

# Character Building Through the Synergy Between Parents and School in Indonesia

## A Case of Integrated Islamic Elementary Schools

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### ABSTRACT

Character building is a fundamental issue in Indonesia at this time. It is needed to reach good human resources that will be realized in a developed country. There is a need for good cooperation between the three education centers in achieving comprehensive character building. The three education centers include family, school, and society. In this case, the Integrated Islamic Elementary School has formulated a character-building strategy through collaboration between parents and schools. This paper presents a strategy implemented in Integrated Islamic Elementary schools in realizing character building by synergizing parents' and schools' roles. This is an effective way that is organized in Integrated Islamic Elementary School. But other schools, especially public schools, have not realized it. Educational institutions can find information about fundamental and strategic ways that have been implemented by integrated Islamic Elementary schools in realizing character building. This study's results can make an essential contribution to realizing education goals, namely creating excellent human resources.

**Keywords:** *Character Building, Parents and School, Integrated Islamic Elementary School*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Character building is one of the alternative solutions initiated in the context of dealing with moral degradation. Since the emergence of the 2013 curriculum, character building has become an icon that continues to be echoed. Moreover, in facing the era of disruption, character building plays an essential role in helping young people face and maintain morale. Educational institutions today have not been able to provide satisfactory results to the community. This is due to the lack of presence of curriculum management in favor of character building [1].

Integrated Islamic Schools transform character building into a development program. This coaching is carried out through a special program in the form of mentoring activities. Mentoring is a character-building

program in the form of student *halaqah*. Halaqah is a circular sitting activity where a mentor guides 8-12 students. The *Halaqah* is held once a week in a focused and intense manner [2]. In addition to the mentoring program, the Integrated Islamic School also transforms character building into Islamic culture, which is applied to students' daily activities at school. The application of Islamic culture in everyday life effectively internalizes character compared to the delivery of material in classroom learning. Al-Hikmah Junior High School Surabaya also carries this out [3].

Ki Hajar Dewantara has bequeathed an ideal thought concept to smooth the character-building process, namely the Tri Education Center. Tri Education Center is three education courses, including education in schools, education in the family, and education in the society. These three components of education have their

respective roles that are sustainable and mutually supportive in fostering children's character. This function is getting weaker implementation in educational practice at this time [4].

The family is the smallest organization in society that has the closest emotional relationship with a child. Therefore, the family is the most fundamental key in the process of education and character building. Parents tend to be the most influential role models for a child. Children will imitate their parent's behavior. The communication pattern that will be applied is the parents' communication pattern too, both in understanding or other forms of communication, leading to good behavior [2]. Thus close psychological relationship between a child and the family makes the family have a significant role in education and shape the character of a child [5].

Education in school functions in guiding, directing, and educating in the formal sphere. The formalization of education is essentially not commercialization, but as an innovation in education management. Formal education in schools is also an alternative solution for parents who have limitations and disadvantages to educate their children. The limitations and shortcomings referred to are in terms of time spent working and other skills in the field of education. Parents should take full responsibility for educating their children, but they are also responsible for fulfilling their families' necessities. The availability of very minimal time in educating children requires a solution in the form of formalization of education that takes place in schools. This means that parents have given a mandate to schools in terms of children's education [4].

The implementation of formal education at this time is not solely based on academic results. However, several other factors can support the success of students. Today's focus on education is on character building, which turns out to have a more significant impact on achieving success. This success is not only on academic success but also on the success of social life as it should be. The results also reinforce that character is an indicator of students' achievement for the growth of values and academic achievement in general [6].

To achieve maximum character building, it is necessary to have synergy between habituation at school and follow-up in the family and society environment [7]. Integrated Islamic Elementary School accommodates the synergy of parents and schools as an effort to maximize character building. The Parents and Teachers Meeting program is one of the routine agendas that characterizes Integrated Islamic Elementary School

in Indonesia [8]. Besides, the communication between parents and teachers has become more intensive with the WhatsApp group created for each class. Apart from serving as service orientation, it is also intended to make it easier for teachers to monitor students at home.

## **2. CHARACTER BUILDING IN INTEGRATED ISLAMIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

### ***2.1. Islamic Daily Habits***

Islamic values internalization through the cultural habituation of Islamic life applied in students' daily lives is more effective than the delivery of material about the character itself. [3] Fostering student character is not only understanding about right and wrong deeds, but also internalizing Islamic values. So, these Internalized Islamic values into students will become habits [9]. Value internalization cannot be done once or twice at a time but is continuous and sustainable.

To create a generation of faith, piety, and good deeds, Integrated Islamic Elementary School takes a strategic path in instilling an Islamic character through Islamic manners' habituation. Habit is carried out from the time students enter the school environment until they leave school. This starts with a greeting and smiling to the teacher who welcomes the students in front of the gate. It is intended that students are always enthusiastic in the morning and enthusiastic to carry out activities throughout the day. Students are also accustomed to saying greetings every time they enter the room. When about to enter another classroom, students must say hello and then politely convey the intention of coming to the teacher.

Students are accustomed to praying every time they want to start an activity, whether studying, eating, entering the mosque, or entering the bathroom. Children can absorb stimuli more optimally during the golden age than at a later age [10]. Getting children used to reciting prayers from childhood can instill it as a habit carried over to adulthood. Small habits that are instilled from an early age will form spontaneous behavior. So, prayer is not just a routine; it is necessary to convey and internalize the meaning of prayer itself.

Apart from being accustomed to praying, children are accustomed to eating and drinking using their right hand. Children are encouraged to eat and drink while sitting, not standing, more over playing and running. This is not only conveyed through the provision of material, but also through assistance and exemplary. Every meal hour and break time, the teacher

accompanies eating or consume snacks [11]. The teacher ensures students maintain eating and drinking manners daily, either during mealtimes or recess. Of course, teachers also set an example by doing the same thing. There is no teacher who eats or drinks while standing and using his left hand.

## **2.2. Prayer and Sunnah Habits**

The 2013 curriculum emphasizes the aspect of character building. However, facts from the field show that theological education in the school curriculum is currently still fragile. At the same time, the theological aspect is a fundamental aspect of character building [12]. So Integrated Islamic Elementary School answers through habituation of *mahdhah* worship (worship whose conditions and pillars have been determined) such as *dhuhr* and *Asr* prayers together and *dhuha* prayers. In 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades, this activity is only limited to habituation. Many children often joke around during prayers and are only gently reminded until they return to the correct position. However, students in 3<sup>rd</sup> until 6<sup>th</sup> grades slowly begin to convey the meaning and urgency of prayer to present their spirit when worshipping.

The process of internalizing values in worship is not instantaneous. It does not necessarily make students serious and live their worship. Nevertheless, this process is carried out continuously and consistently so that slowly most students can understand the meaning and urgency of worship.

## **2.3. Cleanliness, Tidiness, and Discipline Habits**

Apart from Islamic manners and aspects of worship, the Integrated Islamic Elementary School also implements clean, neat, and disciplined living habits. These habits are made through a routine community service program held once a week to instill a love of cleanliness. Besides, the students take turn to clean the class and this is made through deliberation and agreement with the teacher to agree on the consequences of not maintaining cleanliness and littering. They are invited to be consistent with the decisions they have agreed upon together.

Every student who enters a room or mosque is obliged to arrange shoes or sandals neatly. Usually, there will be punishment or consequences for students who do not tidy up their shoes, for example, by throwing the shoes or sandals into the trashbin. This habit is also followed up through the neat arrangement

of classrooms and the school environment. That way, children feel reluctant to lay down carelessly because they will feel out of place. This is also supported by giving Islamic motivational sentences in maintaining cleanliness and tidiness so that it can increase students' reflection in controlling their behavior.

Every morning, the teacher in charge of welcoming students also monitors student attendance. Students who come late get punished, for example, by reading several sheets of the Al Qur'an or memorizing *surah* that have been memorized again. Before entering the classroom, students line up neatly in front of the class. This is habituated every day to position themselves, even though there is no instruction from the teacher. When students are used to doing something without instruction from the teacher, the habituation process is considered successful. Students have made it a practical and reflective habit [13]. The next stage is the cultivation of spiritual values, which becomes the basis for students to do every action. That way, in every good deed, students do not feel dry from values.

## **2.4. Love the Qur'an Program**

Integrated Islamic Elementary School is a school that makes the child's closeness to the Quran as one of the advantages that must be achieved. This can be seen from the programs of the Integrated Islamic Elementary School, including the program of reading the Qur'an well and correctly (*Tahsin*) and intensive memorization (*Tahfizh*). If schools in general only make the Qur'an as an addition and the proportion is very small, in the Integrated Islamic Elementary School the serving hours for *tahsin* and *tahfizh* is more. The portion of lesson hours for *tahsin* and *tahfizh* are usually around 8 lesson hours each week. Even in some schools, before beginning to learn, they start by reading the Qur'an or memorizing one line/ one verse of the Qur'an.

The implementation of the *tahsin* and *tahfizh* programs at Integrated Islamic Elementary Schools is usually designed in groups. One group consists of approximately ten students so that the development of children's reading and memorization is better monitored. The advantage is that the teacher can take specific actions on students who have particular reading and memorizing difficulties. The *tahsin* and *tahfizh* program is not even just guiding children to be proficient in reading and memorizing the Qur'an, but also to instill students' love for the Al-Quran. This is done by playing films which are considered to be capable of fostering students' love for the Qur'an. Beside that, it is also carried out through

motivational activities. Teachers or speakers from outside try to deliver material that can touch the affective aspects of students so that students feel motivated to read and memorize the Qur'an.

### **3. THE SYNERGY BETWEEN PARENTS AND SCHOOL**

#### ***3.1. Parents and Teachers Meeting***

Integrated Islamic Elementary School maintains good relations with students' parents. After all, parents are the best partners in helping with school marketing. [8]. Besides, the parent's role in education is included in one of the three education centers' core roles. Hence, the Integrated Islamic Elementary School initiated a unique program that is not owned by schools in general, namely the parent and teacher meeting, which functions effectively [14]. Parent and Teacher Meeting is an activity where each class's parents gather and meet with their respective homeroom teacher. This activity was carried out to disseminate the closest school agendas, new school policies, and sharing children's conditions at school.

Parents welcomed this program because it was considered to be able to bridge parents' difficulties in educating their children at home. Parents can determine the child's conditions at school and discuss solutions to common student problems with the homeroom teacher. Fellow parents have the opportunity to exchange experiences and solutions in dealing with difficulties in conditioning children. This activity helps assess children's actual problems because it is carried out regularly once a month.

#### ***3.2. Parenting Program***

World affairs are now increasingly busy for the majority of parents. Most of them do not pay attention to the primary family education for children, while others only know about children's education with love. Nevertheless, they do not understand how to educate with that love. Parents want success for their children, but they do not understand the right paradigm of success. Therefore, the way to educate that is applied becomes less precise [15]. To provide knowledge in terms of theory and equip parents with practical experiences, the Integrated Islamic Elementary School implements parenting programs that are carried out consistently.

Parenting programs are included in the agenda for the Parent and Teacher Meeting every month. In the

Parent and Teacher Meeting routine, there is parenting material filled by child education experts or teachers and parents of students considered experts in child education, both theoretical and practical. Besides, the school also carries out an extensive parenting program every semester. This activity is carried out when taking the learning outcome report of each semester. Before taking the child's report card, parents are welcome to take part in parenting activities together. The school presents speakers with qualified capacities in this parenting activity so that parents feel more enthusiastic to participate.

#### ***3.3. Intermediary Books and Whatsapp Group***

To realize the goal of character building in children, it is not only enough with parenting programs and periodic parental guidance in materials. There is a need for continuous mutual communication. Besides, children go to school every day and, of course, behave every day. Every child's development, both positive and negative, is beyond the reach of parents. It would be better if parents still know about it. If the parents do not understand the details of the child's development, then the parents will find it increasingly difficult to deal with every child's behavior at home. The more familiar and understanding the details of a child's development both at home and at school, the easier it will be for parents to identify childcare needs.

The involvement of parents in every child's development strongly supports various positive aspects of students. Many previous studies have shown that parental involvement has a significant influence, including increasing student academic achievement, building healthier life between parents and children, supporting children to tend to positive behaviors. Beside its impact on students, parental involvement can increase the relationship between parents and school. This is one of the added values for Indonesia's sustainability of education, which has not touched this area for a long time. Schools are also helped handle cases of student problems both in terms of discipline and morals [16].

### **4. CHARACTER BUILDING THROUGH THE SYNERGY BETWEEN PARENTS AND SCHOOL**

Character building for students is an essential substance in realizing excellent human resources. Of course, these excellent human resources must master science and technology, but character is also an essential

aspect of carrying out a social life for every human being.

Effective character building needs to be implemented systematically and in the synergy between schools and parents. Good coordination between parents aims to monitor learning outcomes. The socialization of programs that will be implemented in schools is a form of systematic support. Cultivating character requires the direct behavioral experience [17]. It needs a coherent synergy by all elements based on high awareness [18].

This synergy can also be in the form of curriculum support that is enforced. The curriculum acts as a basis or reference in carrying out the educational process. Internalization in the educational process to create memorable characters requires parents to be in the same vision with school's goals. This means that when students are at home, parents need to condition them accordingly, just like the role of educators in schools as their parents' substitutes when in the school environment.

Another support in realizing a school that focuses on the students' character is policies adopted into the daily culture in the school environment. Some examples are habituation of good deeds, habituation of *sunnah* and compulsory worship, habituation to love in reading and practicing al Quran that is acceptable. The existence of a policy that becomes a culture will bring out a legal element. So anyone who does not follow the existing policies has the potential to receive warnings and even sanctions. This will result in precautionary behavior so as not to violate existing rules, or in other words, the educational process needs negative reinforcement in the form of sanctions.

A person's character is about the soul or the spirit, based on habits and social environment interactions. If the habits in the environment are right, students will easily mingle and follow these good habits. Kurtus states that a set of behaviors is what determines the character of the individual [19].

The character can be an essential factor and an output in the educational process [20]. In the process, students' attitudes can trigger teaching techniques and strategies from the phenomena of positive and negative students' perceptions that emerge. The perceptions that arise is what educators should understand in order to be able to anticipate futile learning.

As an educated person, of course, the value of discipline and personality ethics is an essential aspect that cannot be negotiated. Thus in learning, it is necessary to emphasize education that continues to

integrate and instill values or character [21]. The character will provide provisions for student's futures. Character learning needs to be well planned. It requires real action that is not just a theory. It takes the participation of the whole community. Parents, teachers, administrative staff, and school caretakers should make good collaboration in showing good exemplary. So that children can imitate and emulate as a direct experience of character values.

Conscious efforts to develop characters need innovative learning [22]. It raises the enthusiasm and passion for students' learning, which many schools have not done in Indonesia. The majority of schools use the same unique format from students starting to learn until these students graduate. In practice, in innovating learning that emphasizes the character value of several models that can be applied and practical, according to the research results of Putri Ani Puji K.K, is inquiry guided [23]. This method is done in any learning by providing guidance or real examples by integrating character values towards students.

The rapid development of science and technology, the role and character of modern society, seems to have received little attention recently. In his research, Chowdhury revealed that Moslems always need to emphasize the character's role in learning and their daily reality [18]. The internalization of character in learning requires various teaching models and techniques to foster a love for good value. Characters in the form of morals, values, and ethics in students' minds and behavior manifest the attributes needed for success in the future.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This research shows that it turns out that the synergy of parents and schools in shaping children's character is an effective step. However, this method is not used by schools in general in Indonesia. Schools only communicate formally with parents. Integrated Islamic schools show that by forging close relationships with parents, schools gain several advantages. These benefits include implementing and monitoring students' character at home and community satisfaction with Integrated Islamic Elementary school.

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