming attitudes and behaviors that tend to be permanent and automatic through a repetitive learning process. (Keraf & Komalasari, 2019). The habituation process not only teaches right or wrong knowledge, but can also allow students to feel good and bad values. (Rachman, 2017). Meanwhile, the concept of exemplary is the right method in character education, because the exemplary method is an educational method that is applied through good role models ⁴ in the form of real behavior that can be observed by students. (Hapsari & Iftayani, 2016). This is also appropriate when applied to children of elementary school age, because the characteristics of elementary school children are imitating, and also

learning to model characters from their surroundings. The several forms of school culture in Alam Al-Karim Lampung Elementary School are as follows.

NO	Name of Program / Activity	Activity Description	Character developed
1	Morning Activity	Morning Activity Activities in the form of thematic activities in order to prepare students before carrying out the teaching and learning process in schools. This program is approximately 15-30 minutes in duration. Some of the activities are usually playing (outdoors) with teacher supervision, and cleaning the school environment together.	Gotong Royong
2	Daily worship	Daily worship which is performed as a habit is divided into two, namely shallat daily worship and prayer	Religious
3	Murajaah Qur'an	Murajaah Qur'an Murajaah or the process of memorizing Al-Quran verses according to the student's level. besides memorizing certain hadiths.	Religious
4	Apple Morning	Apple Morning Apple morning is held incidentally, such as national day celebrations as well as a pre-start activity before starting important school activities	Nationalist
5	Snack Time	Snack Time Snack Time is an activity carried out by students as a break or pause before carrying out further learning. The strengthening of character can be seen from several special rules, namely that each student at the basic level is given responsibility for each item (such as lunch boxes, tissue / hand rags, spoons, and so on).	Independence, integrity

Table 1: Culture of Al-Karim Lampung Elementary School

School culture in the morning activity is a program designed in order to prepare students before entering the teaching and learning process. this activity is carried out in the early morning In the implementation, students are given time to play the game simultaneously facilitated and supervised by the teacher. In this case, apart from being a pre-learning process, this activity is also carried out as a means to shape student character such as responsibility for the facilities and time given, as well as discipline on the time available. Apart from playing together, Morning Activities are usually carried out in the form of mutual cooperation to clean the school environment and the environment around the school in order to create love and concern for the environment and the natural surroundings.

The next school culture is in the form of daily worship activities. In this case, daily worship is in the form of prayer and shallat as obligatory worship as a Muslim. The daily prayer service is a habit that is peculiar to the Nature school, which includes getting used to praying first before doing any activity. Meanwhile, shallat is an habituation in the form of shallat dhuha in the morning and shallat in congregation during the day. This is an effort made by schools to form religious character in students.

Another school culture in the form of murajaah activities or the process of memorizing Al-Quran and hadith verses is an activity that must be carried out by students. The habituation is also pursued in order to develop the existing religious character of the students. This murajaah process is directly guided by a special teacher who has qualified abilities in terms of reading the Al-Quran and memorizing it.

The school culture in the form of Apple Morning activities is carried out incidentally. Usually held on big days or national days. The agenda is in the form of ceremonies that often run like other ceremonies, such as raising the red and white flag, singing mandatory songs, praying and so on according to the context of the warnings. Through the Apel Pagi activity,

one of the character values to be instilled is the value of nationalist character as one of the important characters that is instilled through school.

The school culture in the form of Snack Time activities is a characteristic of habituation in Nature School, which is in the form of eating light meals together but is done together and has its own rules that must be done by students. For example, students queue when they want to take food, until students are required to bring their own eating utensils and are given the responsibility to always clean the equipment they carry. This is an effort to instill independence and responsibility and integrity of students.

Learning in the New Normal Era of Alam Al-Karim Elementary School, Lampung

One of the areas affected by the current Covid 19 pandemic is the education sector. ³¹ Based on the direction of the Ministry of Education and Culture (2020) learning activities are currently being carried out online in order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus disease (Covid-19)(Dewi, 2020). At present, several impacts that can be felt ²¹ in the teaching and learning process include changes in the learning system which are currently being transferred to the online learning process which has become a new education scheme, as well as the emergence of gaps in the community, especially with regard to the economy because the learning load is converted to online (Aji, 2020). This also applies to Alam Al-Karim Primary School in Lampung, where learning is currently being transferred online. ³⁴ Based on the results ³³ of the research that in order to strive for the teaching and learning process during the pandemic, Al-Karim Lampung Natural Elementary School made several efforts, including by creating a new curriculum by integrating with the prevailing conditions and government instructions. The curriculum is made permanent by promoting learning by prioritizing character, namely Islamic morals as one of the characteristics of the School of Nature. In addition, the curriculum is also

held face-to-face, but still in accordance with the health protocol, the division of two days is carried out online, while the other day is done face-to-face with a limited number.

In intensifying the teaching and learning process and means of strengthening character, Alam Al-Karim Elementary School also involves the role of parents ³⁰ in order to further strengthen the learning process and strengthen the character of students in particular. Lickona, Schapss & Lewis explained that the partnership between schools and parents is important, especially in developing children's character (Ramdan & Fauziah, 2019). This is done by developing intensive communication in the form of activity reports and regular evaluations. In addition to online and face-to-face learning, the school has also designed a new learning design, namely "Green Therapy" in the form of programs with outdoor activities (usually carried out in the open) and still implementing health protocols. According to the school, this was carried out as an alternative to overcome boredom learning amid the current outbreak conditions. The activities are in the form of education on health protocols, light games as a means of refreshing, and other agendas related to other outdoors. Trips outside the field ¹⁰ are examples of learning experiences because they provide opportunities for learners to see and experience the world outside the classroom, challenge previously held ideas, expand their thinking, and engage them in active learning. (Jose, Patrick, & Moseley, 2017). In addition, the program is also implemented as a means of strengthening character, especially the character of discipline in the midst of efforts to maintain children's discipline amid the current outbreak.

Conclusion

Strengthening Character Education is an important effort to be carried out by schools as a vehicle to strengthen the character of their students. The role of schools in strengthening character requires careful planning and efforts, so that every plan or program that is made can be carried out well and on target. Alam Al-Karim Elementary School as one of the schools that

has a focus on strengthening the character of its students has tried to design a program that is tailored to the characteristics of the school by integrating it with current educational instructions, namely in the form of a new school curriculum adapted to the current New Normal conditions. This, as well as the development of intensive communication with parents as a means of maximizing the teaching and learning process is one of the learning designs that can be done by every school today.

School culture, which is also one of the right means of strengthening character education, must also be maximized, even though learning is carried out online, because through school culture it allows children to develop their character, including through repeated habituations which later will form character in the child. As ³² one of the important goals of education, character is essentially an important thing that animates education itself. In the midst of the epidemic that has hit all corners of the world, the Covid-19 pandemic is not actually an obstacle that can weaken our current education, especially character education.

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