

Early Childhood Education Teachers' Strategies in Instilling the Value of Gratitude Through Islamic Daily Activities at RA Al Rizky Padang Sidempuan

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Abstract

Instilling character values in early childhood is an important foundation in the formation of children's personalities, one of which is the value of gratitude. This study aims to analyze the strategies applied by PAUD teachers at RA Al Rizky Padang Sidempuan in instilling the value of gratitude through Islamic daily activities. The research method used is descriptive qualitative with data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of the study show that teachers use the approach of example, habituation, and Islamic stories as the main strategies. Islamic daily activities such as praying together, saying hamdalah, and introducing asmaul husna are effective media in instilling the value of gratitude. This study recommends continuous training for teachers to enrich early childhood character cultivation strategies based on Islamic values.

Keywords: Teacher Strategy, Gratitude Value, Early Childhood Education, Islamic Daily Activities, Early Childhood.

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International Conference Global Islamic Education: Cultivating Tolerance and Interfaith Cooperation in A Multicultural (GIE), Theme: Strengthening Tolerance and Peace.

<https://proceeding.pancabudi.ac.id/index.php/GIE>

Introduction

Early childhood is an individual who is 0 – 6 years old, who is at a stage of development and growth that takes place very quickly. During this time, aspects such as physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, linguistic, motor, and spiritual develop intensively. (Rita Nofianti, 2021) Therefore, it is necessary to stimulate education that is appropriate, comprehensive, and in accordance with their stages of growth and development so that they can develop optimally and are ready to enter the next level of education. Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is the main foundation in shaping children's personality and character from an early age. Early childhood is considered a *golden age* where children's potential develops very rapidly, both physically, cognitively, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. (Kurniawati, R, 2018) explained that early childhood is an individual from birth to about six years old, which is at a stage of development and growth that takes place very quickly. During this time, aspects such as physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, linguistic, motor, and spiritual develop intensively. In the context of Islamic education, one of the important character values that need to be instilled from an early age is the value of gratitude, as a form of children's introduction to God and His grace.

The value of gratitude in Islam reflects the attitude of receiving, appreciating, and repaying the goodness of Allah SWT with obedience and positive behavior. Children who are accustomed to being grateful will grow up to be optimistic individuals, not easy to complain, and able to appreciate the slightest blessings. (Zuhairini, et al. 2008) This is where the role of early childhood teachers becomes very important in designing and implementing appropriate and contextual learning strategies to instill these values.

One effective approach is through Islamic daily activities, such as praying together, reciting tahmid sentences after meals, and getting used to mentioning the name of Allah (basmalah and hamdalah) in daily activities. This approach is relevant to the world of children who tend to learn through repetition, direct experience, and habituation.

RA Al Rizky Padang Sidempuan as one of the Islamic-based PAUD institutions is committed to forming Islamic character in its students. Teachers in this institution not only teach the cognitive aspects of Islam, but also strive to instill noble moral values, including gratitude, through daily activities that are designed in a creative and fun way. However, the extent to which the strategies used by teachers are able to instill the value of gratitude effectively still requires scientific study.

This research is important to describe and analyze teachers' strategies in instilling the value of gratitude through Islamic daily activities at RA Al Rizky Padang Sidempuan, as well as contributing to the development of character education practices at the PAUD level.

Research Methods

This research uses a qualitative type with a case study approach. This approach was chosen because the researcher wanted to deeply understand teachers' strategies in instilling the value of gratitude through Islamic daily activities that take place naturally in the PAUD environment. Case studies allow researchers to explore complex educational processes, events, and contexts within a specific educational unit. (Moleong, L. J. 2017)

This research was carried out at RA Al Rizky Padang Sidempuan, an Islamic-based early childhood education institution. The subjects of the study are PAUD teachers who are directly involved in the learning and implementation of Islamic daily activities in the classroom.

Data collection is carried out with three main techniques, namely 1) Participatory Observation: The researcher directly observed the daily Islamic activities carried out by teachers and students, such as morning prayers, reading basmalah before studying, and saying hamdalah after meals. Observations were made to obtain factual data on the strategies implemented. 2) In-Depth Interviews: Interviews are conducted with class teachers and RA heads to explore their understanding, goals, and strategies in instilling gratitude values.

Interviews are semi-structured to be flexible yet focused. 3) Documentation is used to collect additional data in the form of activity schedules, guidebooks, photos of activities, and learning tools relevant to gratitude values.

Furthermore, data analysis is carried out in a qualitative descriptive manner with 3 steps, namely 1) Data Reduction, namely Selecting and simplifying important data from the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. 2) Data Presentation: Organize data into the form of a descriptive narrative so that it is easy to understand. 3) Drawing Conclusions and Verification, concluding findings related to teachers' strategies in instilling gratitude values and triangulating between sources to ensure data validity. (Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. 2014).

Result

The cultivation of gratitude in early childhood at RA Al Rizky Padang Sidempuan is carried out through an integrated approach between habituation, example, structured Islamic activities, and active communication between teachers and parents. This study found that the strategies applied by PAUD teachers in the institution are systematic, contextual, and based on Islamic values. Here is an in-depth description of the research findings:

4.1 Exemplary Strategy: Teachers as Figures of Gratitude

Example is the most important strategy applied by teachers in the process of internalizing gratitude values. Teachers consistently show grateful behavior in various activities in the classroom, such as saying *Alhamdulillah* when receiving help from students, completing activities, or when getting results from a learning process.

Children show a tendency to imitate their teachers' words and actions. When the teacher expressively expresses his gratitude verbally, the children imitate without being asked. For example, when the teacher says, "Alhamdulillah, we studied well today," the children naturally say the same thing at the end of the activity.

This example is also seen in the way teachers respond to challenging situations with a positive attitude. This fosters an implicit understanding to children that gratitude is not only done when getting pleasant things, but also when facing difficulties.

4.2 Habituation Strategy: Practicing the Habit of Gratitude Early

Habituation is an important process in strengthening the value of gratitude. At RA Al Rizky, habituation is carried out through routines arranged in Islamic daily activities such as:

- a. Reading prayers, waking up and going to class
- b. Saying *Alhamdulillah* after eating
- c. Giving thanks after completing the game
- d. Prayer together before and after study

This activity is carried out repeatedly every day until it becomes part of the routine. This habit aims to make words and attitudes of gratitude not only appear because of the teacher's direction, but also become an automatic habit embedded in the child's personality.

The teacher also emphasized the importance of being grateful for the little things. For example, when a child gets a toy that he likes or manages to tidy up a book, the teacher will immediately give verbal appreciation such as "*We're grateful, yes, you can tidy up well. Alhamdulillah.*" This response builds awareness in children that every achievement deserves to be grateful, not just big things.

4.3 Islamic Story Strategy and Children's Song with Nuances of Gratitude

Islamic stories and songs are very effective learning media because they are in accordance with children's imaginative world. Teachers at RA Al Rizky regularly read the stories of the prophets, especially the Prophet Job (a.s.), who is an outstanding example of patience and gratitude despite experiencing many trials in life.

One of the interesting learning moments was when the teacher read the story of the Prophet Job, then asked the children:

"If we are given a sick like Job, what do we still say?" The children in unison replied, "Alhamdulillah."

Simple Islamic songs are also used to reinforce the message of gratitude. For example, the song: *"Alhamdulillah, I have hands... Alhamdulillah, I can eat..."* Songs like this are sung every morning and are an important part of strengthening gratitude from an early age.

4.4 Islamic Daily Activities as a Media for Internalizing the Value of Gratitude

Islamic daily activities are the main structure that forms a space for the cultivation of spiritual values. At RA Al Rizky, daily activities such as congregational dhuha prayers, daily prayer readings, morning dhikr, and memorization of Asmaul Husna are not only rituals, but also a means of instilling gratitude as worship to Allah SWT.

Some forms of applying the value of gratitude in Islamic daily activities are:

- Morning dhikr: Children are taught to say *"Alhamdulillahilladzi ahyana..."* As a form of gratitude for being given the opportunity to live today.
- Simple reflection: After playing, the teacher invites the child to have a light conversation: *"Who is happy today? Who is grateful to be able to play football?"*
- Craft: After completing the artwork, the teacher invites the child to give thanks, affirming that the ability to make something is a blessing from God.

These activities show that the cultivation of gratitude values does not stand alone, but is naturally integrated into every learning activity.

4.5 Collaborative Role between Teachers and Parents

The cultivation of gratitude is strengthened by good communication between teachers and parents. The teacher provides a report on the development of the child's attitude of gratitude through a liaison book or during monthly meetings. Parents are also encouraged to reinforce these values at home, such as:

- Giving thanks together after eating
- Reminding children of the good things they should be grateful for
- Setting an example of gratitude in everyday situations

Teachers give simple suggestions to parents such as sticking *"Alhamdulillah"* stickers on the dining area or children's beds to form an environment conducive to instilling gratitude.

Strategy	Form of Activity	Impact on Children
Example	The Teacher Says <i>Thank God</i>	Children imitate gratitude
Habituation	Daily prayers, dhikr, gratitude while playing	Children are used to giving thanks in a routine
Islamic Stories & Songs	The Story of Prophet Job, a song of gratitude	Children understand the meaning of gratitude through stories
Islamic Daily Activities	Dhuha prayer, daily prayer, reflection	Internalization of gratitude in worship and activities
Collaboration with Parents	Reinforcement at home	The value of gratitude is more embedded because of consistency

Discussion

5.1 Teacher's Example in Instilling the Value of Gratitude

Exemplary strategies are a key aspect in the process of internalizing values in early childhood. Teachers as a central figure in the classroom have a very strong position in influencing children's behavior. Children learn faster through observation and imitation.

(Daradjat, Zakiah. 1996). Therefore, when teachers show consistent expressions of gratitude in daily activities — for example, saying *Alhamdulillah* — children indirectly perceive that the behavior is a good thing and worthy of emulation.

These findings corroborate the theory put forward by Albert Bandura in *Social Learning Theory* that children learn a lot from imitating the behavior they see. (Bandura, A. 1977). In the context of Islamic education, the Prophet PBUH is also the main example in instilling the value of gratitude and patience. So, when teachers imitate the attitude of the Prophet in daily life in the classroom, children will absorb these values more naturally and meaningfully.

5.2 Habituation as a Media for Cultivating Consistent Attitudes

Habituation strategies carried out through daily routines such as reading morning prayers, saying gratitude after eating, or being grateful after playing, show that the repetition of positive behaviors is consistently effective in building character. In early childhood development, habituation has an important role because their cognitive systems are not yet fully capable of rationally distinguishing values, but are very strong in remembering patterns and habits.

According to Piaget, at the age of 4–6 years, the child is in the *preoperational stage*, where symbolic understanding and social imitation begin to develop. (Piaget, J. 1952) Therefore, when teachers make habituation continuously, the value of gratitude will be embedded as a basic thinking pattern and behavior that will be carried into children's daily lives.

This habituation is also supported by the physical and emotional environment provided by the school. For example, there is a poster saying *Alhamdulillah* on the wall of the classroom, a pleasant atmosphere when praying together, and verbal support from teachers when children show grateful behavior.

5.3 Islamic Stories and Children's Songs as Emotional Education Tools

Strategies that utilize Islamic stories and songs of gratitude have been proven to be able to awaken the affective dimension of children. The story of prophets such as Prophet Job who was grateful despite hardship became an educational tool that touched on the emotional and empathic aspects of children. In children's world, imagination is the most effective way of entering to convey abstract values such as gratitude.

According to Vygotsky, a child's development occurs optimally when new concepts are presented in a meaningful context and according to their proximal development zone. (Vygotsky, L.S. 1978). In this case, the use of songs and stories makes the value of gratitude easy to understand and enjoyable. The song "Alhamdulillah, I have hands..." For example, teaching children to be grateful for their limbs in a way that evokes their sense and logic at the same time.

5.4 Islamic Daily Activities as a Structured Education System

Islamic daily activities at RA Al Rizky are not only ritual, but also integrated as a character learning system. Activities such as dhuha prayers, daily prayers, and morning dhikr are interpreted more deeply as a form of thanking Allah for the blessings of life, health, and togetherness.

From the perspective of Islamic education, this kind of spiritual activity is a direct way to cultivate the values of monotheism, including gratitude as a form of faith. (Al-Ghazali. 2002) This is in accordance with Al-Ghazali's opinion that education must start from the cleansing of the soul and habituation to goodness through real and regular worship.

5.5 Synergy of Schools and Parents in Instilling the Value of Gratitude

Another important finding is that teachers' strategies become stronger when supported by the home environment. Teachers involve parents to continue the habit of gratitude at home, for

example by inviting children to say thank you when they get gifts, enjoy food, or succeed in helping with homework.

This collaborative approach is in line with the tricerter principle *of education* put forward by Ki Hajar Dewantara: schools, families, and communities must work together to shape children's characters. (Hidayat, S. 2008) With parental involvement, children get consistent experiences about the importance of being grateful in various situations.

Conclusion

Based on the results of research that has been carried out on the strategies of PAUD teachers in instilling the value of gratitude through Islamic daily activities at RA Al Rizky Padang Sidempuan, it can be concluded that several things are as follows:

1. The exemplary strategy is the main method applied by teachers in instilling the value of gratitude. Children find it easier to imitate the teacher's behavior than to understand verbal instructions. Therefore, a teacher's consistent attitude in saying and showing gratitude is a real model for students in developing the character of gratitude from an early age.
2. The habituation strategy is carried out through structured Islamic daily routines, such as reading daily prayers, saying *Alhamdulillah* after eating or playing, and involving children in activities that consistently instill a positive attitude towards the blessings of Allah SWT. This habit has been proven to be effective in forming a habit of gratitude that is inherent in children's daily behavior.
3. The use of Islamic stories and children's songs is an educational medium that is very suitable for the characteristics of early childhood cognitive and affective development. Through the stories of Islamic figures who are grateful in various situations, children gain a contextual understanding of the importance of gratitude, accompanied by a sense of joy and emotional involvement.
4. Islamic daily activities at RA Al Rizky are not only ritual, but also a medium for internalizing the value of Islamic character, especially the value of gratitude. Activities such as dhuha prayers, reading prayers together, and singing Islamic songs regularly contribute greatly to the formation of children's spiritual character.
5. The synergy between teachers and parents in instilling the value of gratitude is the main supporter of the success of this strategy. Teachers play the role of facilitators and role models at school, while parents continue the habit at home. Thus, the process of instilling gratitude values takes place consistently in two main environments for children.

Overall, the strategies implemented by teachers at RA Al Rizky show that the cultivation of gratitude values can be done effectively in early childhood through an Islamic approach that is contextual, fun, and integrated with daily activities. This approach not only fosters positive habits, but also builds the foundation of the child's spiritual character in the long run.

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