THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CHARACTER EDUCATION TO IMPROVE SOCIAL SKILLS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract: Education is one of the main keys to building and shaping citizens' character quality. One of the skills in education is social skills. This research aims to determine the implementation of character education in the formation of social skills in elementary schools. The research method used is the descriptive qualitative research method. The subjects in this study were teachers and elementary school students. Instrument content validation was carried out by consulting the validator team. Methods of data collection using interviews, questionnaires, and documentation. The results of this study show that there is an influence between character education by carrying out routine religious activities, instilling a nationalist spirit, carrying out tasks independently, cooperation, and helping others in terms of goodness, which is then integrated into everyday life to foster social attitudes in the form of honesty, discipline, responsibility, polite, caring and confident so, the application of character education has a good impact on social attitudes in students.

Keywords: Social Skills, Character Education, Elementary School

INTRODUCTION

The social skills in question are the skills and positive mindset that are skilled at carrying out social interactions both verbally or direct communication as well as non-verbal or indirect communication. Social skills are verbal and non-verbal communication skills, including expressivity, sensitivity, and control. Expressivity refers to the skill of communicating or sending messages to others. This sensitivity refers to the skills of receiving and interpreting the messages communicated. Meanwhile, control refers to skills to regulate and manage abilities in a communication process. Social skills enable individuals to interact with other individuals successfully. These skills include expressing and receiving praise, expressing and receiving complaints, refusing unreasonable requests, asserting individual rights, asking for help, proposing changes in other people's behavior, solving problems, associating with friends of the opposite sex, and getting along with other people.

Observations by León-Garzón & Castañeda-Peña (2018) state that people who are skilled at interacting have social intelligence that can establish relationships with other people quite smoothly, are sensitive to reading their reactions and feelings, can lead and organize, and are good at handling disputes that arise. In contrast, Cheung & Lee (2010) explains that social skills refer to special abilities related to interpersonal intelligence. Furthermore, interpersonal intelligence, according to Goleman (2015), defines 4 (four) separate abilities as its components, namely the ability to organize groups, the ability to negotiate solutions, the ability to establish relationships, and the ability to social analysis. Furthermore, Goleman (2015) argues that social skills are the art or ability to handle other people's emotions in evoking the desired response (response) to others.

Humans living their life wheel definitely need the help of other people, whether it's parents, siblings as the closest people or people around them, because this is human nature that there is always dependence on their social environment, gradually humans will understand what it wants, then working to get it and then knowing how to take advantage of what it wants. The process tells the story of human life, which always describes the movement from dependence to independence and character. Character education in Indonesia has long been rooted in education tradition. Education is a moral strength and mental quality, morals, and character that must be attached to educators so that they become a motivator and driving force for their students in carrying out an activity. In contrast, a character is a quality or mental strength and morals, character or character of the individual or student, and a special personality that is the driving force and motivator. The existence of a nation is determined by its character. Only a nation with strong character can make its nation a nation with dignity and respect by other nations. Becoming a nation with character is everyone's desire. In social life, the realization of an independent human being will not be achieved as long as a person does not

have independent attitudes and learns to become an independent person with characteristics, has a sense of responsibility, has initiative, is confident, dares to compete and is tenacious in achieving progress.

Furthermore, character education can also be interpreted as an effort to develop students' potential with cultural and national character so that they have values and character as their personal character. Character education is interpreted as education of values, mind, morals, and character which aims to develop students' ability to decide what is good and bad in everyday life. Therefore, character education psychologically includes the dimensions of moral reasoning, moral feeling, and moral behavior (Mutaqin, 2015).

Along with the current rapid flow of globalization, it has caused the erosion of national values among Indonesian citizens, especially students at various levels of education. This phenomenon has even led to the fading of national identity among students. This, of course, must get serious attention from all of us, especially the actors in the world of education. The fact that emerges is that students are more proud of the results of foreign cultures than their own national culture. This is evidenced by the existence of a greater sense of pride in students using foreign (imported) products compared to using their own national products. In terms of everyday life, for example, they are more proud to play games on gadgets and Android than playing or interacting with their peers directly. This kind of situation needs to be studied about how to instill the values of nationalism, which actually starts at elementary level students.

High individualism makes elementary school students reluctant to socialize with friends around them. The factors that cause this include gadgets and social media that make students focus on these objects. The social skills possessed by students are lacking, and this will harm their future lives. In particular, this study aims to identify social skills in good character education shown by elementary school students and to describe the application of social skills based on character education in elementary schools.

METHODS

The design used in this study is a case study research design. This study aims to describe how the application of character education improves elementary school students' social skills. The data collection techniques used in this study were interviews, observations, and questionnaires.

Interviews were conducted with elementary school teachers and elementary school students. This interview aims to dig deeper into information regarding the condition of elementary school students' social skills. Besides that, it is also to see how character education is integrated into the

curriculum in elementary schools. The interviews were semi-structured, so the researchers prepared the guidelines before conducting the interviews. Observations were made by directly observing elementary school students. The things observed included the components of their social skills, including honesty, discipline, responsibility, courtesy, caring, and self-confidence. Researchers used observation sheets while in the field.

Questionnaires are used to retrieve data about the social skills possessed by students. The type of questionnaire used in this study was a closed questionnaire, where respondents chose answers provided by the researcher and could immediately provide answers according to their own circumstances. Data analysis techniques used in this study include data reduction, data presentation, conclusion, and evaluation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on interviews conducted with teachers and elementary school principals, the implementation of character education there has been going quite well with the implementation of habituation activities. Things that enable character education to run according to the target include at least three things: using the principle of continuity/routine (habituation in all aspects of life). Habituation is an effort the teacher makes to implement character education so that students will naturally get used to these activities. Habituation is a series of activities that must be carried out by students, teachers, and education staff that aim to foster good habits and form generations of positive character. Habituation carried out in elementary schools in Tarakan is the habit of being honest, responsible, independent, and working together.

The observational data results show that the character applied to each class in elementary schools in Tarakan varies depending on what the teacher needs. Schools and teachers can add and subtract character values according to what is needed by the school and the nature of SK-KD material and subject matter. The character values most widely applied by elementary school teachers include being religious, caring for the environment, responsibility, honesty, discipline, and tolerance. By Presidential Instruction number 87 of 2017, the Ministry of Education and Pala (2011) emphasized that there are five main character values originating from Pancasila, which are priorities for the development of the Strengthening Character Education (PPK) movement, including religion, nationalism, integrity, independence, and mutual cooperation. These values cannot stand and develop alone but are interrelated with one another.

Based on the questionnaire results, it shows that of the 18 character values, the character values that are more widely applied in elementary schools are religious values applied through

congregational prayers and praying before and after lessons. The value of caring for the environment is implemented through disposing of waste in its proper place, collecting used bottles, and carrying out cleaning activities together. The value of responsibility is implemented through carrying out the teacher's assignments and daring to apologize if you make a mistake. The value of discipline is applied through activities arriving on time, and submitting assignments on time. Honest values are applied through activities that must be brave to admit mistakes that have been made. The value of tolerance is applied through cooperative activities without choosing friends and not disturbing friends who are praying. These character values are implemented through simple classroom and school activities.

These skills include expressing and receiving praise, expressing and receiving complaints, refusing unreasonable requests, asserting individual rights, asking for help, proposing changes in other people's behavior, solving problems, associating with friends of the opposite sex, and getting along with other people more mature. In short, Setiawati (2009) reveals that social skills in students are one of the important things in helping students to be able to have friends and interact with other people, as well as helping students develop in carrying out their developmental tasks. In line with the previous statement, Pala (2011) stated that students' social skills are the way students interact, both in behavior and in terms of communicating with others. Social skill is an individual's ability to communicate verbally and nonverbally with others according to the situation and conditions that existed at that time, where this skill is a learned behavior. Students with social skills can express positive and negative feelings in interpersonal relationships without hurting others (Agung, 2011; Safitri et al., 2019). Students' social skills are the way students interact, both in terms of behaving and in terms of communicating with others. Students will develop good social skills if the parenting style is also good given by their parents. However, most parents often assume that their students' social skills are not important to pay attention to because they can learn to interact well with friends, relatives, or other people.

Social skills consist of the words skills and social. The word skill is used to show that social competence is not a personality trait but a set of learned processes and acquired behavior. At the same time, social means being together with other people, including friends, siblings, parents, and teachers. Social skills are generally complex interpersonal behaviors (Michelson, Sugai, Wood & Kazdin, 1983). The implementation of social skills through character education for elementary school students in the learning process in elementary schools is reinforced by the social learning theory of Albert Bandura (Santrock, 2007), who argues that social learning theory emphasizes student behavior, environment, and cognition as key factors in the development process. Bandura believes that personal, cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors have a reciprocal, not unidirectional, relationship in students' social development. Vygotsky believes that the experience of social

interaction is very important for developing students' thinking processes or cognitive (Santrock, 2007). From the theory above, several definitions of social skills have emerged, including:

Cubukcu (2012) states that social skills are a term used by psychologists to refer to moral actions expressed culturally, such as sharing, helping someone in need, working with others, and expressing sympathy. Social skills are thoughts, actions, and emotion regulation activities that enable students to achieve personal or social goals while maintaining compatibility with their social partners (Revell & Arthur, 2007). Social skills include the ability to initiate, build, and sustain friendships; the ability to build healthy interpersonal relationships with other people; the ability to create and maintain mutually beneficial intimate relationships; the ability to be empathetic; and the ability to be altruistic (Pattaro, 2016). Hariyanto et al. (2022) argued that individuals acquire social skills through learning.

Efendi (2017) added that the things that educators must do in implementing social skills through character education are: (1) educators must apply learning methods that involve active participatory students, (2) educators must create an active learning environment and conducive, (3) educators must provide character education explicitly, systematically, and continuously by involving aspects of knowing the good, loving the good, and acting good, and (4) educators must pay attention to the uniqueness of each student in using learning methods.

It is also added by Agustian & Alamsyah (2001) that educators must train and shape students' character through repetition so that character internalization occurs, such as by inviting students to pray consistently. Based on this explanation, the authors try to categorize the role of educators in each type of educational institution in shaping student character. In formal and non-formal education, educators must: (1) be involved in the learning process, namely interacting with students in discussing learning material, (2) be an example for their students in behavior and attitude, (3) be able to encourage active learning through using a variety of learning methods, (4) being able to encourage and make changes so that the personality, abilities, and desires of teachers can create mutually respectful and friendly relationships with their students, (5) being able to help and develop students' emotional and social sensitivity so that students become more pious, appreciate other creations, develop learning soft skills that are important for the next student's life, and (6) show a sense of empathy for students so that teachers in guiding students who are difficult are not easily discouraged.

Several reasons for the need for character education, including (1) A large number of young people injure each other because of weak awareness of moral values, (2) Providing moral values to the younger generation is wrong. One of the most important functions of civilization, (3) The role of schools as a means of educating becomes increasingly important when many students receive little moral teaching from parents, society, or religious institutions, (4) there are still universal moral values

received such as attention, trust, respect, and responsibility, (5) Democracy has a special need for moral education because democracy is a rule from, for society, and by society, (6) As education, nothing is value-free. Schools teach value-free education. Schools teach values daily through design or without design, (7) Commitment to character education is important for our students to want and continue to be good teachers. And (8) Effective character education makes people more civilized, cares about society, and focuses on increased academic performance.

According to Khasanah et al. (2023), social skills are skills in adjustments that allow students to get along with their friends. Solomon (1997) means that social skills are a person's ability to adjust to himself by associating with other people. Students who have good relationships with other people characterize that they can pleasantly make friends. Social skills are how students interact with others regarding behavior and communication to adapt to the surrounding environment (Adistyasari, 2013).

Based on the opinions and definitions above, it can be concluded that the conceptual definition of social skills is the ability to carry out social interactions both verbally and non-verbally, which can be received or responded to (responded to) and is beneficial to oneself and others and one's ability to balance processing abilities thinking that is expressed culturally, such as sharing, helping someone in need, and expressing sympathy. Social skills are also a way for someone to get along with their environment by establishing communication and forms of behavior. The social skills a student possesses help him make it easier to adapt to the community environment and comply with the norms that apply in that place. Students with good social skills will be able to respect others, not be individuals, and easily make friends.

Educators can be teachers, parents, or anyone. The important thing is that they have an interest in shaping the personality of students or students. The role of the teacher as an educator is basically a learning and moral society. Lepiyanto (2011) outlines several thoughts about the teacher's role as an educator, including:

1. Teachers must be directly involved in the learning process, discuss, and take the initiative to build character education

2. The teacher is responsible for being a model with moral values and taking advantage of opportunities to influence his students. This means that the teacher should be able to be a "good example" that lives for every student. Students must also be open and ready to discuss with students about various good values.

3. The teacher must provide an understanding that student character grows through cooperation and participation in making decisions

4.   Teachers must reflect on moral issues through routine questions to ensure that their students experience character development.

5.   The teacher must explain and clarify to students continuously about good and bad grades.

Social skills through character education generally direct students to be able to communicate well and clearly. Working in groups makes them happy because they can communicate with their friends, but for lower grades, it is important to have direct guidance and assistance from the teacher. From researchers' observations, when the teacher conducts learning in class, students can interact in a friendly and polite manner. Still, if the teacher leaves the class, the students use impolite language to be heard. Related to the problems that arise, these students, in responding to the conflicts they experience, always end in fights, even though friends around them try to separate them. Solving these problems requires the teacher as a mediator to stop conflicts or fights. However, students have a sense of sensitivity towards their classmates, especially if there are friends who are sad, sick, or unhappy. In showing empathy, fellow students still need guidance and direction from the teacher first, but these students can show empathy towards their friends over time. Students can even behave formally and adapt to conditions and situations, such as during ceremonies and the learning process in class. In general, students can respect and obey the rules at school, but for school attribute rules, some students still dress not according to the rules because of financial limitations. High-graders can and can control these negative emotions, but low-grade students cannot and always cause fights, so a teacher who can mediate this is needed. Implementing social skills through character education provides individual benefits and benefits that positively impact society. Students who have strong social skills tend to be more able to adapt and interact harmoniously in their environment.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis, it was found that elementary school students showed an increase in their social skills in terms of getting used to working with friends. The results of this study show that there is an influence between character education by carrying out routine religious activities, instilling a nationalist spirit, carrying out tasks independently, cooperation, and helping others in terms of goodness, which is then integrated into everyday life to foster social attitudes in the form of honesty, discipline, responsibility, polite, caring and confident so that the application of character education has a good impact on social attitudes in students.

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