Management of Religious Character Education in the Digital Era: The Role of Schools and Parents' Collaboration

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Abstract.
The development of information technology in the digital era has resulted in various changes in human life. The ease of internet access makes it easy for children to access various shows, which can affect their development. Schools and parents have an important role in managing student character. One of the main characteristics that students must have is a religious character. This study aimed to determine the management of character education in the digital era, which schools and parents can carry out, and the collaborative role of schools and parents in character education management. By employing the library method, this study analyzed as many as 40 articles per research objective to obtain the appropriate formulation. The results showed that character education in the digital era has several opportunities and challenges. Religious character education in the digital era can be carried out by schools, for example, through learning, extracurriculars, school programs, and habituation. Parents also play an important role in character education by supervising, educating, and setting an example. Parents can collaborate with schools in character education management by participating in the management process. The principal plays a crucial role in the collaborative process between parents and schools. Based on the discussion that has been carried out, it can be interpreted that the management of character education in the digital era of collaboration between schools and parents can be carried out by involving parents in managing character education, where the principal plays an essential role.

Keywords: Character building; Digital era; Religious; School; Parent

1. INTRODUCTION

The digital era has resulted in many changes in human life, such as changing human work from everything done manually to being replaced by sophisticated technology (1). Correspondence, for example, which originally used paper and required delivery times of up to tens of days, has now been replaced by digital messages using a chat...
application called WhatsApp or various social media such as Facebook and Instagram (2). As for now, children watch television with fewer educational broadcasts and various entertainment television broadcasts with soap operas that are less educational (3). In addition, along with the rapid development of social media, children have free access to various shows available on social media; they can view content that smells of mischief and violence that adults should only see (4).

Various negative effects resulting from spectacle include children becoming less respectful and indifferent to older people such as parents, family, teachers, school principals, and neighbours around them (5). Distortion of morals is also the main impact, resulting in negative behaviours such as brawls, violence against friends, bullying, drinking, and free sex (6). Another effect of excessive social use is that children will experience excessive dependence and anxiety. This is certainly not good for the mental development of children in the future. From a religious point of view, this attitude is also not good because dependence on social media is a time-consuming and pointless act. Excessive anxiety is also not a good behaviour because it eliminates the attitude of submission or piety to Allah SWT (7).

“Spectacular will be a guide” is the proper expression to describe the influence of the development of digital technology on children's characters. This expression states that what children see in everyday life is a guide for children to behave and behave (8). If carried out continuously, these attitudes and behaviours will become a permanent character in the child. If you want to form a good character, children must also be accustomed to good behaviour (9). One of the children’s good behaviour can be started from a good show.

Meanwhile, if children are allowed to continue to watch shows that are not good, it will have a bad impact on children in the short and long term (10,11). In order to control this, good character, management is needed by authorised stakeholders, namely, parents and schools, consisting of principals, teachers, and employees.

School and its components play the most crucial role in character education (Suparno, 2015) as they are obliged and entitled to provide learning and instil good values in students. Besides, students also spend most of their time at school, starting from the teaching and learning process, interacting with the academic community at school, socialising with peer themes, to participating in various activities that can develop talents and interests. Schools also have the right to organise programs deemed appropriate to their students’ conditions to shape student character. Therefore, through various activities at the school, the academic community can freely develop student character (11,12).
suggest that parents, particularly mothers, significantly impact the development of their children’s character in addition to school. Parents start shaping their children’s personalities from the prenatal stage as they grow up. Parents can teach their children moral values such as honesty, responsibility, respect, empathy, and self-discipline, whether at home or outside. Parents can use everyday activities and situations to instil these values in their children. However, the way parents impart character traits may differ based on factors such as family circumstances, child traits, and parental education, among others, as pointed out by (14,15).

emphasise that cooperation between schools and parents is crucial for effective character education. The success of character education depends on the collaboration of both components. Character education will be suboptimal or unsuccessful if either fails to carry out their role appropriately or collaborate effectively. It can create an imbalance if only one component fulfils its responsibility, as students may perceive that what is taught by one component is unnecessary if the other component does not support it. For instance, if students learn at school about the importance of performing obligatory and voluntary prayers, but their parents do not reinforce the same practices at home, students may feel that performing these prayers is only mandatory at school and not necessary to practice them outside the school.

Religious character is one characteristic that needs to be strengthened in this digital era because it is the foundation for forming other characteristics such as responsibility, honesty, discipline to hard work (17). This is indicated by the placement of the characters “Faithful, Fearful of God, Almighty, and Noble Morals” as the first character in Pancasila students. Other characteristics, such as being independent, creative, and capable of working together, are placed after them (18). If students have a strong religious character, other characters will likely be formed easily, and vice versa (19). Therefore, this article will further discuss managing students’ religious character.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Religious character education refers to cultivating moral and ethical values based on religious beliefs and practices. It involves developing a strong moral character, empathy, compassion, and a sense of responsibility towards oneself and others, guided by religious teachings and principles. According to (20), religious character education is rooted in the belief that religious faith and moral character are inseparable and that individuals must be guided by ethical and moral principles based on their faith to lead a meaningful and purposeful life. They argue that religious character education seeks
to help individuals develop a solid moral compass based on religious teachings that guide their behaviour and decision-making.

In addition, (21) define religious character education as an approach that helps individuals develop moral and ethical values grounded in religious beliefs and practices. They argue that religious character education is crucial for nurturing a sense of moral responsibility, compassion, and empathy towards others and promoting the common good. According to (22), religious character education in the digital era requires a proactive approach that embraces digital technologies while recognising potential risks and challenges. It involves using online platforms and digital technologies to create immersive and engaging learning experiences that help individuals develop a stronger connection and engagement with their faith. Moreover, religious character education in the digital era requires a focus on building strong relationships with followers and promoting a message of inclusivity and tolerance. It also requires a willingness to embrace new and innovative approaches to teaching and learning, such as gamification and immersive learning experiences (23).

Since religious character education is essential to a child’s development, parents and schools must ensure that children receive a comprehensive education that nurtures their religious character in the digital era. Schools play a vital role in religious character education by providing a formal education that complements what children learn from their families and religious communities. Schools must work closely with parents and religious institutions to create a holistic educational experience that promotes the values of their faith. According to (24), schools can use digital technologies to create interactive and engaging educational experiences that enhance religious character education.

Parents also play a critical role in religious character education in the digital era. Parents must work with schools and religious institutions to reinforce the values and teachings of their faith in the home environment. This includes monitoring their children’s online activities, discussing digital technologies’ ethical and moral implications, and modelling appropriate behaviour online. In addition, parental involvement is crucial in promoting religious character education in the digital era (25). Parents must actively participate in their children’s religious education and be willing to engage in conversations about navigating the challenges and opportunities presented by digital technologies.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this research, the problem formulation will be answered in the results and discussion section, namely:
1) What are the opportunities and challenges of character education management in the digital era?
2) How is the management of religious character education carried out by schools?
3) How is the management of religious character education carried out by parents?
4) What is the role of the principal in the collaborative process between parents and school?

The findings of this study are expected to be valuable for schools and parents, helping them to strengthen their role in managing their students’ character development, including the importance of collaboration between these two components.

4. METHODS

This article employed library research by collecting references related to the studied research topic for further analysis. The analysis results from these various sources produced new formulations related to the research topic under study. Reference searches were carried out through the Publish or Perish application on the Google Scholar database with the keyword “character education management.” Based on this search, a total of 685 references were obtained. These references were published within 20 years, from 2002 to 2022. Even so, not all of these references were used in this study. Several references are excluded, including in the form of books and book chapters, to the results of research on students’ final assignments published by the university library but have not been published in journals or presented in seminars. The types of references used in this study are journal articles and proceeding articles that are appropriate to the research topic (26).

The references obtained are then selected further. The first reference selection technique is carried out based on the year of publication; considering that character education is carried out in the digital era, the articles used are the most recent articles published within the last five years. The second selection technique was based on the type of article; references that were not journal articles or proceeding articles were excluded from the selection. The third assessment technique is based on the research topic; references that did not match the research topic were not used for analysis in this study. After three times of filtering, 40 were obtained and analysed in this study.
5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1. Management of Character Education in the Digital Age

The rapid development of the digital era greatly influences the character education management that must be carried out. The digital era changes students’ environment, such as transportation, communication, and education. In terms of transportation, for example, students are currently getting more access to online motorcycle, taxis, public transportation, and so on. Furthermore, in communication, students are also increasingly facilitated by smartphones and the internet, allowing students to easily and quickly exchange messages. As for aspects of the educational process, students can gain knowledge and carry out school assignments, where students search for information from gadgets. This differs from the conventional era, where all these activities must be done manually to make the challenges much more severe (27,28).

If not balanced with adequate character education, the convenience of the digital era may negatively affect students. In this era, students may face minimal challenges, leading to a lack of appreciation for important aspects that require attention. For instance, due to easy access to knowledge through the internet, students may become lethargic towards reading, resulting in a decline in their reading habits. This decline is detrimental to students’ character development, particularly in the discipline. In the past, students could read books effortlessly, without the immediate availability of information on the internet. Therefore, balancing the convenience of the digital era and character education is crucial to ensure students develop into responsible and disciplined individuals (29). Another degradation is the degradation of the character of hard work. In the past, students had to work hard to gain knowledge, such as going to the library, recording it in a book, etc. Some students also have to go to school by bicycle or on foot. However, nowadays, knowledge is obtained easily via the internet, and most students now use motorised vehicles to go to school (30).

Character education management in the digital era has several opportunities. First, technological developments make it easier for students to access positive content. If used properly and correctly, the internet makes it easy for students to obtain positive content, whether in text, images, or videos on websites and social media. Through this positive content, students can use it as a guide or example to practice in everyday life. For example, students can access content from stories of prophets and companions
that can be used as examples of polite, honest, and responsible behaviour in everyday life. In addition, various motivational content can also make students more enthusiastic about carrying out various activities, be it studying, helping parents, to improving skills (31).

The second is the availability of various character education media. Parents and teachers can also use opportunities to develop digital technology to convey character education to students. The existence of films, short videos, and various motivational words that are easily accessible can be used by teachers and parents as a medium to convey disaster education to children (32,33). If teachers and parents are not good at telling stories or do not have enough time to tell them, they can use these media to provide positive insight to students. This opportunity can be utilised to the fullest if teachers and parents can manage the content given to students. Teachers must be able to choose and adapt existing content to students’ development levels. The content is widely available, but not everyone follows students’ age development (34).

Character education in this digital era must also address several challenges faced. As with opportunities, the first challenge faced is also related to easy access to content. If students misuse this convenience, it can make them easily access negative content that negatively impacts their development. For example, if students see content about violence, students may imitate the scenes in that content. Especially students who are not yet mature are excellent imitators, so when they see something, they will record it in memory and might do the same thing on another occasion. In fact, sometimes without even looking at it, the content appears in front of students, so students inevitably have to see the negative content (35).

Related to the first challenge, the second challenge that must be faced is that students must have good digital literacy. The existence of good digital literacy will make it easier for students to be able to filter and select good content to view. Meanwhile, if students do not have good digital literacy, students will be easily influenced to use the internet in a negative context. Therefore, teachers need to instil good digital literacy in students, for example, by training on positive internet use. As for parents, they are also obliged to train and familiarise their children with using the internet only for positive things. For example, by making certain rules and agreements between children and parents. Parents can implement a “reward and punishment” system to implement this (36,37).

The next challenge is that parents and teachers must be able to use the technology well. This is because to supervise the activities carried out by children with their smartphones and gadgets, parents must also understand these devices. Meanwhile, suppose teachers and parents are still technologically illiterate. In that case, the role
of providing supervision will be easily fooled by children because they can easily hide these activities and lie with parents and teachers. Meanwhile, if parents and teachers are technologically literate, then all lines of these students will be easy to uncover (38).

5.2. Management of Religious Character Education in the Digital Age in Schools

Management of religious character education in schools can be done in various ways. The first is through religious habituation. Diverse habits that schools can make to form a religious character are by carrying out various spiritual activities that can be applied at school. For example, the Duha prayer in the morning, noon and afternoon prayers in the congregation, reading the Qur’an every day before starting lessons, and getting used to shaking hands with the teacher before entering school. Students can also be trained to carry out weekly activities such as praying on Fridays. In addition to these daily and weekly activities, schools can also carry out various annual activities such as zakat, fitrah, sharing, and sacrifice. Students can also be trained to set aside a little money for social service activities in areas that experience economic deficiencies or for orphanages (39).

The habituation activities carried out by the school will positively impact students as they carry out these activities continuously for a long time so that students will get used to doing these activities. First, they become used to it over time. In addition, these activities can also fill students’ time so that they are not used for useless things such as playing games or social media. Therefore, when the action occurs, students must still get supervision from the teacher. The teacher must ensure that all students carry out these habituation activities and do not play on smartphones during activities (40,41).

Second, extracurricular activities. Each school usually has various extracurricular activities, ranging from scouts, nature lovers, scientific work, astronomy, and so on (42,43). Some of these extracurriculars can also be used as a medium to instil the religious character of students, depending on the delivery of the material being carried out. However, spiritual or religious extracurriculars are felt to be the most dominant for improving students’ religious character (44). Students will independently organise various activities to strengthen their religious nature through this extracurricular. Among the programs that are usually included in these extracurricular activities are routine Islamic studies, faith and piety coaching evenings, sharing of advice content, special studies for the month of Ramadan to internal actions such as member meetings and training of new members (45). According to (46), this activity can form and improve
students’ religious, polite, responsible, sincere, honest, and independent characteristics. In addition, students will also be restrained from carrying out negative activities.

Third, through the school program. Various school programs that can be carried out to improve students’ religious character are implementing mosque-based character education as carried out by (47). The school program was stated to strengthen students’ religious character through habits carried out in the mosque. Among the activities are the obligatory and sunnah prayers, call to prayer, iqamah, dhikr, and religious speeches. Apart from improving students’ ability to worship, this program can also shape student character, especially religious nature and other characteristics such as responsibility, self-confidence, discipline, love of cleanliness, good manners, etc. Programs that have been launched need to be closely monitored by the school’s academic community, especially by the school principal (48).

Fourth, through integration with subjects (49). All subjects can be used as media to integrate religious character education. For example, in biology subjects, students are invited to learn about living things and their environment. At the same time, students are also taught to recognise the greatness of God Almighty, Allah SWT as the creator so that students will raise awareness about His greatness and power. Alternatively, social learning, for example, is also associated with Islamic teachings. For example, when learning about social welfare, where one of the problems is the existence of poor people, students are taught to be able to assist less fortunate people. Integration efforts through subjects have also proven their effectiveness in increasing students’ religious character, as Adawiyah (2019) mentioned. According to Pertiwi & Marsigit (2017), mathematics lessons can also be a medium for cultivating student character.

5.3. Management of Religious Character Education in the Digital Age by Parents

Parents can also do character education management at home. Parents’ primary role in managing character education at home is as a supervisor. Parents are obliged to supervise children’s activities while at home. For example, regarding the use of smartphones, parents must provide optimal supervision so that children do not use them for negative things, for example, to send or receive indecent images, whether in the form of pictures of themselves or their friends or strangers. This is as mentioned by (50) that one of the negative impacts of smartphone use is the act of sexting, as mentioned, so parents must provide extra strict supervision, such as using filter software that can filter unhealthy sites so that children do not see them if necessary.
The second role that parents must play is as an educator. Parents must provide education through information and advice related to forming a good character. Parents are also expected to be able to provide an overview of the current conditions and the right way to address these conditions so that students can have a handle on the best course of action to take. Students also will not feel confused when faced with various existing conditions because students already have a standard of good values taught by their parents. Related to technological development, parents must also be informed about how to use technology correctly and adequately (16,51).

The third role is that parents can be good role models for their children. (36) stated that children would grow into children with a character if they lived in an environment with characters. This shows that parents are role models for children, so when parents set a good character example, their children imitate them in their daily activities. Children who live in a family environment with a character will imitate the family’s character in their daily activities so that, over time, these activities get used to being carried out and will become embedded in the students’ characters. If parents demonstrate behaviour that lacks good character, their children may imitate them and lack good character. (52).

5.4. School and Parent Collaboration in Character Education Management in the Digital Age

Parents and schools can collaborate to support each other in forming students’ religious character. According to Nurlatifah (2020), parents must participate in the character education management process at school, from planning to assessment. Through this participation, parents will better understand the process of implementing character education in schools and the difficulties encountered so that parents cannot easily blame the teacher when things go wrong. In addition, this involvement also aims for parents to be able to provide input if there are things that are not appropriate, provide support for policies that are deemed appropriate, as well as a collaborative effort to create students with character (53).

The school principal’s leadership strongly influences good collaboration between parents and schools (54). The principal plays a significant role in embracing all components, including teachers, education, staff, students, parents, and the surrounding community, in jointly carrying out their duties and roles in building student character. As a manager, the school principal must design his character education program to involve parents as one of the main components of character education (55). Principals can invite parents to
collaborate in various ways, namely, by attending school meetings and student guardian meetings and inviting parents to several significant events organised by the school (56).

Research reveals that through collaboration between schools and parents in character education, the religious character of students will be formed. (57) reveals that character education at Madrasah Tsanawiyah in the City of Banjarmasin always involves parents in character education management. The results are that this coordination makes the inculcation of religious character education to students more efficient. Agreeing with that, (58) states that involving parents in character education management will provide higher success because parents are the closest people to students who understand the characteristics of each student. Suppose parents can express how they should educate and provide character education to their children. In that case, the success in character education that is carried out is also greater.

6. CONCLUSION

Based on the discussions that have been carried out, it can be concluded that the management of character education in the digital era must pay attention to the current opportunities and challenges. The opportunity is the development of the internet, which makes it easier for students to access positive content and convenience for parents and teachers in providing character learning media. The challenge is that it will be easy for students to access negative content if it is not balanced with good digital literacy. Religious character education in the digital era can be carried out by schools, for example, through learning, extracurriculars, school programs, and habituation. Parents also play an essential role in character education by supervising, educating, and setting an example. The collaboration between schools and parents can be done by involving parents in character education management, where the principal plays a crucial role.

References


