



Character Education between The Western Context and Islamic perspective

Sarwadi

Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Tarbiyah Madani Yogyakarta, Indonesia

sarwadi@stitmadani.ac.id

Husna Nashihin

INISNU Temanggung, Indonesia

aufahusna.lecture2017@gmail.com

Abstract

Character education is essential in Indonesia. The rising crime rate and other instances of moral failings are warning signs that the bulk of people's character is in a dangerous state. According to the constitution, the goal of national education is to produce people who are noble in character as well as skillful and clever. The character education policy guidelines, which comprise 18 characters that excel, mandate this (religious, honest, disciplined, tolerant, and so on). Character education and Akhlak are comparable concepts from the western context and an Islamic perspective. Islam's principal sources for moral instruction are the Qur'an and Hadith, with the Prophet Muhammad SAW serving as an example. The suggested approach to character education in Islam is based on a mental-spiritual approach through soul management, habituation, an exemplary lifestyle, and a healthy environment that involves three different educational institutions: schools, families, and communities.

Keywords: *character education, western context, Islamic perspective*

A. Introduction

In Indonesia, character education has been a fascinating subject for the past ten years. To examine this problem, numerous seminars and conversations were arranged. There have also been several books and journals written (Mughtarom 2016). Even so, the national education-based character education program was introduced by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture about six years ago. It makes sense that the conversation about character education is returning today. Indonesia and other nations throughout the world are dealing with unresolved issues in their economic, political, social, and cultural spheres, which are mostly brought on by a character crisis(Shah et al. 2015).

Character education is regarded as one approach to addressing the social unrest that exists today. The moral, social, and cultural values problem in our nation has a significant impact (Husna Nashihin 2017) on the moral fiber of our generation(Notes on the English Character by E.M. Forster: A Critical Perspective 2021). Our generation has been infected by "a hazardous virus" propagated by the political elites and national leaders, who ought to be positive role models for the youth. Nepotism, collusion, and corruption are prevalent in practically all institutions and facets of daily life in society (Nashihin 2019b). Today's news reports in the media are dominated by vandalism, street fights, crimes, and consumerist lifestyles(Lopes et al. 2013).

Criminal activity rates in schools have significantly increased due to student fights, drug usage, juvenile delinquency, and untimely pregnancies. In addition, students lack self-discipline and national values, lose their enthusiasm for life, and lack the ambition to do well (Zebua and Sunarti 2020). Character education concepts are desperately needed to address these complex issues. With a focus on character education from western context and an Islamic perspective, this essay aims to contribute to the dialogue on the subject.

B. Methods

Literature review is the method used for this research by data collection. Results of the study point to education giving students characters that are in line with western context and Islamic perspective. Recommendations or summaries of the data in this document were obtained from a number of studies that used kepustakaan data, including those from journals, books, majalahs, and other sources. But it's likely that a lot will come from scholarly journals going forward.

C. Discussion

1. The Character Concept

The Greek term *charaktêr*, which originally referred to an impression on a coin, is where the English word "character" comes from (Profile 2016). Later, according to Homiak, "character" began to refer to a distinguishing feature that made something stand out from others and later principally to the collection of traits that set one person apart from another (Dimkov 2020). Characters are described by Horvathova and Fadel on their research as "disposition," which refers to the distinguishing characteristics of a person, group, or country (Horvathova 2015). In contrast, character is described by Lapsley and Narvaez as a reasonably stable aspect of an individual's personality that serves as the foundation for behavior that is consistent with social norms and values (Lapsley and Narvaez 2007). The phrase "personal nature" refers to individual traits expressed via behavior. Thus, it can be said that a person's character has a significant impact on how they respond to reality in a variety of circumstances, whether they be personal or social (Kurniasih et al. 2017).

According to Aristotle's philosophical definition of good character, it is "proper conduct - right behaviour in respect to other persons and in relation to oneself" (Oppy 2012). The character has "a reliable inner inclination to respond to situations in a morally good way," according to Lickona. "So conceived Character has three interrelated parts: moral knowledge, moral feeling, and moral activity," he continued (CLONINGER 2005). Thus, character education is a means of teaching pupils how to behave properly both toward themselves and toward others (God, human being and environment)(Rangkuti and Arjuna 2019). Three operational values, or values in action, namely moral knowing, moral emotion, and moral activity, make up character in substance. Lickona went on to explain that good character is a psychological process that involves knowing the good (Nashihin 2019a), desiring the good, and acting in the good - a habit of the mind, habit of the heart, and habit of action. However, according to Alhamuddin, there is a shared meaning between the concepts of moral, ethical, *akhlak*, and manners in Indonesian culture (Alhamuddin, Surbiantoro, and Erlangga 2022a).

2. The meaning of character development

Despite variations in description, character education always contains the same core principles. Character education is described as follows by David Elkind

and Freddy Sweet Ph.D. (Alodwan 2022): "helping others comprehend, care about, and act upon fundamental ethical principles. When we consider the type of character we want for our children, it is evident that we want them to be able to evaluate what is right, care profoundly about what is right, and then act in accordance with their convictions—even in the face of external pressure and internal temptation " (Suyono 2021). Another description describes character education as a system for instilling the school community's values in terms of knowledge, awareness, or volition, as well as actions to put those values into practice. The deliberate utilization of all aspects of school life to promote the best possible character development is what character education is (Notes on the English Character by E.M. Forster: A Critical Perspective 2021). The term "dimension of school life" refers to all elements of education that should be considered at a school, including the curriculum, school administration, learning and assessment, subject management, extracurricular activities, and surroundings(Eissa and Khalid 2019).

On the other hand, Suparyanto noted that character education is an endeavor to teach students how to make educated judgments and to put it into practice in their daily lives, so they can contribute positively to the environment (Suparyanto dan Rosad (2015 2020). From the aforementioned definition, it can be inferred that character education aims to create generations of people of noble character who are aware of, comprehend, and apply moral or ethical values in life (Nashihin 2017), such as what is right and wrong or what is the appropriate behavior in dealing with various situations in daily life.

In particular, the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Indonesian people established the policy guidelines for character education that include 18 excellent character traits(Muchlis 2020). These include: 1) religious, attitudes and behaviors are obedient in carrying out the teachings of their religion, tolerant implementation of worship of other religions, and live in harmony with other religions; 2) civic, attitudes and behaviors are open to the world and its people 2) sincere, based on an effort to present himself as a person who is consistently trustworthy in word, deed, and labor; 3) tolerance, acceptance of others' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that differ from his own, regardless of their race, religion, or ethnicity; 4) discipline, which entails taking steps to enforce the numerous laws and regulations and show orderly behavior; 5) diligent worker, showing a willingness to put up the effort and resolve necessary to achieve a goal in compliance with the law; 6) Be inventive; consider and take action to produce a new approach or outcome for something that has been owned; 7) independence, attitudes, and conduct that make it difficult to

rely on others to do tasks; 8) a democratic mindset that recognizes that everyone has the same rights and responsibility when evaluating others and themselves; 9) the desire to learn more about something taught, seen, or heard; curiosity, attitudes, and behavior; 10) the nationalistic mindset, which prioritizes national concerns over those of the individual and group; 11, knowing how to think, behave, and speak in a way that prioritizes national interests over those of one's group or self; 12) praising accomplishment, exhibiting behaviors and attitudes that motivate one to contribute to society, and appreciating and respecting the achievements of others; 14) love peace, the attitudes and actions that encourage him to produce something useful for society, and recognize and respect the success of others; 15) joy of reading, habits that take time to read the various readings that give virtue to him; and 13) friendly/communicative; attitudes and actions that encourage him to produce something useful for society; 16) environmental awareness, attitudes, and behaviors always try to prevent harm to the surrounding natural environment and to develop solutions to repair any damage already done by nature; 18) responsibility, attitudes, and behavior of a person to carry out the duties and obligations he should perform for himself, the community, the environment (natural, social, and cultural), the country, and God Almighty. 17) social concern, attitudes, and actions have always wanted to help other people and communities in need(Agus 2023).

3. The Development of Moral Education (Western Context)

In France, Kant, Comte, and Renouvier were well known for their cutting-edge and enlightened views on people and learning. Religious morality was what Kant and later Renouvier anticipated in education(Abdybekova and Ryspaeva 2023). However, during the time of French philosopher Charles Renouvier, who lived in the late 19th century, morality was introduced into the formal educational environment. Renouvier believed that in order to combat the "weakening sense of duty" that young people were feeling, as well as a loss of "justice," "equality," "reciprocity," "rights," and "respect," French society had a responsibility to incorporate moral components into education(Berkowitz and Bier 2004). At that time, many children engaged in improper conduct and did not attain the kind of academic success that is now a focus of character education. Renouvier was horrified by the lack of morals in French education and believed that students should learn throughout their educational careers both how to make moral decisions and their responsibility to participate in French society in an ethical way(Lopes et al. 2013).

Character education in America began to take off thanks to people like Benjamin Franklin, Horace Mann, and William McGuffey who had a significant impact on educational issues. Franklin, Mann, and McGuffey each held important positions within post-secondary schools and participated in the legislation that laid the groundwork for public education in early America (Dimkov 2020). The founding father of America, Benjamin Franklin, who had a significant impact on many facets of American culture, advocated for the teaching of morality in public schools. Franklin shared the belief that pupils should be given opportunity to exercise morality in the classroom with Horace Mann, the next person to have a significant impact on the character of students in American education. Franklin and Mann both believed that moral education would help create character (Nashihin 2018) and that there would be significant advantages beyond character development alone, such as improved classroom behavior and superior academic performance for kids (Siegel 2010).

In addition, Horace Mann emphasized that students would gain a great deal from a character education that focused on "the principles of piety, justice and a sacred regard to truth, love of their country, humanity and universal benevolence, sobriety, industry, frugality, chastity, moderation and temperance, and those other virtues, which are the ornament of human society" (Lapsley and Narvaez 2007). Mann divided character education instruction in public schools into two basic categories. The teacher is the first important factor; they should regularly set an example of moral behavior. The second was that he offered teachers a number of tactics to help kids build their character. Thomas Lickona, who wrote the books *The Return of Character Education* and *Educating for Character: How Our School Can Teach Respect and Responsibility* in the early 1900s, later revived the phrase "character education."

Developing moral character in Indonesia

Ki Hajar, who is regarded as the founder of modern education, once said that education is an effort to enhance pupils' intellectual, moral, and physical development. For the sake of the future well-being of our children, all of those factors must be incorporated (Agus 2023). In his address titled "Nation and Character Building," the first president of Indonesia, Soekarno, later introduced the idea of character building (Syafiqoh, Mustofa, and Najihah 2022). The improvement of students' potential in terms of their intelligence, personality, and behavior is one of the national education objectives, according to the constitution of the Indonesian national educational system published in 2003, article 1. The long-term national

development plan for Indonesia (2005-2025) also states that education should be managed to achieve the ultimate goal, which is the development of strong national characters, national competitiveness, highly valued behavior, and morality in accordance with the values inherent in Pancasila (The five principles)(Sekolah and Agama 2016)(Ainissyifa 2016). The principles include having faith in the Almighty One God, engaging in highly regarded behaviors, demonstrating tolerance, practicing cooperation, being patriotic, being vivacious, and being knowledgeable about science and technology (Fkip-utm 2013).

Moral instruction and religious belief

In his book *Educating for Character*, Lickona makes the case that moral instruction should focus on three components: moral understanding, moral feeling, and moral action. The three are connected (Bangsa et al. n.d.). In addition to the other three factors, religious faith plays a significant part for Indonesians in particular. According to Budiningsih, there is a direct link between morality and religious or existential conviction. Taking this viewpoint into consideration, it can be said that internalizing moral values and character in learning should focus on four factors: understanding or comprehension of the noble character, feelings or appreciation of the meaning of the noble character, actions or practices that reflect the behavior of the noble character, and internalization - the value of faith as the foundation of the character changes(Adams 2011). People of faith, such as Muslims, believe in the existence of God. Muslims have the belief that Allah is aware of everything they say and do and will hold them accountable for all of his good or bad activities in this life. Muslims hold the following beliefs: there is life after death, there is a Day of Judgment, there are punishments in hell for evil or sinful deeds, and there are rewards in heaven for good conduct. Since they are more motivated to conduct good deeds that foster noble character, sincere believers have more self-control in their actions that keep them from engaging in dishonorable behavior.

Islamic Character Education

Islamic principles are where the idea of character education comes from. The Qur'an and Hadith are the two fundamental Islamic teaching texts from which the idea of character education is founded. Numerous passages in the Qur'an emphasize how crucial it is for people to have excellent character (Tri Na'imah and Ahmad Muhibbin 2020). Similar to how many hadiths instruct and outline the development of outstanding character. Some Muslim thinkers, including al Gazali and Miskawayh, developed further clarification of the idea of character education in Islam through their religious writings on Islamic morality(Zebua and Sunarti 2020).

Character has the same Islamic connotation as "akhlak." Islam's most crucial principle is akhlak. In a hadith, the Prophet Muhammad stated, "I was sent to perfect moral glory" (Narrated by Ahmad). According to hadith, Prophet Muhammad SAW's primary goal in the world was to advance morality (noble character). It is undeniable that Islam's goal is to instill moral values in people. Ibn Miskawayh and Ghazali define Akhlak as a character who appears to behave instantly (spontaneously) without needing to stop and think. That is, a person's better character can be seen in the nice deeds that come naturally to them. On the other hand, negative deeds can also be a reflection of a person's poor character (Alhamuddin, Surbiantoro, and Erlangga 2022b). Another Islamic scholar, Ibrahim Anis, described Ahlak as a trait embedded in the spirit from which unconscious good or bad deeds occur. Abu Bakr Jabir Al Jazairy defined Ahlak as a sort of psychic embedded in humans' souls, which gives rise to good and evil activities (Tinggi et al. 2020).

The Prophet Muhammad SAW is seen as the primary example or model of the good character in Islam. Even before he was chosen to serve as the Messenger, Prophet was renowned for his honorable demeanor. In Surah al-Qalam, verse 4, Allah praises the Prophet Muhammad SAW's honorable character (Mahsun 2013). That, according to Allah, signifies that Muhammad has a strong character. Through his actions in daily life, the Prophet Muhammad's great character was immortalized throughout history. Prophet is seen as being sincere, reliable, kind, friendly, gentle, generous, loving of neighbors, possessing a helping spirit, and so forth. His enemies and other religious followers, including those of Christianity and Judaism, also recognized the majesty of his character. Prophet Muhammad is regarded as the ideal for developing moral character in Muslims, and the moral principles he upheld through his life have been historically and experimentally supported. According to A'ishah RA, "The Quran is the character of the prophet." Thus, the Prophet was a living Qur'an. The noble Prophet SAW is the true embodiment of the Qur'anic idea in terms of his complete character (Sari n.d.). According to 'Athiyah al-Brasyi and quoted by sarwadi, a specialist on Islamic education, there are three ways to teach morality in Islam (Sarwadi 2019). The first is direct education by the use of directions, suggestions, counsel, and mentions of the advantages and risks of a particular action. Teachers and parents might employ the format of words of wisdom when delivering advice. The second is indirect moral education, which is taught by making suggestions. The advice is offered directly through narrated poems for children that are filled with wisdom or any other literary works that have high moral standards. The third is to capitalize on the tendencies and characteristics

of kids, who often emulate or model the words and behaviors of those who are near to them, like instructors.

D. Conclusion

Character education teaches students how to act appropriately toward others and themselves (God, human being and environment). Character education is a system for fostering the values of the school community in terms of knowledge, awareness, or volition, as well as activities to put those values into reality, according to another definition. According to the definition given above, character education aims to produce generations of people of noble character who are aware of, understand, and apply moral or ethical values in life, such as what is right and wrong or what is the proper behavior in dealing with various situations in daily life. Thanks to influential figures who had a big impact on educational concerns including Horace Mann, William McGuffey, and Benjamin Franklin, character education in America started to take off. Franklin, Mann, and McGuffey all held significant positions within postsecondary institutions and took part in the legislation that created the framework for public education in early America. According to Indonesia's long-term national development plan, education should be controlled to meet the country's ultimate objective, which is the growth of resilient national identities, competitiveness on a global scale, highly regarded conduct, and morality along with Pancasila's principles. The Islamic meaning of "akhlak" is the same for character. The most important Islamic principle is akhlak. I was sent to perfect moral splendor, the Prophet Muhammad said in a hadith. The advancement of morals was the Prophet Muhammad SAW's top priority in the world, according to hadith (noble character). Islam undoubtedly seeks to instill moral principles in people.

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