

WHY ISLAMIC EDUCATION NEEDS TO BE INTERNALIZED IN EARLY CHILDHOOD: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF INDONESIAN PARENTS' PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract: The emergence of Islamic education schools has become a trend nowadays in Indonesia. Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, Integrated Islamic Elementary School, Islamic Junior High School and Senior High School, Madrasah Aliyah even Integrated Islamic Kindergarten and Raudhatul Athfal and Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal (ABA) Kindergarten are widely known among the community. Many parents choose Islamic early childhood education to be their main choice. This study aims to explore why Islamic education needs to be internalized in early childhood. This study was conducted from 19 July 2019 to 20 August 2019 in some cities in Indonesia. A purposeful sampling method was used to select ten eligible participants. Data were collected through face-to-face, semistructured interviews and were analyzed using the conventional content analysis approach. Two categories emerged from the qualitative data including “creating Islamic environment,” and “the program offered is interesting”. According to the results, although the participants decided to choose the Islamic education for their children by selecting the Islamic school, they should consider that they must internalize the Islamic education in family by being role model for their children.

Keywords: Islamic education and parents' perspective

INTRODUCTION

The development of Islamic education certainly cannot be separated from how the spread of Islam in Indonesia. The development of Islam in Indonesia itself through two factors, namely the geographical location of Indonesia itself, which is at an international crossroads from the Middle East majors to China. Second is trade. Indonesia is known to have very fertile soil so that it produces spices. Thus, foreign traders came to Indonesia.

Indonesia is one of the majority Muslim countries with diversity of tribes and races so that the Islamic religion influences Islamic education. Islamic

educational institutions include Islamic boarding schools, madrassas and Islamic schools. According to data from the ministry of religion, the number of RA (*Raudhatul Athfal*) in Indonesia is 27,999 schools and madrassah is 49,337 schools. Islamic education in communities include Surau, Madrasah Diniyah, Langgar, meanwhile other formal Islamic education such as Islamic Boarding Schools (*Pondok Pesantren*), RA (*Raudhatil Athfal*), Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, Madrasah Tsanawiyah, Madrasah Aliyah and Islamic Universities.

Islamic education can be interpreted as a guidance or education with the aim of directing, teaching, training, nurturing and parenting. This implies an attempt to educate students through a process in accordance with established goals, namely "instilling piety and morals and upholding the truth so that human beings are formed who are personal and virtuous according to Islamic teachings. In Surah An-Nahl verse 78 which means "*And Allah brought you out of the belly of your mothers (at that time) you did not know anything, and He gave you a hearing, and a conscience so that you give thanks.*" in his human life later. Therefore then, Islam outlines that education is one of the activities that a must for Muslim men and women, and lasts for a lifetime (Life Long education) ¹.

This verse explains that every child born is basically in a sacred state without knowing anything but the child has been provided with hearing, vision and also heart so that from birth the potential of a child can be developed. When we develop the potential that exists in children, we must consider education in accordance with the values or norms and abilities of children. Islam sees the family as the first environment for the individual, and it is in the family that education is first obtained by the child. ².

Religious education should be taught from an early age. Early childhood is a group of children who are in a process of growth and development that is unique, in the sense of having a pattern of growth and development, both intelligence, social emotion, language and communication according to the level of growth and development ³. Early childhood is a child in a critical stage of development. Understanding early childhood in general is a child under the age of 6 years. The Government through the National Education System Law defines early childhood education as a coaching effort aimed at children from birth until the age of 6 carried out through the provision of educational stimuli to assist

¹ Nur Hamzah, "Pendidikan Agama Dalam Keluarga," *At-Turats* 9, no. 2 (December 1, 2015): 49, <https://doi.org/10.24260/at-turats.v9i2.315>.

² Nini Aryani, "Konsep Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini Dalam Perspektif Pendidikan Islam," *POTENSIA: Jurnal Kependidikan Islam* 1, no. 2 (December 15, 2015): 213-27, <https://doi.org/10.24014/POTENSIA.V1i2.3187>.

³ Mansur, *Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini Dalam Islam* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2007).

physical and spiritual growth and development so that children have readiness to enter further education. While the limits used by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and experts in general are "Early childhood" is a child from birth until the age of 8 years.

Religious education starts in the family, from the child in the womb (prenatal) until after birth (postnatal). The family is the first environment for children to get religious education because parents are the first and foremost teacher for early childhood. In addition to family religious education is also obtained in the community and schools ⁴. Children's education is also a shared responsibility among families, schools and communities, and even the responsibility of the entire Indonesian nation. Early education starts at an early age or since birth because Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is basically centered on the needs of children, namely education that is based on the interests, needs, and abilities of the child ⁵

Schools as formal educational institutions are obliged to teach religious education for children since they are in Early Childhood Education (PAUD) and Kindergarten (TK). Religious education for young children is directed to stimulate, guide, nurture, and offer learning activities that produce understanding, abilities and skills in children as a foundation for their faith so that they will grow into full individuals. In other words, religious education, together with education in general, targets three aspects of child development in the form of cognitive, affective and psychomotor dimensions. That is, religious education obtained by children must include the provision of knowledge, ability to practice and skills that grow as positive habits of children. There is no doubt that religious education obtained from an early age will have an influence on the further development of children's religion.

The provision of religious education should use a learning approach that focuses on children (child-centered), so that the learning process follows the child's growth and development phase and their characteristics. Therefore, the readiness of teachers in educating both in terms of teaching and learning programs, learning methods, learning media, learning strategies and conditions created in the learning process, must be maximized. The teacher must make

⁴ Mahdi M. Ali, "Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam Bagi Anak Usia Dini," *JURNAL EDUKASI: Jurnal Bimbingan Konseling* 1, no. 2 (March 30, 2016): 190-215, <https://doi.org/10.22373/je.vii2.605>.

⁵ Zul Fa, "Implementasi Kurikulum Dan Strategi Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam Pada PAUD," *MUDARRISA: Journal of Islamic Education* 6, no. 1 (December 31, 2015): 1, <https://doi.org/10.18326/mdr.v6i1.1-29>.

careful planning so that the learning outcomes you want to obtain can be achieved.

Children as unique individuals have abilities and talents that are different from each other. "The period from birth until the third year is a special time in the lives of children. This period is the greatest and at the most important time of growth. " Therefore, parents, communities and teachers must support this phase for the physical and mental development of children by providing religious education and other education so that it can develop optimally. That is, meeting the various educational needs of children at this early age, especially religious education, is very crucial.

In Islamic doctrine, the role of the family is very crucial as explained by Allah in the Qur'an and the Hadith that parents are responsible for the formation and education of children. In Surah At-tahrim verse 6 Allah says, "O people of faith, protect yourself and your family from the threat of hellfire". Likewise with the Hadith of the Prophet, "Every child is born in a state of nature, then both parents make them Jews, Christians and Magi." The family is the smallest and closest sphere that has an important role in education, especially religious education.

Parents play an important role in shaping the personality of their children. The good and bad of a child's personality in the future is determined by the education and guidance of his parents. Education in the family lasts throughout the ages, through a process of interaction and socialization within the family itself⁶.

The older the era, the swift flow of globalization. The emergence of juvenile delinquency, student brawl, drugs, sexual harassment and abuse, and violence are the parents' concerns today. This is certainly caused by the environment and personality of the individual. Not a few parents who complain about the personality of their children and confused how to deal with it. Therefore, there is an immense need to undertake research on deeper understanding of why Islamic education needs to be internalized in early childhood from Indonesian parents' perspectives. It will contribute to developing and giving awareness of the importance of parents into the role model in family.

RESEARCH METHOD

A qualitative inquiry with content analysis approach was chosen as a research methodology. It is the suitable method to explore cultural context-bound

⁶ Fachrudin, "Peranan Pendidikan Agama Dalam Keluarga Terhadap Pembentukan Kepribadian Anak-Anak," *Taklim* 139 (2011).

subjects about which there is little knowledge⁷. Qualitative content analysis is a subjective interpretation of the content of text through the systematic process of coding and identifying themes or categories⁸ to reach a broad and condensed description of the study phenomenon.

This study was conducted from 19 July 2019 to 20 August 2019 in some cities in Indonesia. Ten participants with criteria were selected through purposeful sampling method. The eligible participants divided into three categories; parents whose children have graduated from Islamic Kindergarten, parents whose children are in Islamic Kindergarten and parents who are expecting their children attend to Islamic Kindergarten.

The main technique in this study for data collection was interview. The data was driven from three semistructured, in depth, and face-to-face interviews with ten participants. For obtaining more information about the impact of Islamic Kindergarten for their children, four participants had two interview sessions. The interviews were begun with a general question to the all participants: "Could you tell me why did you choose Islamic Kindergarten for your children?". Then the participants whose their children have graduated from Islamic Kindergarten continued by next question, "did you feel positive impact after your children graduated from Islamic Kindergarten? What are the positive impacts?" Duration of the interview sessions varied from 3 to 5 minutes.

The conventional content analysis approach was applied to analyze the data using the method described by Graneheim and Lundman as follows. All interviews were read several times to gain a sense of the whole. The data were divided into condensed meaning units that were abstracted and coded. Then, codes were sorted into two categories.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Two categories were extracted from the deep descriptions of the participants including "creating Islamic environment," and "the program offered is interesting".

⁷ S Elo and H Kyngas, "The Qualitative Content Analysis Process," *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 62 (2008): 107.

⁸ Hsiu Fang Hsieh and Sarah E. Shannon, "Three Approaches To Qualitative Content Analysis," *Qualitative Health Research* 15, no. 9 (November 2005): 1277-88, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687>.

Creating Islamic Environment

Four participants decided to choose Islamic Kindergarten with the reason of they would like to create Islamic environment. This was a fundamental reason that persuaded them to attend their children to Islamic Kindergarten.

“I will decide to attend my child to Islamic school with reason of my child recognize about Islam and can internalize it in his daily activities. Teaching my child to read and write alphabet is easy, but teaching him about religion needs supporting environment (Islamic Kindergarten)”

This is line with constructivism learning theory which Social constructivist theory of Vgotsky (1978) pinpoints that; learning is essentially a social activity. Learners’ new knowledge is created through their prior experiences. Self-directed approaches role in the learning process are the fundamental advantages of the constructivist theory⁹.

Three other participants added,

“I would like to give the best education for my child by selecting Islamic school”

“I cannot teach my child about Islamic education since I am not mastered it, at least I have my child to attend Islamic school to create Islamic environment.”

“in my current district, Islamic Kindergarten is the second choice in choosing education for children. My current environment is not religious yet. I want to make religious environment for my children by having them to attend to Islamic school.”

The Program offered is Interesting

Six participants decided to choose Islamic Kindergarten with the reason of they are interested in offered program from school.

“I decided to choose Islamic school for my children since the school has many interesting programs. Islamic daily activities, beside, the teachers are religious”.

“in Islamic school, the Islamic education are taught. Besides, they offered Islamic extracurricular”.

“In order to my children are religious, particularly in islamic education such as memorizing Surah, and praying. “

⁹ Nuket Gunduz and Cigdem Hursen, “Constructivism in Teaching and Learning; Content Analysis Evaluation,” *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 191 (June 2015): 526–33, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.04.640>.

“I chose Suryalaya Kindergarten since it offers interesting programs. Suryalaya is widely known as the center of Tasawuf Education. Suryalaya Kindergarten also offers Islamic boarding school curriculum.”

“Islamic Kindergarten has great strategy on Islamic education.”

In conclusion, Indonesian parents are interested in having their children attend to Islamic school. Suprayoga (2004) said all parents want to have a pious child, noble, who can pray for his parents, *birrul walidain*. Islam gives instructions that the child is a mandate that is charged to each parent to be educated as well as possible¹⁰.

Impact

“I feel positive impact after she graduated from Islamic school. She can memorize surah, can recite Iqra and know Hijaiyah alphabet after attending Islamic school 3 years”.

“after he graduated from Islamic school, my son has great attitude (*akhlak*), can memorize Qur’an and dua.”

This is in accordance with the objectives of Islamic education which are physical in nature, that is behavior that is clearly visible, in the form of acts of ritual worship experience¹¹.

CONCLUSION

Parents are the primary and first educators for their children because it is from them that children begin to receive education. Every child has an impulse and power to imitate. With this encouragement children can do something done by their parents. Therefore parents must set an example for their children. Whatever he heard and seen always imitated without considering the good and bad. In this case it is desirable to have great caution and attention from parents. Because the period of imitating this indirectly helped shape the character of children in the future.

When teaching children, parents should remember that a child often learns from examples. The examples of parents play a very important role in bringing up a child. Parents who want their child to be religious, honest and disciplined should themselves be religious, honest and disciplined.

¹⁰ Z Herni, “Pendidikan Agama Islam Pada PAUD (Penerapan Pembelajaran SAINS Pada PAUD),” *Edudeena* 2, no. 1 (2018).

¹¹ Mufatihatul Taubah, “Pendidikan Anak Dalam Keluarga Perspektif Islam,” *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam (Journal of Islamic Education Studies)* 3, no. 1 (February 7, 2016): 109, <https://doi.org/10.15642/jpai.2015.3.1.109-136>.

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