



Parents' Perception of Their Role in Character Education for Early Childhood in Indonesia

Eka Sapta Wati¹, Rudiyanto², Badru Zaman³, Cepi Ramdani⁴

^{1,2,3} Department of Early Childhood Education Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Indonesia

⁴ Department of Early Childhood Education, STAI Al Badar Cipulus Purwakarta, Indonesia

E-mail: ¹ekasaptawati79@upi.edu*, ²rudiyanto@upi.edu, ³badruzaman_fip@upi.edu,

⁴cepi.ramdani1996@gmail.com

*Corresponding Author

Received: May 28, 2024; Accepted: July 9, 2024; Published: July 31, 2024

ABSTRACT

The family serves as the initial gateway for young children to gain various valuable experiences, particularly in understanding character. Cultivating characters that reflect the values of the Indonesian nation is crucial for supporting the government's efforts to produce a golden generation by 2045. This research aims to determine parents' understanding of the family's role in children's character education. The research design is a case study, which explores various information related to parents' understanding in one of the schools in the Bandung area. The research sample consisted of three parents with children aged 3-6 years. The results indicate differences in parents' understanding of their role in early childhood character education. These differences encompass teaching roles, as some parents are not yet aware of effective teaching methods for young children, as well as roles in modeling, motivation, habituation, and rule enforcement. Parents need to learn more about the appropriate role of the family in early childhood character education. By enhancing parents' understanding of character education, there will be a positive impact on the creation of an advanced civilization with a strong national character.

Keywords: *Character Education, Early Childhood, Parents' Perception*



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INTRODUCTION

A family is a unit connected through blood relations among individuals, consisting of a husband, wife, and children. The family is also a small-scale social environment that plays an important role in shaping the character of the nation's future generations (Setiawan et al., 2020). According to Sukardi (2016) the family has a significant role, including collaboration in the economic and reproductive spheres. Additionally, a family can be defined as a social group united by family ties, such as marriage or adoption, which is socially recognized, and whose members jointly occupy a residence and interact with each other. Furthermore, the family serves as the first madrasah for early childhood education.

Three forms of environment are classified as very important in educating children: the school, the family, and the community. These three environments form a unified whole that cannot be separated (Subiyantoro, 2023). Moreover, each of these environments has specific responsibilities within the national education system, including both informal and non-formal

education channels (Alex et al., 2024; Cadima et al., 2024; Cordova Jr et al., 2024).). According to law number 20 of 2023, article 31, paragraph 2, the education system consists of formal, informal, and non-formal education, all of which are interrelated and complement each other. Formal education is provided in schools, informal education is conducted within the family, and non-formal education takes place within the community.

Referring to the research topic that the researcher will conduct, namely character education for early childhood, in terms of the family's perspective in understanding this context, it is very true that family education has a very important role in developing a child's character and personality. The very important role in creating children with character is seen in how the quality of the family influences the formation of the child's character through the educational model given by the parents to the child. In direct proportion to what was stated previously, character education will not work very well if it does not involve the three important factors in the process of forming character education, namely the school family, and the community (Hakim, 2023). However, of these three things, the most crucial role is how to implement family education or the role of the family in shaping the growth and development of children so that they can become adults who reflect the character of the nation.

In Indonesia itself, character education began during the government of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) who declared character education in Indonesia on May 2, 2010, in commemoration of National Independence Day. At that time, character education was highly debated, so the government was determined to make culture and national character development an important component of the national education system, which had to be seriously supported (Afandi et al., 2020; Mahfud et al., 2019; Snyder et al., 2012; Toriql Chaer, 2021). Therefore, every educational institution in this country must support the President's policy (Natalia et al., 2021).

Moreover, education is never finished and will never be finished because, first of all, there is a universal desire for improvement (Baehr, 2017; Berkowitz & Grych, 2000; Peterson, 2020). Everyone wants better education, but they don't necessarily know which one is better, because society's needs always pursue educational theory and general theory (Kamaruddin, 2012; Marsakha et al., 2021; Singh, 2019). Furthermore, the influence of one's view of life may be that one day someone may be satisfied with the state of their education because it is following one's view of life, but one day a different view of life changes one's view of life (Meliani et al., 2024). As a result, his perspective on education changed, which had previously satisfied him. According to this phrase, the educational curriculum in our country must always be changed and changed.

Further, according to Folayan et al (2024) A child's reasoning abilities do not develop naturally from birth to three years of age, or perhaps until about five years old. During this period, the subconscious mind remains open and ready to receive all information and encouragement that is fed into it without choice, from parents to the family environment. The initial foundation of character is formed from them. In addition, they show that character cannot develop instantly and quickly, but must go through a long, thorough, and organized process. Perspectives that have developed over the history of human thought determine how character education should be carried out (Syuraini et al., 2018).

The formation of character or character must of course start from the individual/self, in the family (as the core cell of the nation) especially parents as educators. Character formation is a "mega project" that is not easy, and requires a lot of effort and energy. It requires commitment, persistence, processes, methods, time, and most importantly, examples. This problem of example is a rare item nowadays and is certainly very much needed in a nation that is experiencing a multidimensional crisis of trust (Haryono et al., 2021; Pamungkas et al., 2021).

To realize the above, there needs to be an effort built by the strength of individuals who are the forerunners of the family and society (Retnawati et al., 2018). In building a national civilization there needs to be efforts from various roles including family, education, and society so that the noble ideals of the nation can be realized properly. Therefore, this role is very important in carrying out social tasks for the sake of common interests and goals, strengthening human civilization, and upholding the values of truth, serious and responsible efforts are needed to achieve these hopes (Kreider, 2002; Meliani et al., 2024).

According to Aryani & Wilyanita (2022), several functions must be carried out by families in forming children's character, including the educational function, protection or protection function, affection or togetherness function, social responsibility function, reproductive function, religious function, economic function, recreational function or a comfortable environmental place, and biological function. Apart from that, according to Anisyah et al., (2023) in building children's character several things must be considered in the implementation process, namely, there are 5 ways to apply the method of cultivating character in children, including teaching, motivation, example, habits and enforcing rules. All of these elements will be mutually sustainable and very effective in the process of molding early childhood characters who have noble morals following the character of the nation's children.

Therefore, this research will be carried out to explore or explore how parents understand the role of the family in character education for early childhood. Because looking at the importance of the role of the family in early childhood character education, it is felt to be very important to know how parents understand in reflecting their role in the family in producing children who have a national character with noble morals.

METHODS

Qualitative research aims to produce descriptive data using various analyses. Roshaidai & Arifin (2018) stated that qualitative research is an approach to or exploration and understanding of central and in-depth symptoms and events. Qualitative research aims to examine various social phenomena and examine participants' perspectives using various interactive and flexible strategies. As for the detailed methods that are relevant to be used in this research to help obtain accurate data, the Case Study method will be used. According to Gerring (2004) the case study method is a research method that provides comprehensive explanations regarding an individual, a group, or an organization so that in this research the researcher must process as much data as possible regarding the subject to be studied. Apart from that, this case study method can be used to study a case from an individual or group of people in a comprehensive and detailed manner (Gerring, 2004).

This research will involve a sample or research participants of 3 parents who have young children aged 3-6 years in one of the districts in West Java with the initials RR, TJ, and NUR. The instruments used in this research are observations of the roles parents give to children and interview guidelines to strengthen the results of this research (Ciesielska et al., 2017; Qu & Dumay, 2011). The data analysis used in this research is by using thematic data analysis which aims to find out the role of parents in early childhood character education (Clarke, 2017).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion of this research, which involved 3 research samples with young children aged 3 - 6 years, will be explained in detail in several sub-discussions, including teaching given by parents, motivation given by parents, examples given by parents, habits given by parents and enforcement of rules given by parents. The findings and detailed discussion will be explained as follows.

Teaching Given by Parents

The family is the first environment for children in the process of receiving various information so that it will be absorbed by the child and will become for the child (Fanhas et al., 2020). The meaning of this is that a family is a group or people in a unit or group who live together relatively continuously because they have ties of marriage and blood relations (Lesmana, 2022; Hakim, 2023). Apart from that, the family also has functions which will be explained here, one of which is having an educational function or how parents teach their children. From the three research samples, there are various parental perspectives in understanding the role of the family in shaping children's character in terms of how they teach young children. From the first sample with the initials RR, they understand that the teaching is carried out by parents, namely accompanying the child when the child is learning and answering various children's questions regarding various phenomena or their daily experiences and parents can provide reflections on the child regarding these phenomena. And for the second participant, with the initials TJ, understands that the role of the family in teaching is related to what children can and cannot do as well as answering various children's questions related to children's experiences when they play or observe the surrounding environment and also similar to the previous participant, namely providing reflections regarding this matter. And for the third participant, namely NUR, believes that the teaching he gives is by allowing or not allowing children to have snacks or food that they can and cannot buy as well as prohibiting children from playing various games that they feel are dangerous for their children.

"I like to accompany children to learn and I also like to ask what they see on TV or on the street. I will answer the question so that the child is not confused."

(Interview result RR)

"At least you can teach your children what they can and what they can't do if they want to have snacks like that, it's dangerous, there's a lot of strange food and they like to buy strange toys too."

(Interview result NUR)

Based on this, of the three participants who understood the concept or function of teaching for early childhood, there were only two participants because the third participant understood teaching as the same as the function of protecting children and not allowing children to try or explore their environment freely, as a result, The child appears to lack self-confidence because the parents do not fully trust their child regarding how the child can explore their environment. Apart from that, the role of parents is to provide teaching to children regarding character education indicators, namely teaching children to be responsible, disciplined, helpful, polite, and humble (Pamungkas et al., 2021; Syuraini et al., 2018).

Apart from that, character education is education to shape a person's personality through character education, which can be seen in a person's real actions, such as good and honest behavior, responsibility, respect for the rights of others, hard work, and so on (Setiawan et al., 2020). This can also be related to taking, namely recognition and affirmation or actualization of the results of recognition.

There are two basic paradigms in implementing character education, the first is a paradigm that views character education from the perspective of a broader understanding of moral issues. This paradigm assumes that certain characteristics must be given to students. The second paradigm views education from the perspective of a broader understanding of moral issues. This paradigm considers character education as an educational method and places students as the main actors in developing their character. According to the second paradigm, students function as interpreters, perceivers, and implementers of values thanks to their freedom (Setiawan et al., 2020; Sukardi, 2016).

Furthermore, it is better to teach an understanding of character that is still needed as a provision for value concepts which then become a reference for the realization of certain characters. Teaching character means giving students an understanding of the structure of certain values, their priorities, and benefits. Teaching values have an important element. The first provides new conceptual knowledge. Second, it is a comparison of the knowledge possessed by students. Therefore, this teaching process is not helpful but involves the participation of students. The basis for implementing the dialogue process is to provide students with the opportunity to submit what they understand, what they have experienced, and how they feel regarding the concepts being taught (Afandi et al., 2020; Toriquel Chaer, 2021).

Motivation Provided by Parents

Motivation is very important for early childhood, especially in terms of motivating so that children can develop optimally (Saharia & Yudha, 2023). Apart from that, motivation can also be beneficial or beneficial for the development of character education in early childhood. Motivation is an indicator expressed by points that state that motivation can be useful for children, especially providing internal motivation that comes from within oneself and external motivation, namely motivation that comes from outside (Mahfud et al., 2019). These two things must always go hand in hand with each other so that character can be instilled in children. Based on the results of research that researchers have conducted on three participants, including female participant RR, where parental motivation was carried out by motivating them to always carry out various tasks given by the school. The participant with the initials TJ provided motivation not much different from the first participant, namely by motivating so that children were enthusiastic about going to school. For the last participant with the initials NUR, the third participant motivates his child, including when the child is going to school and parents usually give money for snacks so that the child can be enthusiastic about going to school.

"I like to be motivated when I go to school. I like to encourage my children to want to go to school and want to learn, ma'am"

(Interview result TJ)

"To keep my child enthusiastic, I will give him extra pocket money, ma'am, that's how he likes to be happy and enthusiastic if he is given extra money"

(Interview result NUR)

Looking at the results of these findings, it seems that the three participants have not shown any urgency in their motivation for character education for young children. The motivation in character education is motivating children to always show behavior or attitudes that have noble character (Saharia & Yudha, 2023). This noble moral behavior can take the form of polite behavior, helpful behavior, discipline, and responsibility. This must appear in the role of parents to motivate children so that children can have a character with noble morals (Pamungkas et al., 2021).

Example Set by Parents

Early childhood children are great imitators where children will record every phenomenon in their environment and interpret it in their daily attitudes. This can happen because it is a characteristic of early childhood, namely that children enter the imitation phase (Cadima et al., 2024). Therefore, in character education, the importance of role models from parents who can be good role models for young children is important to create children's behavior with character. The results of the research conducted on the three participants all showed that they were almost the same as each other, where parents always set various examples for their

children, especially in carrying out various positive activities such as learning responsibility, having to play together with their friends, does not show selfish behavior and is happy to help and share.

"Sometimes I like to give examples of what is good and bad to children, such as children not being allowed to cry all the time if they want to ask for anything... and I also like to give an example of putting dirty clothes in the washing machine."

(Interview result NUR)

From these findings, the three participants understand the importance of role models for young children. However, what we need to underline here is that there needs to be special emphasis on forming children who have noble morals. As for other findings that were also found in this research, there were a lot of command sentences instead of invitation sentences that they gave. Providing role models by giving good examples directly to children will make it very easy for children to imitate this, especially by providing examples of good character from parents towards their children, such as helping others and being responsible (Anisyah et al., 2023). Apart from that, it is important to use positive sentences such as invitation sentences, not command sentences because the results will be very different if parents apply invitation sentences to children so that children can imitate what the parents do (Folayan et al., 2024; Retnawati et al., 2018).

Habits Given by Parents

Habituation is very important in the process of character formation for young children. As a habit carried out by parents towards their children, this will stick with them until they grow up (Folayan et al., 2024). The habits carried out are mainly very positive habits related to producing children with noble moral character. Apart from that, the habits carried out by parents towards their children can be very meaningful for the child's life in the future (Anisyah et al., 2023). The researchers found that in the three participants, the habits given by parents were giving children time to play, eat, sleep, and play with gadgets. This is when participants get used to it by giving them time to do these four things.

"Most of my children are accustomed to being able to control when it's time to eat when it's time to play on their cell phone, play games, and eat and sleep, ma'am."

(Interview result RR)

"I like to make it a habit so that my children can know when to play, eat and sleep at school. I arrange it, ma'am, so that the children are disciplined"

(Interview result TJ)

From these findings, it seems that habituation indicators have not yet emerged. How children should get used to being responsible for whatever things the child has done. For example, when children play certain games, children must be accustomed to being able to put the toys back in their original place. Apart from that, another habit that can be implemented is that if children get or have certain items, children must be willing to share them with their peers or with the people around them. Another habit that should be carried out with children is to accustom children to being grateful and worshiping God Almighty. With this, children's behavior with noble character will emerge following the character of the Indonesian nation (Lesmana, 2022).

Apart from that, humans learn a lot from what they see. Exemplary occupies a very important position. Parents must first have a character that they want to teach, to children who will imitate what their parents do rather than what they do. Parents are the first role models that children imitate. Even though the example does not only come from parents,

parents' understanding of this example is very important to create a strong character education environment (Anisyah et al., 2023).

Enforcement of Rules Given by Parents

The initial gate to creating children who can have good attitudes or character is by enforcing the rules within the family (Chaer, 2021). The most important thing in making rules is that the rules that are made must be agreed upon and formulated jointly by the people at home, especially parents and children. Regulations are made to be obeyed together, not to be violated. These rules in the family can also function to regulate various matters related to the smooth and comfortable life of the household as well as producing children who have character and noble morals (Saharia & Yudha, 2023). From the findings of this research, it appears that the participant with the initials RR gave rules about when children should play, when children should play with gadgets when children should sleep, and when children should study. Ar does this so that everything can be controlled in a very conducive manner. Apart from that, another participant, with the initials TJ, also implemented the same things as RR, such as when to play, learn to eat, and sleep. The third participant, with the initials NUR, enforces rules such as when to play and when children eat, go to school, and sleep.

“Yes, ma'am, I made a rule so that my child can coordinate when to play, I also limit playing on my cellphone to only 1 hour a day... I also regulate eating and sleeping, ma'am”
(Interview result RR)

“If I like to give rules about when to play, how many hours the child has to come home to eat, then take a nap every day, ma'am, and I also set the time for studying and school”
(Interview result TJ)

From the three participants who had research conducted through intensive interviews, it was clear that there was no principle of justice in enforcing legal rules within the family. Where these rules are made without considering children as subjects or social beings the same as adults. It is better if any rules that exist within the family must be known and must be agreed upon together and take into account various natural sounds so that the child feels that he is an active component of society and can participate responsibly (Anisyah et al., 2023). Apart from that, involving children in these regulations will make children become children with the character of responsibility, discipline, and noble character.

CONCLUSION

A family is a group of people who have blood ties consisting of a husband, wife, and children. The family plays an important role in the process of character formation in early childhood. The community, especially parents, must understand in depth their role in forming the character of early childhood. The most important roles that parents must know are the teaching function, exemplary function, providing motivation, habituation, and enforcing rules in early childhood. This is done so that children can be created as the nation's next generation who can have noble character and morals.

The limitation of this research is that the number of samples used is relatively small and does not represent the understanding of parents in Indonesia as a whole. Remember that it is very important to know the extent of parents' understanding regarding character education and the role that parents must play in educating children to become children with character. Therefore, the researcher makes recommendations to future researchers that there needs to be more samples using quantitative methods so that they can be more reliable and better represent how parents understand their role in character education.

Sapta Wati, E., Rudianto, Zaman, B., & Ramdani, C. (2024). Parents' Perception of Their Role in Character Education for Early Childhood in Indonesia. *Jurnal Komunikasi Pendidikan*, 8(2), 225–234. <https://doi.org/10.32585/jurnalkomdik.v8i2.5226>

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