

Model of Character Education for Students with Autism: Its Conception and Application in Special School Education Institutions

Desti Widiani

Doctoral Student at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta
Jl. Marsda Adisucipto No 1 Yogyakarta 55281, Indonesia. Tel. +62-274-540971, Fax. +62-274-519739, Indonesia.

Corresponding author

destiwidi@yahoo.com

Abstract: This research is based on the assumption that it is necessary to internalize character education in children with autism. The increasing number of children with autism is a problem that is a shared responsibility, not just the medical department or psychologist. In terms of behavior, children with autism tend to hurt themselves, not confident and aggressive. From these problems, character education also plays a role in directing them to become independent and useful human beings according to their abilities so as not to become a burden on the contrary is a gift given by Allah swt. One of the schools that deal with the problem of children with autism is the Special School "Taruna Al-Qur'an Yogyakarta". This research is a qualitative research that uses an educational psychology approach. The data collection techniques using interviews, observation and documentation. While the data analysis uses data collection, data reduction, data presentation, triangulation and conclusion drawing. The purpose of this research is to find out the model of character education for children with autism, then what character education values have been successfully developed, as well as what are the supporting and inhibiting factors in character education for children with autism at the Special School "Taruna Al-Qur'an Yogyakarta".

Keywords: Character Education, Children with Autism.

Introduction

Character education is expected to form good, honest, and noble behavior. This is not only intended for normal children, but also for children with special needs such as autism who in essence really need character education as a provision for life so that they are ready to face all challenges in a competitive world with full confidence.

Dealing with children who have special needs value people out of hand. There are many complex problems that arise along with the learning process. Various kinds of disorders that occur in these children, such as children with autism disorders. Autism is a complex disorder in which children generally experience three main areas of difficulty, namely communication, imagination, and socialization (Baihaqi, 2006).

While the number of Indonesian children with autism continues to grow, although the cause is still mysterious, until now the medical community in Indonesia does not have a standard treatment standard. Based on Safaria's research, the results showed that the prevalence rate of autism was estimated at 4-5 per 10,000 children. Several studies using a broad definition of autism estimate that 10-11 out of 10,000 children have an autistic disorder. Citing a research result, Philip, who was part of the birth of Indocare (a special pilot center for autism in Indonesia) stated that the number of autistic sufferers in Indonesia is around 475,000 children, meaning that out of 500 children in Indonesia, one of them is autistic (Safaria, 2014).

Director of Mental Health Development at the Ministry of Health, Diah Setia said, it is estimated

that there are 112,000 children in Indonesia with autism, in the age range of around 5-19 years.

"If it is assumed that the prevalence of autism is 1.68 per 1000 for children under 15 years, where the number of children aged 5-19 years in Indonesia reaches 66,000,805 people based on BPS data in 2010 it is estimated that there are more than 112,000 children with autism in the age range 5 years. -19 years old" (Diah Setia, 2013).

The increasing number of autistic children is a problem that is a shared responsibility, not just the medical department or psychologist. Education also plays a role in directing them to become independent and useful human beings according to their abilities so as not to become a burden on the contrary is a gift given by Allah swt.

According to Mirza in terms of behavior, autistic children tend to injure themselves, lack confidence, be aggressive, respond less or even excessively to an external stimulus, and move their limbs unnaturally (Mirza Maulana, 2007).

In line with the problems faced by autistic children, schools and teachers should be able to teach character education. With this provision, children with autism can control themselves and are well aware of the consequences of it. This can be applied in his daily life, namely to do good things so that he gets used to doing good habits. Children with autism need direction to regulate their habits. If he is allowed to do anything without direction it will be dangerous because it can hurt physically. Damage to the nerves of their brains are disturbed, so they cannot be optimal in thinking which ones are beneficial and which ones are harmful. With therapy and the cultivation of good character education will direct his behavior.

Materials and Methods

This research is a qualitative research that uses an educational psychology approach. The research subjects are the principal, teachers and students with autism. The data collection techniques using interviews, observation and documentation. While the data analysis uses data collection, data reduction, data presentation, triangulation and conclusion drawing. obstacle in character

education for autistic children at the Taruna Al-Qur'an special school.

Results and Discussion

1. Character education.

Character literally comes from the Latin, "character" which means character, character, psychological traits, character, personality or morals. Etymologically, character means mental or moral quality, moral strength (D. Yahya Khan, 2020). According to Abdul Majid and Dian Andayani, character education is a process of transforming life values to be developed in a person's personality so that they become one in that person's life behavior (Abdul Majid and Dian Andayani, 2011). In this definition, there are three important ideas, namely: the process of transforming values, being developed in personality and becoming one in behavior (Abdul Majid and Dian Andayani, 2011).

Meanwhile, according to Margustam that character education is carving and imprinting values into students through education, deposition of experience, habituation, rules, environmental engineering, and sacrifice combined with intrinsic values that already exist in students as a basis for thinking, act and behave consciously and freely (Maragustam Siregar, 2014).

Character is influenced by heredity (descendants). Children's behavior is often not far from their parents. Character is also influenced by the environment. Children who are in a good environment tend to behave well, and vice versa, children who are in a bad environment will behave badly too. Character refers to a series of attitudes, behavior, motivation, and skills (Maragustam Siregar, 2014).

Character education, moral education or character education can be said to be a process for perfecting the human self, is a human effort to make himself a human being with noble character, a human being with virtue (Doni Koesoema, 2007). Character education can also be said as education to "shape" one's personality through character education, the results of which are real actions of a person, namely good behavior, honesty,

responsibility, respect for others, hard work and so on (Adang Hambali and Bambang Q-Aness, 2008).

From the description above, it can be concluded that character education is an action that can form a good personality for students who are instilled with religious values, through teachers, parents and the surrounding environment.

According to Lickona, character is related to moral concepts (moral knowing), moral attitudes (moral feeling), and moral behavior (moral action). Based on these three components, it can be stated that good character is supported by these three components (Robingatul Mutmainnah, 2013). All three have a relationship that can be seen in the following figure:

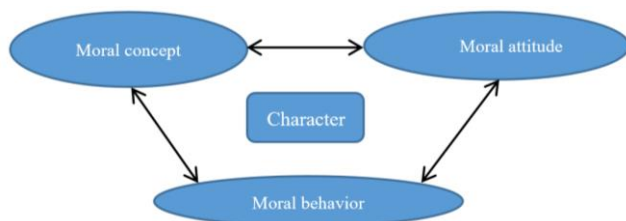


Figure 1. Aspects of character education.

The arrow that connects each character domain with the other two domains means strengthening the relationship between these domains. Moral knowledge, moral feeling, and moral action are inseparable but influence each other in various ways (Thomas Lickona, 2013).

In Islam, character education is often termed as morality, which has been explained a lot in the revelations of Allah SWT in the Qur'an and in the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad. In Islam there are three main values, namely morality, adab, and example. Morals refer to duties and responsibilities other than sharia and Islamic teachings in general. While adab refers to attitudes associated with good behavior. And exemplary refers to the quality of character displayed by a Muslim who follows the example of the Prophet Muhammad (Abdul Majid and Dian Andayani, 2011).

2. Autistic children.

The word autism according to Widodo Judarwanto comes from the Greek "auto" which means itself which is intended for someone who shows symptoms of "living in their own world". Meanwhile, according to Sri Utami autism is a

condition that affects a person from birth or during infancy, which makes him unable to form normal social relationships or communication. This results in the child being isolated from other humans and into a world of repetitive, obsessive activities and interests (Sri Utami, 2005).

According to Rudy Sutadi, autism is a severe/widespread neurobiological developmental disorder that occurs in children in the first 3 years of life. This problem can start when the fetus is 6 months in the womb, and can continue throughout its life if intervention is not carried out early, intensively, optimally, and comprehensively. People with autism have problems in communication, social interaction, and limited and repetitive activities and interests (Rudy Sutadi, 2003).

From some of the definitions above, it can be concluded that autistic children are children who experience complex developmental disorders which include the fields of social interaction, communication skills and show stereotopic behavior, interests and activities.

Autistic children have distinctive characteristics, namely the presence of behavioral deviations and seem isolated from other humans and enter the world of repetitive, obsessive activities and interests. The symptoms above can vary so that it appears that no autistic child is completely the same in all his behavior.

Secara spesifik, faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan anak menjadi autistik belum ditemukan secara pasti, meskipun secara umum ada kesepakatan di dalam lapangan yang membuktikan adanya keragaman tingkat penyebabnya. Hal ini termasuk bersifat genetik, metabolik, dan gangguan syaraf pusat, infeksi pada masa hamil (rubella), gangguan pencernaan hingga keracunan logam berat. Struktur otak yang tidak normal seperti hydrocephalus juga dapat menyebabkan autistik (Joko Wiyono, 2009).

In addition to the above, there are allegations that autistic children are caused by environmental factors such as vaccinations. Some parents reported that their children continued to develop normally after vaccination, but there were also parents who reported that there were unfavorable changes after their children were vaccinated. Another suspected

cause is the behavior of mothers during pregnancy who often consume seafood where this type of food contains very high mercury due to sea water pollution. In addition, there is a deficiency of important minerals such as zinc, magnesium, iodine, lithium, and potassium.

3. Character education strategy.

To achieve the expected character education goals, the right strategy is needed so that the achievement is more focused and effective. To build a good character, the strategies used cannot only improve cognitive aspects, but all dimensions such as spiritual, emotional, social, creative, and motoric must also be developed in a focused and structured manner.

According to Margustam in his book entitled *Philosophy of Islamic Education Towards Character Building Facing Global Currents*, that the strategy of forming human character requires six pillars. The six pillars are a complete circle that can be taught sequentially or not sequentially. The seven pillars are as follows (Margustam, 2014):

a. Good habituation and culture.

According to Ibrahim Alfikiy quoted by Margustam, that habit is a thought created by a person in his mind, then connected with feelings and repeated until the mind believes it is part of his behavior. The law of habituation goes through six stages, namely:

- 1) Thinking, someone thinks and knows the values given, then pays attention, and concentrates on these values.
- 2) Recording, after the values are received, the brain will record. His brain then opens a file similar to that thought and connects it with other thoughts, which are similar or that are considered useful for him.
- 3) Repetition, namely someone decides to repeat the good values with the same feeling.
- 4) Storage, because the recording is done repeatedly on the behavior of the values entered earlier, the mind becomes stronger.
- 5) Repetition, whether consciously or not, a person repeats the behavior of good values that are stored firmly in his subconscious mind.

6) Habits become character, because of the continuous repetition of good values and the stages above that are passed, the human mind believes that these habits are the most important part of behavior.

b. Learning good things (moral knowing).

Good habits that a person does or good things that have not been done, must be given an understanding and knowledge of the values of benefits, rationalizations and consequences of the good values that are done. Thus, a person tries to know, understand, realize and think logically about the meaning of a good value and behavior then explore it and animate it. Then the good values turn into intrinsic power that is deeply rooted in a person.

c. Moral feeling and loving: feeling and loving the good.

The birth of moral loving begins with a mindset. A positive mindset towards the values of kindness will feel the benefits of behaving well. If someone already feels the value of the benefits of doing good things, it will give birth to a sense of love and affection. If you already love a good thing, then all he will sacrifice to do it. From thinking and knowing good consciously then it will affect and will grow a sense of love and affection. The feeling of love for goodness becomes a power and engine that can make people always want to do good even more than just an obligation even though they have to sacrifice both soul and property.

d. Moral acting (good actions).

Through habituation, then thinking knowledge of goodness, continues to feel love for that goodness and then acts of experience of goodness, which ultimately shapes character. Acts of kindness based on knowledge, awareness, freedom, and love will form a deposit of experience. From the sediment it will be imprinted in the subconscious mind and so on into character.

e. Exemplary (moral model) from the surrounding environment.

Exemplary in education is the most convincing method of influencing success in preparing and shaping children morally, spiritually and socially. This is because the educator is the best

example in the child's view, who will be imitated in his behavior, and his manners, whether consciously or not, are even imprinted in the feelings and feelings of a student's image, both in speech and deed, both material and spiritual, whether known or not. is known (Nashih Ulwan, 1993).

In educating the character is needed a figure who becomes a model. The model can be found by children in the surrounding environment, the closer the model is to the child, the easier and more effective the character education will be. Children need real examples, not examples written in books. This is in line with Berk's opinion as quoted by Siti Masganti (2010) moral behavior is obtained in the same way as other responses, namely through modeling and reinforcement. Through modeling learning (exemplary) will occur the internalization of various moral, pro-social behaviors and other rules for good action. According to the Social Learning Theory cited by Nurchaili (2010) human behavior is obtained through model observation, from observing other people, forming new ideas and behaviors, and finally being used as a direction for action.

Children learn more from what they see. *Verbamovent exempla trahunt*. Words can move people, but examples can move hearts. For this reason, character education is actually more of a demand, especially for the educators themselves. This is because good knowledge of values will not be credible when the good normative theoretical ideas are never encountered by children in the practice of their lives, either at home or at school (Doni Koesoema, 2007).

- f. Repent (return) to Allah SWT after making a mistake.

Repentance is essentially returning to Allah SWT after making a mistake. *Nasuha* repentance is repenting of the sins/mistakes he has committed now and regretting the sins he has committed in the past and promising not to do them again in the future and determined to do good in the future. Repentance will form awareness about the nature of life, the purpose of life, give birth to optimism, virtue values,

values obtained from various actions, the benefits and emptiness of their actions, and so on in such a way that a person is brought forward to take action in a new paradigm and new characters in the future (Margustam, 2014).

Discussion

Taruna Al-Qur'an Special School is an educational institution under the Taruna Al-Qur'an Islamic Boarding School Foundation which is given the responsibility to provide educational services for autistic children in terms of positive character values to shape the character of autistic children who are *qur'ani*. In accordance with the vision of the school, namely the establishment of a Special School for Al-Qur'an Taruna as an institution and an optimal education service system in shaping Children with Special Needs to become independent generations with *Qur'ani* personality.

To build character values in autistic children, it is implemented at the Taruna Al-Qur'an Special School through several strategies, namely *first*, through the basic principles of education services for children with special needs, *second* through habituation and good culture in schools, *third* through example, *fourth* through the *fifth* and applicative morals through al-Qur'an therapy.

1. Through the basic principles of education services for children with special needs (autism).

The basic principles of educational services for children with special needs are used because educating children with disabilities such as autistic children who have communication, social and emotional disorders are not the same as other children. So that in learning and inculcating the value of character education, a special approach also requires special services. This adjusts to the level of disturbance experienced by autistic children ranging from communication disorders, emotional disorders and social disorders.

The basic concept of implementing character education at the Taruna Al-Qur'an Special School is based on the basic principles of educational services for children with special needs such as the principle of *all the children, reality, a dynamic program, equal opportunity*.

(*equality of opportunity*), cooperation, affection, individual service, motivation, skills, repetition and reinforcement above are implemented into school activities/programs.

2. Through Good Habituation and Cultivation at School

So to build positive and religious values, the Special School for Al-Qur'an Taruna both teachers, employees and students cultivate positive and religious values so that the cultivation of character education in schools can run in synergy with the goals to be achieved. The following are positive habits and culture created in the school environment: ablution, Duha prayer, Dhuhur Prayer, dhikr, Pray, Save, Habit of bathing, brushing teeth, washing clothes, ironing and cooking, Eating together and Washing your own dishes.

Good habituation and culture in this school aims to instill character education for autistic children can run continuously and sustainably so that autistic children will get used to good things.

3. Through Al-Qur'an therapy.

Al-Qur'an therapy at the Al-Qur'an Youth Special School is carried out twice a day, namely in the morning before the dhuha prayer and in the afternoon after the dhuhur prayer. Except on Saturday, only done once in the morning. Al-Qur'an therapy is carried out in the prayer room guided by a companion teacher.

In this activity, students read prayers, dhikr, and selected verses simultaneously in a room accompanied by mentors. When students do this activity, they not only listen to the reading but are guided to be able to read it together so that they are accustomed to reciting if at any time they need it. The prayers, dhikr, and verses that have been read have been summarized in a book specially prepared by Umi Hanik Abdurrahman (one of the caregivers of the Taruna Al-Qur'an Islamic Boarding School). This collection of readings which is a representation of the *ruqyah* verses comes from several hadith books, such as *Riyadh al-Salihin* and *Mi'ah Hadith*.

In practice, this strategy of al-Qur'an therapy is very helpful in planting character education,

especially Islamic characters. At the first time children follow this Koran therapy, there are indeed some who have tantrums because they are not used to this kind of therapy. However, over time the child can follow quite well. With great affection Ustadzah Umi read the verses of the Koran while stroking the child's back. And guide the children to want to listen to the chanting of the verses of the Qur'an and even be able to imitate it in an orderly manner.

4. Through Applicative Morals

Applicative morality is one of the character education strategies at the Taruna Al-Qur'an Special Schools. This applicative character is included in the design of an integrated individual curriculum for autistic children. At the Taruna Al-Qur'an Special School, these applicable morals are summarized in the daily activities of students, including:

- a. Reading prayers before and after doing activities.
- b. Shake hands and say hello.
- c. Islamic manners of eating and drinking.
- d. Apologize when you make a mistake.
- e. Saying thank you to people who give something/help.

This character education strategy through applicative morals is a strategy in integrating the values of character education in the daily lives of autistic children. In this case, students are invited to practice directly in daily practice. Considering the condition of autistic children who have limited communication skills, the values of character education taught must be simple and practical, adapted to the conditions and needs of students.

5. Through Exemplary

Every teacher must meet the requirements as a responsible human being in the field of education. Teachers as educators are responsible for passing down values and norms to their students through the process of education. So that a teacher must have a good personality and ethics in accordance with the values that have been regulated in Islamic law.

The exemplary method in instilling character education values for autistic children is one of

the effective methods in instilling character, this is in line with psychological reviews which state that human nature is like imitating and imitating. A child has a tendency to imitate what is around him. Because the environment can be said to be a process of cultivating children which is influenced by the conditions that are faced and experienced by children at any time.

Conclusions

The implementation of character education values for autistic children at the Taruna Al-Qur'an Special School through several strategies, namely *first*, through the basic principles of education services for children with special needs, *secondly* through habituation and good culture in schools, *third* through example, *fourth* through morals, applicative, *fifth* through Koranic therapy, and *sixth* through *Group Support Therapy*.

The character values built by the Taruna Al-Qur'an Special School are character values related to Allah SWT, character values related to oneself, character values related to other people and character values related to the environment. Character values related to Allah SWT such as faith and piety are religious programs aimed at children with autism through applicative morals, al-Qur'an therapy and habits of worship such as dhuha prayer, dhuhur prayer, tadarus al-Qur'an, meditate and pray. Character values related to self are behaviors shown by students who relate to individuals such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, and independence. Character values related to other people include mutual respect, help, courtesy, and tolerance. And character values related to the environment, for example preserving the environment.

In the application of character education for autistic children at the Taruna Al-Qur'an Special School, there are supporting factors and inhibiting factors. Existing supporting factors such as good communication between the school (teachers) and parents/guardians of students, an approach of compassion and educating with a heart, an integrated individual curriculum, a ONE-ON-ONE

learning system, a conducive and religious environment. While the inhibiting factors are the lack of parental care in planting character education, the condition of the community that does not accept the shortcomings of autistic children, the condition of some children who sometimes still have tantrums.

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