

The Role of Religious Activities in Developing Early Childhood Spiritual Intelligence at RA Al Hasanah Padang Sidimpuan

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the role of religious activities in developing early childhood spiritual intelligence in RA Al Hasanah Padangsidimpuan. 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 religious activities such as daily prayer reading, congregational prayers, memorizing short verses of the Qur'an, and commemorating Islamic holidays play an important role in fostering children's spiritual values. Children show an early understanding of faith, gratitude, caring, and emotional closeness to religious values. Teachers play the role of facilitators as well as role models in the implementation of these religious activities. The application of activities that are fun and in accordance with the characteristics of early childhood has proven to be effective in shaping children's spiritual intelligence from an early age.

Keywords: *Religious Activities, Spiritual Intelligence, Early Childhood*

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Introduction

Childhood, especially early childhood, is a golden age in human development. During this period, children experience very rapid development, including in physical, cognitive, social-emotional, and spiritual aspects. Early childhood education (PAUD) has a strategic role in directing these potentials to grow in a balanced manner. One of the aspects that is currently increasingly of concern in the world of children's education is the development of spiritual intelligence. Spiritual intelligence is not only the ability to worship, but also includes awareness of God's existence, the ability to reflect on the meaning of life, and a positive attitude towards oneself, others, and the surrounding environment.

From the perspective of Islamic education, spiritual intelligence is an inseparable part of character building. Islam emphasizes the importance of moral education and the formation of faith from an early age, as stated in various verses of the Qur'an and hadith of the Prophet PBUH. Spiritual education cannot be achieved through a purely cognitive approach, but must be formed through experience, habituation, example, and active involvement of children in religious activities. Thus, religious activities are an important means of fostering early childhood spiritual intelligence.

Religious activities referred to in the context of early childhood education include various activities such as the reading of daily prayers, the study of short letters of the Qur'an, the practice of worship (ablution, prayer), the commemoration of Islamic holidays, and Islamic stories that convey moral values and examples. These activities not only introduce children to religious teachings in a formal way, but also instill spiritual values through real, fun and meaningful experiences. Children who are actively involved in religious activities tend to have high empathy, gratitude, patience, and awareness of the meaning of good and bad deeds.

RA (Raudhatul Athfal) as an early childhood formal education institution based on Islamic values has a great responsibility in designing religious activities that are effective and in accordance with the stages of child development. At RA Al Hasanah Padangsidimpuan, religious activities are an integral part of the curriculum and daily routine. Teachers strive to integrate spiritual values in various learning activities, starting from

From the morning opening activities, play while learning, to the closing of learning. However, the effectiveness of these religious activities in shaping children's spiritual intelligence still needs to be studied scientifically and systematically.

Phenomena in the field show that although religious activities have been carried out regularly, not all children show significant spiritual development. This can be caused by various factors, such as the limitations of the approach used by teachers, lack of parental involvement, and lack of reflection from children on the meaning of the activities carried out. Therefore, research is needed to explore in depth the role of religious activities in developing early childhood spiritual intelligence, especially in RA Al Hasanah Padangsidimpuan.

This research is important to provide an empirical picture of the implementation of religious activities in Islamic PAUD institutions and their impact on children's spiritual development. In addition, this research is also expected to provide input for teachers, institutional managers, and parents in improving the quality of children's spiritual education through a contextual and fun approach. Given the importance of spirituality as the foundation of a complete life, strengthening this aspect from an early age is a strategic step in preparing a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also has high intelligence of the heart and spiritual awareness.

Thus, this study aims to describe the forms of religious activities carried out at RA Al Hasanah Padangsidimpuan, analyze their contribution to the development of early childhood spiritual intelligence, and identify the supporting and inhibiting factors that affect the effectiveness of these activities. The results of this study are expected to be a reference in the

development of a more effective and applicable spiritual education model in the context of Islamic-based early childhood education.

Theoretical Studies

Spiritual intelligence is a person's ability to understand the deepest meaning of life, noble values, and establish a harmonious relationship with God, others, and nature. According to Zohar and Marshall (2001), spiritual intelligence (SQ) is the highest intelligence that directs intellectual intelligence (IQ) and emotional intelligence (EQ) in making meaningful and valuable decisions.

In the context of early childhood, spiritual intelligence includes the ability of children to know God simply, show gratitude, understand the value of kindness, and have concern for others. This intelligence is not instantaneous, but grows gradually through a process of habituation, exemplarship, and pleasing spiritual experiences.

Early childhood is in an early developmental period that is very sensitive to environmental stimulation, including spiritual and religious values. Early childhood education has an important responsibility in instilling a strong spiritual foundation through a gentle, concrete, and world-appropriate approach to the child. In Islam, children are born in a state of *fitrah*, as the Prophet Muhammad PBUH said: *"Every child is born in a state of fitrah..."* (HR. Bukhari and Muslim). Therefore, the role of education is to maintain and direct the nature to develop in its entirety.

Spiritual development in early childhood is carried out through the introduction of Allah, the Prophet, the teachings of Islam, and moral values that are reflected in daily activities in the educational environment, such as praying together, praying, reciting, and showing good manners.

Religious activities are activities related to worship values, religious habits, and Islamic practices that are carried out regularly in Islamic educational institutions. According to a holistic approach to early childhood education, religious activities are not just routines, but an important part of the process of character formation and spiritual intelligence.

Activities such as: Daily prayer, training children to communicate with God, congregational prayers, introducing worship procedures and the importance of togetherness, Reading the Qur'an, introducing the holy book as a guide for life, commemorating Islamic holidays, fostering love for Islamic history and culture, Habit of saying *thayyibah* sentences, such as *"Alhamdulillah"*, *"Masya Allah"*, or *"Bismillah"* as a form of spiritual awareness in daily life.

These activities, if done consistently and funly, can foster spiritual aspects in children, such as reverence for Allah, gratitude, and awareness of kindness and compassion for others human.

Teachers have a strategic role in shaping children's spiritual intelligence. Teachers not only function as material presenters, but also as exemplary figures who reflect Islamic values in speech, actions, and attitudes. The example of teachers in daily religious practice will be a real model for children.

According to the theory of social learning by Albert Bandura, children learn through observation and imitation. In this context, teachers who consistently demonstrate religious behavior can help children imitate and form spiritual habits 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 examines the phenomenon that occurs in RA Al Hasanah Padangsidimpuan 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 using a descriptive qualitative approach to describe in depth how religious activities play a role in developing early childhood spiritual intelligence in RA Al Hasanah Padangsidempuan. Data were obtained through observation of children's activities, interviews with teachers and principals, and documentation of daily activities related to religious habits.

1. Implementation of Religious Activities at RA Al Hasanah

Based on the results of observations, religious activities at RA Al Hasanah are carried out routinely and in a structured manner. Some of the main religious activities observed include: (1) Daily prayer readings before and after activities, such as eating, studying, and going to school. (2) Congregational prayers are carried out in a guided manner to introduce the harmony and prayer procedures. (3) Memorizing short verses of the Qur'an and reciting Asmaul Husna with accompaniment of songs to make them easy to remember. (4) Commemoration of Islamic holidays such as the Prophet's Birthday, Isra Mi'raj, and the month of Ramadan, which are packaged in the form of creative and educational activities. (5) The habit of saying *thayyibah* sentences in daily life, such as "Bismillah" before eating and "Alhamdulillah" after doing something.

All of these activities are designed to be suitable for early childhood development, which is fun, simple, and forms habits through repetition.

2. Children's Response to Religious Activities

The results of the interviews showed that the children responded to religious activities with enthusiasm and a sense of joy. They began to show a basic understanding of God's existence, the importance of praying, and being able to pronounce *dhikr* sentences fluently. In addition, children begin to show religious attitudes such as greeting teachers with greetings, expressing gratitude, and showing concern for peers.

Children's spiritual intelligence appears to develop through simple behaviors that show an awareness of the values of goodness and their relationship with God, the environment, and others.

3. The Role of Teachers in Developing Children's Spiritual Intelligence

Teachers at RA Al Hasanah have an important role in guiding and directing children in religious activities. Teachers not only teach verbally, but also provide direct examples through daily attitudes and behaviors. For example, teachers always start activities with prayer, instill Islamic values when resolving conflicts between children, and show consistent affection to all students.

Interviews with teachers show that they have a high awareness of the importance of shaping a child's character through a spiritual approach. They are also active in creating a conducive and religious learning atmosphere so that children feel comfortable and close to religious values.

The results of this study show that religious activities have a significant influence on developing early childhood spiritual intelligence. This is in line with the theory that early childhood is a phase that is highly sensitive to value formation, including spiritual and religious values.

Religious activities that are carried out consistently and adjusted to The characteristics of the child are able to form spiritual awareness through pleasant and meaningful experiences.

Activities such as joint prayer, congregational prayers, and the habit of dhikr are a medium for internalizing the value of monotheism, gratitude, and love for Allah SWT.

The role of teachers as facilitators and role models is also the main key to the success of this activity. Children learn not only through material, but also through observation of teachers' behavior that reflects Islamic values. This is in line with Bandura's theory of social learning, that children imitate the behavior they see from adults they trust and are close to.

Thus, religious activities are not just a daily routine, but an important means of forming a spiritual foundation that will be the foundation of children's character in the future.

Conclusion and Suggestions Conclusion

This research shows that religious activities carried out regularly and structured at RA Al Hasanah Padangsidempuan have an important role in developing early childhood spiritual intelligence. Various forms of religious activities such as daily prayer reading, congregational prayers, listening to and memorizing short verses of the Qur'an, commemorating Islamic holidays, and the habit of saying thayyibah sentences, have been proven to be able to instill spiritual values in children slowly but consistently. Children begin to demonstrate a basic understanding of the concept of divinity, develop a sense of love for Allah and His Messenger, and are able to express spiritual emotions through attitudes such as gratitude, caring for friends, and obeying the teacher's commands. Religious activities that are packaged with a fun approach and in accordance with the world of children also support the formation of a positive and religious learning atmosphere.

Teachers play a central role in guiding and directing children during the activity. The example of teachers, both in attitude and speech, has a great influence on the process of internalizing religious values. In addition, children's active involvement in activities also helps to hone spiritual sensitivity and religious awareness from an early age.

Suggestion

Based on these findings, it is recommended that the RA Al Hasanah institution continue to maintain and improve the quality of religious activities carried out, as well as innovate so that these activities are more interesting and meaningful for children. Teachers are expected not only to be facilitators, but also role models in displaying Islamic values in daily life. In addition, collaboration between schools and parents is needed so that the spiritual values taught in schools can be continued and strengthened in the family environment. Further research is also recommended to delve deeper into the influence of religious activities on other aspects of development, such as social-emotional or moral early childhood.

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