

Transforming Religious Character Values of Primary-school Pupils

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Abstract: This study discusses the transformation of religious character values of the pupils of an elementary school in Palembang. The study focuses on (1) the process of transformation of religious character values of the pupils; (2) what religious character values are transformed; (3) vertical relationship is transformed. The research method was a qualitative approach with empirical inductive strategy. The data were collected from the teachers and pupils based on real experience either in the form of speech or behaviours of the respondents and existing field situations because this study intended to know the phenomena experienced by elementary school pupils. The process of transforming the religious character values in learning at the school was through the involvement of parents, experts, learning activities, memorization, and peer tutors. The result of the transformation is the students' greeting the teachers and other pupils when they meet. Furthermore, the pupils give smiles, greetings, and show politeness. They pray every time they start and end their activities. Besides, the pupils perform *Dhuhr* the noon prayer together.

1 INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has implemented character values in everyday life for a long time. In the period leading to the Indonesian independence, the country included character values in the formulation of the proclamation. The character values are democracy, nationalism, love of homeland, and responsibility. In line with this, during the formulation of *Pancasila* as the basis of the state, character values were also reflected. This can be seen from the character values contained in the five principles of *Pancasila*. The character values contained in *Pancasila* include religious values, tolerance, peace, democracy, nationalism, and social care.

Actualization of character education programs in schools is needed to overcome the nation's character crisis. Children's moral future must be developed from the best wisdom (Gray, 2009). So, characters cannot be created naturally, but derived from the creation of environment. Character is formed from outside influences, formed from assimilation and socialization. Assimilation concerns human relationship with the physical environment, while socialization concerns the relationship between humans. Both elements form the character and character is the pattern of a person related to the

environment. The environment in question can be formal, informal, or non-formal.

The character values in a formal environment are manifested in national educational goals. Article 3 of the Indonesian Law No. 20 of 2003 on the national education system states that national education functions to develop the abilities and form the characters and civilization of dignified nation in order to educate the life of the nation, and is aimed at developing potential learners to become human beings who believe in God the Almighty, are noble, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens.

Character value learning in the classroom can be integrated in every subject. Character education can be integrated in the learning of each subject. Learning materials relating to norms or values on each subject need to be developed, explored, linked to the context of everyday life. Therefore, character value learning should not only concern the cognitive domain, but it also touches the internalization and real practice in the daily life of the learners at school and in the community. Thus, the school can prepare graduates who are academically ready and have good character (Kamaruddin, 2012).

However, some conditions should be met in order to develop the characters of learners. There are still some problems in the implementation of character values in everyday life. This can be seen from the case of elementary-school pupils smoking electronic cigarettes in the District of Trenggalek, East Java Province as reported on *detiknews.com* on Sunday, October 22, 2017. Besides, there was the case of elementary-school pupils who died of bullying. *Online News merdeka.com* on Wednesday August 9, 2017 reported that a second-grade pupil in Sukabumi District, West Java, died after fighting with his peers at school. There was also an instance of elementary-school pupils who almost had a brawl *Jawapos.com* on Monday, May 08, 2017 reported that the police foiled the brawl and dozens of pupils from two elementary schools in Paoman, Indramayu were secured in the police station.

The cases are closely related to character education, and such violations should be prevented. Character education should be able to reduce learners' improper behaviours. Character education is an attempt to improve learner attitudes. How to improve? By teachers' exemplary behaviours, such as behaviours in speaking or behaviours toward others. For character education, the most direct ways can be listed as educators' exemplary behaviours, the words they choose while talking, their interaction with their students, and their reactions towards their students (Silay, 2013). Such interaction exchanges can occur during learning and also after learning, so that the final product of learning is not only the cognitive domain of the students but also the characters formed by the students.

Character education in the national education system is often neglected as shown by the emergence of unethical learner behaviours. Therefore, character education is necessary. Character education is a way to help prevent the side-effects of unethical behaviours (Gray, 2009). Similarly, character education gives knowledge, cultural practice, and oriented actions to the students (Abbas and Hassan, 2014). Therefore, character education is defined as value education and moral education in order to form excellence. Thus, unethical behaviours can be shaped into good ones. It shows that there are social changes, developing realistic measures are needed to enact social changes (Byrd, 2012).

The Ministry of Education and Culture, formerly the Ministry of National Education, specifies 18 character values of the students, including religious values, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democracy, curiosity, spirit of nationality, love of the homeland, appreciation of

achievement, friendliness/communication, love of peace, love of reading, environmental care, and responsibility. These values can be developed through education at school. It is possible for schools to create their own programs tailored to meet the classroom management and school procedures. Many schools create their own programs of character education, relying on rather superficial expectations tied to their classroom management/discipline procedures. (Benninga, 2003)

The 2013 Curriculum firmly defines the character values in the Core Competencies (CC). CC I specifies the religious values and CC II specifies the character values regarding attitudes. The 2013 curriculum also requires the students to develop or improve their cognitive, affective and psychomotor/skill domains. Affective domain refers to character values. Çubukçu (2012) states that curriculum needs to be structured to have values in the context of character education. The Regulation of the Ministry of Education and Culture No. 65/ 2013 states that knowledge is obtained through the activities to know, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create. All learning activities are oriented towards the competence stages that encourage students to do the activities. Religious character can be cultivated when its curriculum is thoroughly infused with religious content (MacMullen, 2018).

In simple terms, the transformation of religious values into character education can be defined as any effort that can be made to influence the moral character and positive values of students (Volkov, 2018). The transformation of religious values into character education helps a person so that he can understand, pay attention to, and carry out core ethical values (Wallis, 2018). Starting from the definition, when we think about the types of characters we want to build in students, it is clear that when we want them to be able to understand these values, pay more attention to the truth of those values, and then do what he believes is, even though he must face challenges and pressures both from outside and inside him (Freathy, Doney, Freathy, Walshe, & Teece, 2017).

Not all elementary schools in Palembang have implemented the 2013 Curriculum. Some schools still use the 2006 Curriculum. Therefore, character values have not become the focus in learning. However, in learning the learners have actually applied the character values, both individually and in groups. The integration of moral values can be done in group work activities through the exchange and transformation of knowledge, so as to identify characteristics (Sze, 2014)

Related to the cases of character problems above, an elementary school in Palembang, the site of this study, has not experienced the problems. From the interview, the vice principal said that character values (character building) became the main concern. The school added some religious lessons to build religious characters. The first-grade to third-grade pupils should learn *iqra* 1 to *iqra* 6; they would get *atahfiz* certificate. Furthermore, grade-4 to grade-6 pupils would be certified based on their quran *murattal* recitations. In addition, the report cards for the first grade to third grade pupils include *dhuhr* prayer practice, and for the fourth grade to sixth grade pupils *dhuhr* prayer practice plus short *surah* recitations.

To obtain more effective research results related to the transformation of religious character values of the pupils at the school, this study limited the scope and focused on the following: (1) the transformation process of religious character values of the pupils in learning at the school; (2) the religious character values transformed in learning at the school; (3) the vertical relationship transformed by the pupils at the school.

2 METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with empirical inductive strategy (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2016). The data were collected from the teachers and pupils based on real experience in the form of either the speech or behaviours of the respondents and existing field situations because this study intended to find out the phenomena experienced by the elementary school pupils.

The participants in this study were nine teachers and 19 pupils. The nine teachers consisted of one principal, 2 vice principals, 2 religious teachers, 3 subject teachers and one classroom teacher. Nineteen pupils were from one class of fifth grader. They were chosen because they were considered to be more religious pupils than others. They got special treatment which they had to memorize Part 30 of al Quran,

Data were collected through observation and interview. Observation were intent to obtain pupils activity data. Interviews were conducted to gather information from the teachers regarding religious values that had been developed in the school environment.

The value of religious characters has several indicators, namely giving a smile, greetings, courtesy, praying when they start and end activities or carry out tasks, and thank to God for blessings and gifts.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

3.1.1 Process of Transforming Religious Character Values in Learning

The process of transforming the religious character values in learning at school was through the involvement of parents, experts, learning activities, singing, rote, and peer tutors. Each component is described as follows.

(1) Involvement of Parents

The school required the involvement of parents or guardians in developing the characters and creativity of pupils. The religious character values become one of school's focus, so parents or guardians were expected to contribute to the development of religious characters because parents or guardians spend more time with their children than teachers at school do. In gathering this information, the information were analyzed from Linking Book.

Practice of compulsory praying (*fardhu*) is one indicator of religious character values. *Fardhu* prayers consist of *fajr*, *dhuhr*, *asr*, *maghrib*, and *isha'* prayers. Based on the amount of time the pupils spend at home and at school, it is clear that the family at home has a more dominant role in the implementation of *fardhu* prayers for the pupils. Considering the time at school from 07:10 to 13:40, the pupils can have only *dhuhr* prayer at school.

The school implements *dhuhr* prayer programs in 3 sessions due to the limited area for praying compared to the number of pupils at the school. The congregational prayers performed in sessions also give the pupils the opportunity to choose between the prayer and lunch. The pupils are free to choose their own desired things; besides, there is no compulsion for the pupils to perform congregational prayers at the same time.

Other *fardhu* prayers, namely *fajr*, *asr*, *maghrib*, and *isha'* prayers, can be performed by the pupils with their family at home. Of course, the involvement of parents or guardians is expected in this respect. If parents or guardians are busy at work, then *fajr*, *asr*, *maghrib*, and *isha'* prayers can be done alone by the pupils themselves. Parental or guardian involvement can be in the form of monitoring. To this end, the school has provided a liaison book between parent/guardian and principal/teacher. The book also includes a table of *fardhu* prayers initiated by parents or guardians.

(2) Experts

The school teachers has an important role in the process of transforming the religious characters of the pupils. A teacher becomes *imam* in the congregational *dhuhr* prayer performed every school day. A schedule of *dhuhr* prayer *imams* from Monday to Thursday has been determined by the school. There are 3 *imams* every day because there are 3 sessions of congregational prayers.

In addition, the teachers gave *tausiyah* (advice) in some religious activities on certain days. The activities may include a joint *zikr* with parents or guardians on Saturday. Therefore, the teachers become the experts in the process of transforming the religious characters of the pupils.

The school also invites two dominies alternately within one week. Both dominies provided the teachers with briefing sessions before the teachers transform to the pupils. In addition, dominies may directly transform the pupils through *tausiyah* and learning in *takhassus* (special treatment) classes regularly every Friday.

(3) Learning Activities

The school had implemented the 2013 Curriculum, so the school should develop the four core competencies of the pupils. The first core competence is of the spiritual aspect, that is, the religious character values that should be developed in the learning process.

Through the Islamic Religious Education subject, the school transforms religious characters of the pupils. The Islamic Religious Education classes were on Monday from 08:45 to 10:05 (2 learning hours) and on Thursday from 13:00 to 13.40 (1 learning hour). Besides Islamic Religious Education, there is another subject that could transform religious values of the pupils. It is Quran Reading and Writing. The class is on Friday from 07:25 to 08:45 (2 learning hours).

(4) Memorization

The school has the recitation programs of short *surahs*, hadith and prayers. The recitations are monitored by using a Recitation Performance card. The card includes the scale of smooth, less smooth, and not smooth. Furthermore, the cards are rated by parents.

Short *surahs*, hadith, and prayers that the pupils must memorize and recite were also found in the performance cards. Prayers memorized by the pupils on the cards include prayer for parents, rhyming reading, i'tidal reading, pre-meal prayer, prayer after eating, prayer before going to bed, prayer after wake-up, prostration reading, reading session between two prostrations. There are also toilet entering prayer, home prayer, mosque prayer, tahiyat reading, and

reflection prayer. The cards that the pupils should memorize contained some *surah* and hadith.

The pupils were categorized into seven groups according to their competence to read *iqra* and Quran. There are four grades of student assessment in reading *iqra* and Quran: very good (A), good (B), enough (C), and poor (D). Students are rated A when they were fluent and memorized *surahs*. Students were rated B when they are fluent in *makhradj* and have not memorized *surahs*. Students are given C when they memorized *surahs*, but less fluent in pronunciation. Students were rated D if they have not memorized *surahs*.

Furthermore, there was one more group called *Takhassus* class, where all the students memorize all the *surahs* in 30 parts of Quran. The pupils from grade-1 to grade-6 can attend this class with certain requirements. *Takhassus* class begins with a prayer, reading al-fatihah, and studying prayers. Then, the pupils recite previous targeted recitations of the hadith, prayers, and short *surahs*. The core activity of *takhassus* class is to study and write or copy what you read. *Takhassus* class ends with a prayer to go home and reading al-Quran prayer.

(5) Peer Tutors

Peer tutoring was one of the methods used by the school where the pupils could learn with their peers. When the pupils recite a prayer and two short *surahs* before starting an activity, the pupils are led by one pupil through a speaker located in the front office. At first, *murattal* recitation is heard when the pupils are about to enter the classroom at 6:45. Then, the pupils read short *surahs* at 07.10, leading by one pupil through a speaker located in the front office and mentored by a religious education teacher. The pupils who lead the *tadarus* through a speaker should fulfil 3 criteria: the pupils of grade-2 to grade-6, the pupils who have passed Al-Quran reading assessed by the religious education teachers, and the pupils who are good at memorizing. The school lists the *surahs* recited through a speaker.

In the first week, Monday to Friday, the recited *surahs* are Al-Fatihah and An-Nas, Al-Fatihah and Al-Falaq, Al-Fatihah and Al-Ikhlash, Al-Fatihah and Al-Lahab, Al -Fatihah and An-Nasr. In the second week, Monday to Friday, the *surahs* are Al-Fatihah and Al-Kautsar, Al-Fatihah and Al-Quraish, Al-Fatihah and Al-Fiil, Al-Fatihah and Al-Kafirun, Al-Fatihah and At-Takatsur. Next, every following week continues with the same pattern.

3.1.2 Religious Character Values Transformed in Learning

The first core competence in the 2013 curriculum is concerned with religious competence. The competence includes receiving, implementing, and appreciating religious teachings. The results of the transformation of religious character values of the pupils are reflected by the students' greeting to the teachers and other pupils when they meet. Furthermore, the pupils give a smile and show politeness. They also pray every time they start and end their activities or carry out their duties. They thank God for His blessings. They also thank God for their success. In addition, the pupils respect the persons performing the worship; they will not bother those who are praying. The pupils reject any attitudes, actions, and policies that violate the religious teachings. When a pupil is littering, they will reprimand him/her by mentioning the hadith about keeping clean. The pupils maintain the harmony of life among the followers of religion in order to create a peaceful atmosphere.

3.1.3 Vertical Relationship Transformed by the Pupils

Vertical relationship refers to human relationship with the Creator. In terms of vertical relationship, the result of the transformation of religious values of the pupils is that the pupils perform *dhuhr* prayer in congregation and teachers act as *imams*. The pupils pray before and after learning. They practise reading *hadith* and Quran individually and in groups. They recite Islamic yells inside and outside the classroom during the learning process. They always make *istighfar* when making mistakes. The pupils study, write, or copy all the *surahs* they read.

3.2 Discussion

3.2.1 Process of Transforming Religious Character Values in Learning

Religious character values are those of adherence and obedience attached to a person in understanding and implementing religious teachings. The school seeks to attach obedience and compliance of the pupils through learning. Sayektiningsih in her research states that religious (Islamic) character building should be integrated in every school subject. Teaching materials should be developed in such a way as to be able to simultaneously build the

emotional, spiritual and intellectual intelligences of learners as their basic needs (Sayektiningsih, 2017).

The school involves the parents in transforming religious character values. Rahim states that the relationship between parent and child is a relationship that is naturally intertwined, implemented in the form of pure affection, a sense of affection between parent and child. The love affection reflects the fulfilment of children's education needs (Rahim, 2013). Parents should be able to provide directions for their children to act positively and stay away from any activities that are not useful.

The school also transforms religious values through Quran Reading and Writing, the Quran recitation, and *takhassus* classes. Dawn argues that in the view of Islam, character education has been instilled since the level of children when they can read Al-Quran. This is because Al-Quran has set such a complete theory and/or concept related to human relationship with God and human relationship with other humans. Furthermore, a value is something to learn (Yufiarti et al, 2018). Children learned to share each other with everyone. So, that human relationship with God has an important role in realizing human relationship with other humans.

3.2.2 Religious Character Values Transformed in Learning at the School

Good character components include moral knowing and moral feeling. Moral knowledge consists of moral awareness, moral value knowledge, perspectives of perspectives, moral thinking, decision making, and personal knowledge. Then, moral feeling consists of conscience, self-esteem, empathy, loving good things, self-control, and humility. The school has built these two components as shown by the research findings described previously. Lickona (2013)

The school provides the pupils with the knowledge of religious characters through quran reading and writing, *surah* recitation, and *takhassus* class. The teachers also develop the knowledge of pupils who have previously had initial knowledge. Once moral knowledge of religious characters has been established, the pupils begin to have moral feeling. Thus, the pupils have developed the religious character values in the form of giving smiles, greetings, politeness. They also pray every time they start and end their activities or carry out their duties.

Based on the description, the school emphasizes on not only academic competence, but also religious character values. The results of Kamaruddin (2012) showed that what is important for an educational

institution is not only attention to the students' academic competence needs, but also character development so that graduates become academically ready and well-qualified.

3.2.3 Vertical Relationship Transformed by the Pupils

The vertical relationship transformed by the pupils is a tangible form of moral knowledge and moral feeling that have been possessed in order to bring up the other good character component, namely moralacting (moral action). Moral action consists of competence, desire, and habits. The pupils practise the religious character values, among other things, through congregational prayers (Lickona, 2013)

4 CONCLUSIONS

The process of transforming religious character values of the pupils in learning is through the involvement of parents, experts, learning activities, memorization, and peer tutors. The result of the transformation is the students' greeting the teachers and other pupils when they meet. Furthermore, the pupils give smiles, greetings, and show politeness. They also pray every time they start and end their activities or carry out their duties. Vertical relationship is reflected by the pupils performing *dhuhr* prayer. In addition, they perform *dhuhr* prayer in congregation and teachers act as *imams*. The pupils practise reading hadith and Quran individually and in groups. The school also provides religious values through Quran Reading and Writing, Quran recitation, and *takhassus* class. The teachers develop the knowledge of pupils who have previously had initial knowledge. Once moral knowledge of religious character values has been established, the pupils begin to have moral feeling. Thus, the pupils have developed the religious character values in the form of giving smiles, greetings, and politeness. They also pray every time they start and end their activities or carry out their duties.

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