

Character Building of Gen Alpha Student: Convergence of Citizenship Education with Moral Development at Al Uswah

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Abstract: The formation of santri character in the Alpha generation is a big challenge in today's digital era. In the context of pesantren, a complete and virtuous character can be formed through the synergy between civic education and moral development. In the process of fostering santri morals at the Wali Songo Islamic Boarding School, there is an organization called Al-Uswah. This study aims to explore how the convergence of these two aspects in pesantren can shape the character of Gen Alpha students. By using qualitative methods through observation, interviews, and documentation, this study found that the integration of civic education with moral development can strengthen the values of discipline, social responsibility, and empathy for others in students.

Keywords: Character Of Students, Gen Alpha, Civic Education, Moral Development

Introduction

Generation Alpha is the successor to the millennial generation and generation Z, born amidst rapid technological development. As a result, the Alpha generation has acquired all the knowledge since childhood, which allows them to think more broadly than previous generations. Education patterns based on religion and family values are very important in the midst of rapid technological advances because this generation will determine the future. As well as democratic parenting, parents remain responsible for their children's actions but do not overly restrict their children's wishes or loosen their freedom too much. The term "Generation Alpha" was given by social researcher Mark McCrindle to the group of people born in 2010 and later, with an estimated 2.5 million people born every week worldwide. They will find new ways to interact, learn and play. They were born in the digital age, with highly intelligent technological devices. Digital and physical environments are

interconnected. As they grow up, technology will become part of their lives and will influence their experiences, their attitudes and their expectations of the world. Even some psychologists and neuroscientists believe that the way people now will think will be different from previous generations. Even more than their predecessors Generation Z, the concept of being "networked" is central to the activities of Generation Alpha¹. In the world of education, many parents of students send their children to educational institutions in the form of pesantren. Pesantren is an Indonesian Islamic education system that shows its role by contributing to the development of the whole person. In addition to pesantren as an educational institution that prioritizes "tafaqquh-fi-al-din", the pesantren tradition has been able to integrate morality into the education system on an

¹ Erfan Gazali, "PESANTREN DI ANTARA GENERASI ALFA DAN TANTANGAN DUNIA PENDIDIKAN ERA REVOLUSI INDUSTRI 4.0" 2 (August 1, 2018): 94–109.

extraordinarily strong scale (Dhofier, 2009: 25), and has contributed greatly to the birth of new educational institutions in the world of Islamic education. In fact, the aspect of fast modernity integrated in the pesantren tradition is shown by the development of formal education institutions; in pesantren institutions, it is proven that almost 70% of pesantren institutions have provided formal schools/madarasah and modern universities². In pesantren, students are generally taught about character building, so that students can behave well and in accordance with the norms. Character education is a process of instilling essential values in children through a series of learning and mentoring activities so that students as individuals are able to understand, experience, and integrate the values that are the goals of the educational process. Character education can be understood as an effort to help learners develop all their potential with the aim that these learners become resilient, competitive, noble, moral, tolerant, cooperative, patriotic, dynamically developing, science and technology oriented individuals, all of which are inspired by faith and piety to God Almighty based on Pancasila. Character is an important aspect to determine the progress of a nation. According to Freud, quoted from a journal by Fifi Nofiaturohmah, he said that failure to give a good personality to a person at an early age will form a bad character as an adult. It is very important for a santri to get character education. A santri is an Islamic generation that will continue Islam in the future. A study shows that the many influences of modernization that affect today cause the quality of children's character to decline. Many phenomena that occur today show a decline in children's character, such as dishonesty of a child to others both at school and at home, even in the community, declining discipline, courtesy to elders and younger people, and various images of decadence of morality, making the education system must be redesigned based on morality, morals, and ethical systems³. One of the efforts in

fostering the character of students with Al-Uswah activities in the boarding school. Wali Songo Islamic Boarding School, Campus of Female has one of the organizations engaged in moral development called Al-Uswah. Al-Uswah is an organization engaged in the character of students, to become students who have good character. Moral development can be explained as a serious effort in shaping children, involving education and programmed coaching that is carried out seriously. Human spiritual potential is managed optimally by following methods and approaches in accordance with the demands of Islam⁴. With Al-Uswah coaching held every Monday afternoon, it is expected to shape the character of students, besides that in the learning method educators combine civic education in an effort to instill good morals. Citizenship education has an important role in shaping santri's understanding and awareness of their rights and obligations as citizens. This education aims to instill the values of democracy, justice, and equality. In the context of pesantren, civic education can be enriched with Islamic values to build social awareness and responsibility among santri. The purpose of this study is to analyze the convergence of civic education with moral development in Al-uswah activities as an effort to build the character of Alpha gen students. There is a novelty in this research from several previous studies, namely in the convergence of civic education with moral cultivation. Where there are similarities with Purwanto's research entitled The Moral Development Strategy of Santri in Islamic Boarding Schools.

Materials and Methods

This research was qualitative in nature, and pre-existing data was collected through observation. The research also included notes from interviews and a comprehensive description of the context, as well as findings from examination of previous documents and records. The research method used

² "View of Budaya Pesantren Dalam Membangun Karakter Santri," accessed November 10, 2024, <https://ejournal.kopertais4.or.id/tapalkuda/index.php/qodiri/article/view/1158/801>.

³ Abdul Khakim and Muhammad Anas Ma'arif, "Pembentukan Karakter Religius Melalui Pembelajaran Integratif Berbasis

Pesantren di MTS Negeri 1 Pasuruan," *Ta'limDiniyah: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam (Journal of Islamic Education Studies)* 4, no. 1 (October 30, 2023): 124–39, <https://doi.org/10.53515/tdjpai.v4i1.101>.

⁴ Nurul Wathoni Lalu Muhammad. 2020. *Akhlaq Tasawuf NTB: Forum Pemuda Aswaja*. 2020 h.22

in this study is qualitative research. By conducting interviews with sources who have accurate information. The research place was conducted at the Wali Songo Islamic Boarding School, by examining 1st and 2nd grade MTs students who are the alpha generation in this educational institution. By making observations in Al-Uswah activities held on Mondays, along with the participation of researchers in these activities. The sources of information used in this study include primary and secondary sources, and data collection methods in the form of interviews, observation, and documentation. In this study, data analysis was carried out through data triangulation, where the data was then presented and concluded.

Results and Discussion

Al-Uswah's Moral Development Activities

The concept of al-uswah moral coaching emphasizes the importance of emulating the morals and behavior of the Prophet Muhammad SAW as a guide in everyday life. This uswah moral coaching can provide a good example to our students with moral character because this role is very important to build a nation.

Akhlakul karimah or praiseworthy morals will make someone have good actions and behavior so that it can reflect that someone is seen to be good. This moral guidance also revives the psychic or soul of a person with Islam by getting closer to God and imitating the behavior or characteristics of the Prophet Muhammad SAW which is known as honest nature (al amen), patient nature, and caring attitude (empathy) with fellow people.

Uswah hasanah is used to foster the morals of students by working on moral values and with the methods used, namely:

1. Habituation

The habituation method can be done by providing and modeling good habits in everyday life and doing it continuously, increasing devotion and faith in Allah SWT, practicing worship, instilling the value of discipline, honesty, obedience which is included in commendable morals.

2. Advice

Mau'idzah (lesson) is Arabic which comes from *Al-Wa'zhu* which means giving lessons on commendable morals and motivating their implementation and explaining reprehensible morals and warning them or increasing goodness with anything that softens the heart. Thus *mau'izhah* and advice are repeatedly mentioned in the Qur'an and As-Sunnah while explaining that both are the most important means of moral development, while the Qur'an often tells to warn. There are several ways to convey this *mau'izhah*, including: (1) directly or advice, (2) giving stories that contain mau'izhah, (3) making parables, (4) with dialog.

3. Structured Education

This Structured Education Teaching is carried out in a systematic way, starting from explaining the concept of mahmudah morals to practical application in everyday life. It aims to provide a deep understanding of the importance of morals

4. Supervision

The purpose of coaching accompanied by supervision is to assist students in efforts to form aqidah and morals and supervise them in carrying out worship and preparing psychologically and socially, asking continuously about their condition. Every administrator must provide knowledge, skills and experience, therefore the role of the administrator as supervision is a method that devotes full attention and follows the development of children in the aspects of children's faith and morals, monitors children's mental and social readiness and accompanies children in various situations of their social environment⁵.

Educators' process in fostering the character of students

The convergence between civic education and moral development education through AL Uswah mode shows a very important synergy in student education and is important in shaping the character and morality of today's young generation. Shaping today's young generation not only understands the rights and obligations as

⁵ Purwanto Purwanto and Alimni Alimni, "STRATEGI PEMBINAAN AKHLAK SANTRI DI PONDOK PESANTREN AL-QURANİYAH MANNA BENGKULU SELATAN," *Tahdzib Al-Akhlak: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 2 (December 31, 2023): 342-50, <https://doi.org/10.34005/tahdzib.v6i2.3447>.

citizens, but also has morals in accordance with the example of the prophet.

The following is a discussion of how these two aspects complement each other

1. Citizenship education

Civic education instills the spirit of national values, love for the country, rights and obligations as citizens, in this context civic education focuses on:

- Legal Awareness where students are taught their rights and obligations as citizens
- Active participation encourages learners to engage in social and political affairs.
- Democratic values by instilling the principles of democracy and justice.

2. Uswah moral development

Moral development through the Al Uswah model, which focuses on the example of the Prophet Muhammad, plays a role in shaping the moral character of students. Some important aspects of this moral development include:

- Exemplary: Using examples of good behavior from the Prophet as a reference.
- Value-Based Learning: Teaching moral values such as honesty, discipline, and respect.
- Character Reinforcement: Encouraging students to apply these values in their daily lives.

Convergence of Citizenship Education with Al-Uswah's Moral Development Activities

The word generation according to Tolbize (2008) is a group of people who can be identified by year of birth, age, location, and events in life that significantly influence their developmental stages. Members of a generation share experiences that influence their thoughts, values, behaviors, and reactions. Each individual, of course, brings their own personality, influences, and particular background of race, social class, gender, region, family, religion and more, but some broad generalizations are possible about the characteristics of those born in the same year.

Generation Alpha, born to millennials, is known to be highly educated and tech-savvy. They tend to be:

- Individualists: Prefer to do things on their own and have strong strong views.

- Like to organize: Have a tendency to control situations.

- Attached to technology: Their lives are heavily influenced by digital devices and social networks

There are four things that teachers need to prepare for the educational process of students with this era of the Alpha generation character

1. Focus on skills, not on material content
2. Deliver lessons with greater flexibility and purpose
3. Collaborative skill-building planning
4. Developing soft skills

Challenges in fostering the character of Gen Alpha students

Facing challenges in santri education is complex, given the diversity of their characters and backgrounds that are very different, often educators find symptoms or challenging problems that always occur in the pesantren environment. Not only that, the challenges of an educator are often also faced by santri who are very diverse in background and require an active and innovative approach.

Problems or challenges of educators that are often found in the context of pesantren are:

1. Cultural differentiation
2. The impact of technology
3. Limited access to education
4. Social stigma
5. Integration of religious and general values
6. Communication with parents

Discussion

Character education for students in the Gen Alpha era faces significant challenges, considering the rapid development of technology and shifting social values. In this context, the convergence between citizenship education and the cultivation of al-uswah morals becomes a strategic approach to shaping the character of students based on the noble values of religion and social norms.

Citizenship education in Islamic boarding schools plays an important role in shaping students who not only have knowledge of rights and duties as citizens but are also able to apply national values in their daily lives. Learning that prioritizes the concepts of tolerance, mutual respect, and

cooperation in diversity becomes an important element in building the character of students. Amid the ever-changing social dynamics, students are expected not only to be religious individuals but also to become active, responsible citizens who care about the nation's progress. Akhlak Al-Uswah as the Foundation for Character Development.

Akhlak al-uswah, which means moral exemplars, refers to exemplary figures in Islam, especially Prophet Muhammad SAW, who serve as the primary source in character formation. Through character building oriented towards exemplary behavior, it is hoped that the students can emulate noble qualities such as honesty, patience, steadfastness, and compassion towards others. In its implementation, the education of akhlak al-uswah in pesantren not only focuses on teaching moral values but also on the internalization of those values in daily life. Synergy of Citizenship Education and Moral Character Development

The convergence between citizenship education and the moral character development of al-uswah demonstrates the importance of balancing both in shaping the character of students. Students who understand their rights and obligations as good citizens, while also internalizing noble moral values, will be able to become agents of positive change in society. For example, in the context of the religious and cultural diversity present in Indonesia, the value of tolerance taught in citizenship education aligns with Islamic teachings on *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (brotherhood among Muslims) and *ukhuwah basyariyah*. (*persaudaraan sesama manusia*).

The importance of integrating these two fields of education is also reflected in the effort to build students who are not only proficient in religious knowledge but also possess a responsible social attitude. Students who practice the moral character of al-uswah in their daily lives will find it easier to apply civic values such as justice, respect for the rights of others, and active participation in society.

Although this convergence concept offers a comprehensive solution in character building for students, there are several challenges in its implementation. One of them is the gap between theory and practice in the field, where the process

of integrating citizenship values and the moral example of al-uswah sometimes runs separately or is not yet sufficiently structured in the pesantren curriculum. In addition, the increasing influence of digital technology in daily life also poses its own challenges. Students exposed to uncontrolled information through social media can face a shift in moral values that threatens the desired character formation. In the future, pesantren as an educational institution have the opportunity to strengthen their role in shaping the character of students who possess civic-mindedness and noble virtues. One of the steps that can be taken is to strengthen the curriculum that integrates citizenship education and the cultivation of al-uswah morals, so that students are not only taught theory but also practical application in everyday life. In addition, collaboration between Islamic boarding schools and other formal educational institutions can be one way to expand the scope of character education. Considering the existing challenges, it is important for pesantren to continue adapting to the times without sacrificing the fundamental values that form the foundation of their education. Through the strengthening of these two dimensions of education, students can be shaped into individuals who are not only of noble character but also possess a high sense of responsibility towards the country and society.

Conclusions

Character education for students in the Gen Alpha era requires a holistic approach, considering the challenges of globalization, technological advancements, and rapid social changes. This research shows that the convergence between citizenship education and the cultivation of al-uswah morals is an effective strategy in shaping the character of students based on true religious and citizenship values. Civic education provides students with an understanding of their rights and responsibilities as citizens, teaches national values, tolerance, and encourages active participation in social life. On the other hand, the cultivation of moral character through the exemplary traits of Prophet Muhammad SAW provides a strong moral

foundation for the daily behavior of students. By integrating these two fields, students can develop into individuals who not only possess deep religious knowledge but are also socially aware, responsible, and capable of making positive contributions to society. However, in its implementation, there are several challenges that need to be addressed, such as the gap between theory and practice in the pesantren curriculum, as well as the negative influence of technological developments that can affect character formation. Therefore, pesantren need to strengthen and align the curriculum that integrates civic education and moral development, as well as enhance community participation in supporting the character formation of students. As a recommendation, Islamic boarding schools need to optimize the use of digital media to spread positive values and educate students about wise technology use. Moreover, collaboration with formal educational institutions and the government can expand the scope of character education for students, making it more relevant to the needs of the times. Overall, the convergence of citizenship education and the cultivation of al-uswah morals is a highly relevant and important approach in shaping the character of Gen Alpha students who are capable of facing global challenges and making tangible contributions to national development.

<https://ejournal.kopertais4.or.id/tapalkuda/index.php/qodiri/article/view/1158/801>.

Nurul Wathoni Lalu Muhammad. 2020. Akhlak Tasawuf NTB: Forum Pemuda Aswaja. 2020 h.22

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