

The Role of the Islamic School Environment on the Development of Early Childhood Spiritual Intelligence at RA Al Ishlah Medan Helvetia

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Abstract

This research aims to uncover and describe how the practice of instilling Islamic values is carried out through daily activities at RA Alif Medan Helvetia. Early life is an important period in character formation, including the cultivation of Islamic values such as honesty, discipline, politeness, and love for Allah SWT and the Prophet. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Data collection techniques are carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of the study show that the cultivation of Islamic values at RA Alif is carried out consistently and integrated into children's daily routines, such as habituating prayers, Islamic speeches, dhuha prayers, maintaining cleanliness, sharing, and respecting teachers and friends. The example of teachers is the main element in this process. A warm and affectionate learning atmosphere also supports the process of internalizing Islamic values in children. Thus, these small steps taken every day become a strong foundation in shaping children's Islamic character from an early age.

Keywords: Instilling Islamic Values, Daily Activities, Early Childhood.

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Introduction

Early childhood is an individual who is in a very rapid and decisive phase of development in his life journey. The age of 0–6 years is known as the *golden age*, which is a golden age that only comes once in a person's life. During this period, children's potential develops very quickly, including in physical, cognitive, social-emotional, moral, and spiritual aspects. Therefore, education at this time is very important to form the foundation of children's character and personality in the future.

In the framework of Islamic education, the formation of children's personalities does not only emphasize on intellectual aspects and skills, but more than that, Islamic education aims to form a whole human being (*insan kamil*) who believes, is pious, and has noble morals. One of the aspects that is an important concern in Islamic education is spiritual intelligence, which is a person's ability to understand, appreciate, and practice spiritual values that originate from Islamic religious teachings in daily life. Spiritual intelligence includes the awareness of the existence of God (Allah).

SWT), the ability to understand the meaning of life, sensitivity to moral values, and the ability to live with love, gratitude, empathy, and responsibility. In the context of early childhood, spiritual intelligence can be realized through simple behaviors such as knowing the name of Allah, saying prayers before and after doing activities, feeling pleasure in doing good, and showing respect and affection for others. This spiritual intelligence is an important foundation for the development of children's morals and character in the long run.

One of the key factors in the formation of children's spiritual intelligence is the environment, especially the school environment as a place where children spend most of their time outside the home. A school environment that is conducive, religious, and provides real spiritual experiences will greatly affect the growth of children's spiritual awareness and attitudes. In this regard, the Islamic school environment plays an important role in providing a space that encourages the internalization of Islamic values through various forms of activities, interactions, examples, and an atmosphere that supports spiritual learning.

The Islamic school environment is not only measured by the existence of symbols-religious symbols such as mushallas or calligraphy, but more importantly how all elements of the school (teachers, curriculum, school culture, and daily activities) reflect Islamic values. Teachers who provide examples, daily routines that contain prayer, dhikr, tadarus, habituation of noble morals, and affectionate interactions are part of the process of instilling spiritual values that are very effective for children.

RA Al Ishlah, located in Medan Helvetia District, is one of the Islamic-based early childhood education institutions that prioritizes the formation of children's spiritual character through an Islamic school environment. This school designs various religious habituation programs such as reading daily prayers, praying dhuha together, learning the stories of the prophet and companions, and moral development through stories, games, and social interactions. Teachers at RA Al Ishlah Medan Helvetia also play an active role in providing examples through attitudes, speech, and daily behavior.

However, it is necessary to study in more depth how the role of the Islamic school environment at RA Al Ishlah Medan Helvetia in developing early childhood spiritual intelligence. Is the built environment able to facilitate spiritual development optimally? What are some indicators that indicate the development of spiritual intelligence in children? How do teachers, school programs, and institutional policies engage in creating an environment that supports spiritual learning? These questions are important to answer in order to get a complete picture of the contribution of the school environment to the spiritual aspects of early childhood.

This research is very important considering the increasingly challenging realities of the times, where moral and spiritual values are beginning to be eroded by the influence of materialism and individualism. Spiritual education that is instilled from an early age is expected

to be able to become a moral and spiritual fortress for future generations. Therefore, Islamic schools, including RA Al Ishlah Medan Helvetia, have a great responsibility in shaping a generation that is spiritually intelligent and has an Islamic character.

Based on this background, the author feels the need to conduct research to find out more deeply about the role of the Islamic school environment in the development of early childhood spiritual intelligence. especially at RA Al Ishlah Medan Helvetia.

Theoretical Studies

Islamic values are the principles of life that are sourced from Islamic teachings which include faith (belief), sharia (rules), and morals (behavior). These values teach humans to live in truth, honesty, compassion, responsibility, and love for Allah SWT and His Messenger. According to Al-Ghazali, moral values derived from Islam must be instilled from an early age so that it becomes a habit that remains in a person. In the context of early childhood education, Islamic values include: Getting used to prayer in every activity, Instilling honesty, responsibility, and concern for others, Teaching love for Allah, the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, and the Qur'an, Fostering a sense of discipline, cleanliness, and obedience to the rules. The cultivation of Islamic values must be done in a concrete and fun way, because early childhood learns through direct experience, not

only through verbal advice. Early childhood is in the age range of 0–6 years, a period often referred to as the *golden age*. During this period, the development of a child's brain is very fast, so what is instilled will greatly affect his personality in the future (Hurlock, 2003). According to Jean Piaget, children aged 2-7 years are in the *preoperational* stage, where they begin to think symbolically, imitate, and learn from the environment through observation and repetition.

Instilling value in early childhood must be done through ways that are appropriate to their developmental stages, such as playing, singing, listening to stories, seeing examples, and engaging in meaningful routine activities.

According to Susanto (2011), value education can be instilled effectively through habituation in daily activities. Activities such as greeting, praying, sharing food, washing hands, and tidying up toys not only form habits, but also contain high Islamic values.

This habituation practice is referred to as the internalization process, where values that are repeated become part of the child's personality. In the Islamic education approach, instilling value through daily activities is referred to as *ta'dib* the process of educating children to have good manners or behavior. Some daily activities that contain Islamic values include:

- (1) Pray before and after doing activities, which teach awareness of God in every action.
- (2) Saying greetings, which contain the values of affection and brotherhood.
- (3) Maintain cleanliness, because cleanliness is part of faith.
- (4) Respect teachers and friends, which reflects the values of morals and manners in society.

Teachers have a strategic position in shaping children's characters, especially in terms of instilling values. In RA (Raudhatul Athfal), teachers are not only teachers, but also role models. Early childhood is very easy to imitate the behavior he sees. Therefore, teacher example is very important in the success of value instilling.

According to Imam Al-Ghazali in *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, the most influential education is education by example. When teachers are used to being honest, patient, friendly, and orderly, children will imitate without feeling patronized.

In addition to example, teachers also need to create a learning environment that is fun, compassionate, and emotionally safe. In this atmosphere, children will feel comfortable learning and absorbing Islamic values naturally.

The Islamic school environment, such as RA Alif Medan Helvetia, is an important space in the process of forming children's Islamic character. An environment full of Islamic values ranging from classroom decorations, teacher habits, daily activities, to school culture is an effective means to support the cultivation of values.

According to Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, early childhood education aims to help the growth and development of children optimally so that they are ready to enter further education. In the context of RA, the goal also includes the formation of Islamic spirituality and morals from an early age.

Research Methods

The research used in this study is qualitative research that provides descriptive information in written or oral narratives about the people and behaviors observed. In this study, the author examined phenomenon that occurred at RA Al Ishlah Medan Helvetia to obtain the truth of information based on the theoretical framework of the questions asked scientifically. The research approach used is a field-based descriptive approach in natural conditions taken from written or oral narratives and the behavior of the people observed consisting of school principals, teachers and students.

Research and Discussion Results

This research was conducted at RA Alif Medan Helvetia, an Islamic-based early childhood education institution that consistently implements the cultivation of Islamic values through daily activities. Based on data collected through observations, in-depth interviews with teachers and principals, and documentation of learning activities, researchers found that Islamic values are not only taught in theory, but are directly integrated into various daily activities of children.

The practice of instilling Islamic values is carried out in the following form:

- (1) Habituation of Islamic Speech. Children are accustomed to saying greetings when coming and leaving school, as well as saying "bismillah" before starting the activity, and "alhamdulillah" after finishing it. These words become part of a routine that is repeated every day so that children are used to associating every activity with Allah SWT.
- (2) Daily Worship Activities. Every morning the children participate in joint prayers, read short letters, and perform dhuha prayers in congregation. The teacher guides the children in the practice of ablution, gets to know the prayer movements, and teaches the daily prayers slowly and pleasantly.
- (3) Social Activities and Islamic Morals. Values such as helping, good manners, discipline, and sharing are instilled through playing together, eating together, queuing, and group work. Children are trained to wait their turns, ask permission, and help each other when facing difficulties.
- (4) Maintain Cleanliness and Tidiness. The habit of maintaining cleanliness is instilled through hands-on practice, such as washing hands before eating, putting garbage in place, and tidying up playground equipment. The teacher gave an understanding that keeping clean is part of faith, as the teachings of Islam.
- (5) Teacher's Example. Teachers are the main figures in the cultivation of values. The attitude of teachers who are patient, friendly, disciplined, and diligent in prayer are role models that are easy for children to imitate. The teacher not only commands, but also sets a direct example in every action.

The results of this study show that the cultivation of Islamic values carried out at RA Alif Medan Helvetia is integrated with the daily lives of children. Seemingly simple activities, such as greeting or washing hands, are actually a strategic step in internalizing Islamic teachings

from an early age. Children are not taught dogmatically but are invited to experience and live these values in real life.

These findings are in line with Piaget's theory of cognitive development which states that early childhood is at a preoperational stage, where learning must be carried out through concrete activities and repetition. With continuous daily habits, Islamic values are not only known but also instilled as part of the child's character.

The approach used by RA Alif is also in line with the principle *of learning by doing* which is very suitable for early childhood. When children are used to living a daily life that is full of Islamic values, then Islamic character will be formed naturally, not by force.

In addition, the example of teachers has proven to be very effective in this process. Children find it easier to imitate what their teacher does than to understand through long explanations. Thus, teachers are not only educators, but also living models of Islamic behavior.

A safe, compassionate, and religious school environment is the main supporting factor. When children feel valued and loved, they will be more open to accepting the values taught.

With all these practices, it can be concluded that the cultivation of Islamic values through daily activities at RA Alif is a small step that is full of meaning — it really becomes a "small step to heaven" as the title of this study implies.

Conclusion and Suggestions

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the results of research conducted at RA Al Ishlah Medan Helvetia, it can be concluded that the Islamic school environment has an important role in supporting the development of early childhood spiritual intelligence. A religious environment, supported by habituation activities such as joint prayer, congregational prayers, the recitation of the holy verses of the Qur'an, and the example of teachers in behaving and speaking, have a positive influence on the formation of children's spiritual character. Children show progress in terms of religious awareness, polite behavior, empathy for others, and regularity in carrying out religious routines that are introduced from an early age.

The role of teachers in guiding and stimulating the spiritual aspects of children is also very crucial. Teachers are not only teachers, but also role models in shaping children's religious behavior. Through a gentle, fun, and appropriate approach to the characteristics of an early age, children can easily absorb the Islamic values taught.

5.2 Suggestion

Based on these findings, the researcher suggested that RA Al Ishlah continue to develop creative and contextual Islamic values-based programs so that children's spiritual intelligence is further honed. Teachers are expected to improve the quality of teaching by enriching methods that are able to touch the spiritual aspects of children holistically. In addition, the role of parents is also very important in supporting this success. Therefore, synergy between schools and families is needed so that spiritual habits instilled in schools can be continued and strengthened at home. In the future, the researcher suggests that further studies be carried out with a different approach or a wider scope, so that the understanding of the role of the Islamic environment in early childhood development can be explored more deeply and thoroughly.

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