

PROMOTING BALANCED EDUCATION IN A FAITH CHARITY-BASED SCHOOL IN YOGYAKARTA: A QUALITATIVE VIEW

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Abstract: The role of charity for needy Indonesians has a long history and tradition. One aspect has been educational goals. Free education for needy children is provided in Indonesia, yet very few reports have been structured to assess success or failure. Using mixed approaches of first-hand solicited data and secondary literature review, the current study was particularly designed to examine the reciprocal roles of donors and recipients. This was done in order to understand how to motivate increased donations and how to improve the likelihood that recipients will benefit in their self-esteem and life skills. Additional perspectives were derived from reports of student educational experiences in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Findings show that students in Yogyakarta have been waived from tuition, and they have received school equipment and educational logistics for their learning. Several students' parents in Yogyakarta, however, showed their uneasiness about continuance of children's education after graduation from elementary public school; they want their children to continue into higher education. The parents also discussed the issue of balancing moral education and science, but their views might contradict the school's objective of forming students' attitudes and behavior with spirituality, religious teachings, and moral conduct, such as prayers and Qur'anic memorization.

Keywords: Charity, elementary school, indigent, moral education

INTRODUCTION

Education is a conduit by which society passes on knowledge, customs, and values from one generation to another. When education is provided in a classroom system, the government or social institutions are responsible for providing standards, management, and funding. Around the world there is still difficulty for poor children to gain equal access to quality education. The best schools may be far from where the children live, yet their families cannot afford transportation costs. Or they cannot afford school fees for a good school nearby. These issues

have motivated philanthropically-minded individuals, civil society groups, and religious communities to fund and operate education for disadvantaged students. Such projects have various names, including “charity education” or “free school”/ “*pendidikan gratis*”.¹

This research focuses on one public elementary school in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, namely the private religious school *Sekolah Dasar Juara*, also known as Champion Elementary School. This school waives tuition and provides free school uniforms and supplies to students. Previous studies have examined the relationship between donors and recipients. The main research objective for this study was to see how this relationship shapes charitable education and affects student outcomes. The study therefore examined the influence of donors on outcomes in light of the less powerful roles of recipients and their families.²

Few reports have examined schools subsidized by alms-gift giving. In 2013 one of this paper’s researchers studied poverty alleviation by *zakat*. Results led to a recommendation for charitable institutions in Yogyakarta to combine three programs -- economic empowerment, health care, and education -- as a consolidated philanthropic welfare system.³ The 2013 study contended that education was essential to success in helping families out of poverty and that it was especially effective when combined with free health-care services and/or micro-finance grants. The study also showed that many children in the city of Yogyakarta lacked transportation options to go to the few and far away charity-based schools in the city. An alternative solution, according to the report, would be for welfare institutions to underwrite extra teachers and classrooms in neighborhoods that are much closer to where poor children live.

The people of Yogyakarta, the city where these researchers live, have long practiced philanthropy to ease the everyday concerns of individuals and communities, by means of serving food to the hungry and providing clothing and shelter to the homeless. Philanthropy according to Payton and Moody is defined

¹ Zulkipli Lessy, Margaret Adamek, & Khadija Khaja, “Philanthropic *Zakat* for the Disadvantaged: Recipient Perspectives from Indonesia.” *Asian Social Work and Policy Review* 14, no. 3(2020): 138-147; Mary J. Oates, *The Catholic Philanthropic Tradition in America*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995; Asep Supriyadi, “Manajemen dan Kebijakan Pendidikan Gratis dan Implikasinya Terhadap Mutu dan Pemerataan Pendidikan di Pondok Pesantren Al-Hikmah Gunung Kidul.” *Unpublised Thesis*. Sekolah Pascasarjana UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2016.

² Robert L. Payton, M. Novak, B. O’Connell, & P. D. Hall, *Philanthropy: Four Views*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1988; S. A. Ostrander, “The Growth of Donor Control: Revisiting the Social Relations of Philanthropy.” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (2007): 356-368.

³ Zulkipli Lessy, *Philanthropic Zakat for Indonesia’s Poor: A Qualitative Study of Recipient Experiences at Rumah Zakat*. *Unpublished Dissertation*. School of Social Work Indiana University, Indianapolis, 2013.

as a means to fulfill the short-term needs of the poor and to provide sustainable long-term programs.⁴ According to Latief, modern Indonesian philanthropy in the recent two decades has had new developments toward these goals in the wake of the Suharto military government collapse. Secular and religious nongovernmental organizations have built philanthropic foundations to serve their communities and congregations, and have expanded such services to the wider society.⁵ This paper urges philanthropic institutions to incorporate networking to ensure long-term effects for those in need of a sustainable economy, accessible health care, and quality education.

Lack of narratives from students in Indonesia's free school system is due to the fact that Islamic philanthropy occurs without seeking details of recipient outcomes.⁶ Gifts fulfill a duty to God without requiring oversight of effects on recipients. Contemporary research exists on philanthropic education in programs of Dompot Dhuafa, Al-Falah Foundation, Rumah Zakat, and others in Indonesia, but such studies looked at alms-giving as a way to release children from daily extreme poverty.⁷ Such help is often stopgap temporary aid, as limited by institutional rules.⁸ One study examined what practices of students in a secondary high school in Yogyakarta were related to development of benevolent values.⁹ The study, however, did not examine empowerment by means of free education. Indeed, it is rare to find a program designed to permanently ameliorate clients' deprivations. The authors' research here was, therefore, conducted to fill the knowledge gap.

A study conducted by Abubakar and Bamualim showed the importance of *waqf* (donor trusts or bequests) in supporting the revival of *Pondok Pesantren* Gontor,

⁴ Teresa Odendahl, *Charity Begins at Home: Generosity and Self-interest among the Philanthropic Elite*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 1990; Robert L. Payton, & Michael P. Moody. *Understanding Philanthropy: Its Meaning and Mission*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008; Robert L. Payton, M. Novak, B. O'Connell, & P. D. Hall. *Philanthropy: Four Views*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1988.

⁵ Hilman Latief, *Politik Filantropi Islam di Indonesia: Negara, Pasar, dan Masyarakat Sipil*. Yogyakarta: Ombak, 2013.

⁶ G. C. Kozlowski, "Religious Authority, Reform, and Philanthropy in the Contemporary Muslim world." In W.F. Ilchman, S.N. Katz, & E.L. Queen II (Eds.), *Philanthropy in the World's traditions* (pp. 279-308). Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998.

⁷ Zulkipli Lessy, "Philanthropic Zakat for Indonesia's Poor: A Qualitative Study of Recipient Experiences at Rumah Zakat." *Unpublished Dissertation*. School of Social Work Indiana University, Indianapolis, 2013.

⁸ Indonesia Magnificence of Zakat, *An Empirical Study of the Role of Zakat in Poverty Alleviation*. Jakarta: Indonesia Magnificence of Zakat, 2011.

⁹ Irfan Yanuar Arifin, "Menumbuhkan Nilai-nilai Filantropi Melalui Kegiatan Infaq, Zakat, dan Shadaqah di SMP Muhammadiyah 6 Yogyakarta." *Skripsi*. FITK UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2015.

the Universitas Islam Indonesia Yogyakarta, and *Pondok Pesantren Tebuireng* in Jombang, East Java, but it did not indicate whether the *waqf* made education accessible to poor students. It simply asserted that the *waqf* supported those three institutions to become bigger and financially sustainable. *Waqf* in Indonesia has traditionally relied on familial or organizational bases, while *waqf* in the West has come via trusts established for educational institutions. According to Indonesia Magnificence of Zakat, in a study of its recipients, reported that 41.5% of respondents had at least six years of elementary school education, but there was no respondent educated beyond high school. The recruitment process for potential respondents had been based on ability to return a loan of capital.¹⁰

Free education in the United States included, by the year 1800, boys' boarding schools funded by wealthy benefactors in Maryland and Pennsylvania. James White, for example, bequeathed funds in 1767 for a Catholic school in Philadelphia. Frederick Brandt bequeathed substantial Maryland property in 1815 to Rev. Francis Neale of Georgetown College "in order to establish thereon as soon as convenient a school or seminary, or any other house of education for the purpose of bringing up youth in useful literature and Christian piety." ¹¹ Academies for girls accompanied the development of Catholic sisterhoods after 1790, and Ursuline nuns in 1772 opened a New Orleans school for the daughters of "the better class". Such parochial schools emerged in American society as Catholic families rose in stature during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Clergy and laity alike felt that education of poor children and orphans was a contribution to the nation's well-being.¹² Free schools in the United States, however, did face concerns about funding,¹³ and financial fluctuations affected enrollments.

Research has focused on charitable institution management, politics, and activism.¹⁴ The authors' current research looks to develop new paths in Islamic education studies in Indonesia. Most studies on education and charity examine benefits of temporary and short-term collection and distribution of alms.¹⁵ This

¹⁰ Indonesia Magnificence of Zakat, *An Empirical Study of the Role of Zakat in Poverty Alleviation*. Jakarta: Indonesia Magnificence of Zakat, 2011.

¹¹ Mary J. Oates, *The Catholic Philanthropic Tradition in America*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995: 142.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Hilman Latief, *Politik Filantropi Islam di Indonesia: Negara, Pasar, dan Masyarakat Sipil*. Yogyakarta: Ombak, 2013; Latief, Hilman. *Melayani Umat: Filantropi Islam dan Ideologi Kesejahteraan Kaum Modernis*. Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2010; Ahmad Busyro Sanjaya, "Manajemen Filantropi Berbasis Rumah Ibadah." *Unpublished Thesis*. Sekolah Pascasarjana UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2016.

¹⁵ Irfan Yanuar Arifin, "Menumbuhkan Nilai-nilai Filantropi Melalui Kegiatan Infaq, Zakat, dan Shadaqah di SMP Muhammadiyah 6 Yogyakarta." ... 2015.

new research seeks to discern what motivates donors and whether the student recipients of charitable education have had their needs met. Islamic philanthropy in the Muslim world from the medieval era to the 20th century has had a focus on motivating givers, more than on evaluating needs of recipients and long-term effectiveness of charity.¹⁶

To better understand the respondents' lived experiences, these researchers used in-depth interviews exploring recipients' thoughts and accounts.¹⁷ Each interview lasted approximately two hours. Semi-structured questions in face-to-face interviews solicited respondents' feelings, experiences, and knowledge about challenges of becoming recipients and about obstacles encountered. Semi-structured questions and probe-mixed questions were used, in addition to fixed questions, so that additional details could emerge in context-specific answers. Semi-structured questions elicited respondents' interpretations that otherwise might not have been revealed by the structured questions alone. This flexibility allowed respondents to engage in dynamic interaction with researchers and, as a result, to fully represent their individual perspectives.¹⁸ Semi-structured questions also facilitated common understanding between the researcher and respondents and ensured respondents' "opportunities to report their own thoughts and feelings".¹⁹

Prior to the interview phase, respondents had accepted an invitation by mail or telephone. At each prearranged first meeting, a respondent was encouraged to read and sign informed consent. Interviews with any underage child were held in the presence of his or her parents or caregivers. The researcher introduced themselves as lecturers at Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic Yogyakarta. Among the documents shown to respondents was the city office of Yogyakarta's letter of permission to conduct research. Interviews were recorded digitally.

The researcher guaranteed anonymity by using pseudonyms for the interview transcriptions and by veiling any references to actual identities in the report, even

¹⁶G. C. Kozlowski, "Religious Authority, Reform, and Philanthropy in the Contemporary Muslim world." In W.F. Ilchman, S.N. Katz, & E.L. Queen II (Eds.), *Philanthropy in the World's Traditions* (pp. 279-308). Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998; Zulkipli Lessy, Margaret Adamek, & Khadija Khaja, "Philanthropic Zakat for the Disadvantaged: Recipient Perspectives from Indonesia." *Asian Social Work and Policy Review* 14, no. 3 (2020): 138-147.

¹⁷ Amia Lieblich, Rivka Tuval-Mashiach, & Tamar Zilber, *Narrative Research: Reading, Analysis, and Interpretation*. London: Sage, 2008.

¹⁸Paul D. Leedy, Jeanne Ellis Ormrod, & Kaura Ruth Johnson. *Practical Research: Planning and Design*. New York, NY: Pearson, 2019; Bonnie Stone Sunstein & Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater, *Field Working: Reading and Writing Research*. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012.

¹⁹ Immy Holloway, *Basic Concepts for Qualitative Research*. London: Blackwell Science, 1997.

though the majority of respondents authorized the researcher to cite their names in future. Transcripts were secured in the researchers' personal computer, requiring password access and not being internet-connected. Data erasure will be done by overwriting files after one year or after completion of the journal article draft, if earlier.

FIND AND DISCUSSION

The qualitative view of this research was used to investigate five respondents, and were recipients -- four females and one male -- of charity education at SD Juara Yogyakarta. The following descriptions are findings excerpted from the respondent narratives:

Respondent 1: Roni's Mother

A 49-year-old woman and the mother of 9-year-old Roni reported that she finished high school and married a man who was a guard at SD Juara for minimum wage. Their two-child family lives on an average income of Rp 800.000 (\$40), making it difficult to seek a good quality school for Roni. She hopes that Rumah Zakat will establish junior and senior high schools free for poor Yogyakarta children. Her two children are Roni, who is in third grade at SD Juara, and a one-year-old baby. Because of her husband's employment with SD Juara, her child's education at this school is free. As a home tailor, her income is only enough for food staples. She reported:

... to make extra income, I sew tablecloths and curtains for schools to generate the family *income* which is better than designing *batik* clothes of two meters daily. I gave my workers wages of Rp 15.000 (\$1.20 cents) a day. I am self-employed, so my income is better than only designing *batik* for another employer. I wanted to motivate other women who are on the school committee to design *batik* themselves to sell..."

Roni's mother said that for Roni's admittance to SD Juara, the family answered a survey about motivation, income, and home economic situation. Also considered was the spiritual aspect of family members, such as how often they pray and fast and whether they do voluntary alms and socialization in their neighborhood. She added:

One day, Roni asked about prayers, and I explained the prayers to him. He suddenly asked me to awake him for *subuh* prayer at 4.00 am so he could pray. After this, he used to pray five times a day, and his motivation to learn at SD Juara is high.

Roni's mother stated that Roni had a high motivation to study. He is at school from 7.00 am to 12.30 pm Monday through Saturday. Guided by a teacher, students usually conduct *dhuha* prayer in a small mosque until 8.00 am; then they come into class. On Fridays they play sports and sometimes go camping with the Boy Scouts. Fifth and sixth grade students do *gamelan* exercises. On Saturdays the students conduct *dhuha* prayer themselves before participating in such extracurricular activities as visiting the zoo or swimming.

SD Juara curriculum is similar to that of the public elementary schools. She compared Roni's textbooks with her cousin, who attends public elementary school. Both schools use the same textbooks for social studies, natural studies, mathematics, languages, and arts. Roni learned topics such as basic formulas, least common multiple, and greatest common factor.

Roni's mother asserted that some parents disagree with the system of rigid assessment because it represses students' uniqueness and development physically and mentally. Roni moderately likes all courses and his teachers' styles. Roni struggles in mathematics, so his mother sometimes helps with math homework. She wants Roni to be smart in mathematics so that he can go to a public junior high school. However, she is worried that public junior high schools usually require high grades from elementary school graduates. Furthermore, she is worried about tuition fees for private junior high schools, such as Muhammadiyah, which is expensive. She stated that schools like Muhammadiyah used to be less expensive and accepted many children from low-income families. She gave an example from her hometown of Cepu, Central of Java. Currently, all Muhammadiyah schools are expensive.

Roni's mother wanted him to be involved in competitions via extracurricular activities. However, she stated that Roni lacks self-confidence to participate in competitions. He prefers to take part in activities such as *zhuhur* prayer and reading the Qur'an under the guidance of a teacher. According to Roni, who was playing when this interview took place, he was able to memorize chapters of the Qur'an, such as *al-Fatihah* through *al-Buruj*. Roni's mother stated that she also likes the extra time provided for SD Juara students, especially for fourth grade students. In the morning, they use such time for reviewing course material.

In order to suitably adapt their teaching strategies, teachers should be emotionally close to their students. From first grade onward the teachers observe each student's character and ways of thinking, and this observation can take weeks. By this process, the teachers can fit their teaching styles according to students' individual characteristics. His mother said, "*Alhamdulillah*, my son, Roni, has adapted well in class." She likes SD Juara because *zakat* is helpful for students

from low income families, like hers, and she feels that tuition fees in other public schools are too expensive. The tuition-free SD Juara has lessened her family's expenses, and she can save money for Roni's higher education.

Respondent 2: Rafika's Father

Being an orphan since age 15, Rafika's father (now 42) has been independent economically since he was a teenager. He worked for multiple employers during 1990-2001, but had no job during the economic crisis. In 2008, he worked at a pharmacy with a monthly wage of Rp 450.000 (\$45). He also was a ceramic ambassador in several fairs across Java. Lastly, he became a pet fish seller via bicycle in front of several elementary schools. The salaries of these jobs were enough for daily life. Currently, he works as an informal religious teacher for children and teenagers at the local mosque, and his wife teaches in the same field at another school. The couple's small salaries are insufficient for daily expenses. They have three daughters, aged 10, 5, and 3, in the small house they rent for Rp 5.000.000 (\$500) a year. Rafika's father first became acquainted with SD Juara when Rumah Zakat lent him a sewing machine of Rp 7.000.000 (\$700) and gave him a glass cabinet, cloth, and leather, which are kept in the living room. He was entitled to equipment and sewing materials because his wife had sewing experience. Rumah Zakat supported his work via marketing and consultation about entrepreneurial prospects. His products are sold online or through retailers.

Rafika's father stated that the teaching method in his sons' class is thematic and integrative. Each subject is taught with multiple approaches. For example, when a teacher explains rain, the lesson plan relies on numeracy, *Bahasa Indonesia*, social studies, and science. Students are encouraged to ask questions for clarification or to discuss subjects in group work. Most courses are similar to those at the public state elementary schools, but some courses at SD Juara stress religious values, moral education, ethics, and Islamic teachings, Qur'anic *tahfidz*, and *hadith*, which are not taught in the state public schools. Moral values conveyed by the teacher's lessons encourage students to respect their elders, parents, and teachers. According to Rafika's father, even a smart student must have good moral standards, so education should mold proper behavior; hence daily five-time prayers and memorization of Qur'an verses and *hadith* are important. These help children to understand and apply religious teachings.

Rafika's father explained that for mathematics SD Juara applied the government's 2013 Curriculum. The students thus studied the same material as at public schools. For example, Rafika was just then learning mathematics problems, such as "if average daily garbage collected in Yogyakarta city weighs seven tons,

then how many tons of garbage are collected in a month?” He felt such exercises increase children’s ability in mathematics, logical thinking, and language.

Rafika’s father further stated that SD Juara is concerned about applying social studies and languages. He gave an example of fruit and vegetables becoming a theme for a lesson. Children were encouraged to consume food containing vitamins and fiber for health and to avoid food containing excessive salt or sugar. According to Rafika’s father, thematic lessons help the children to think diligently and grow independently. He gave as an example his daughter Rafika (age 10) once making a clock from cardboard and ordinary paper. Working independently, she showed her father that she could handle her job. Her father wanted to help, but Rafika stated that she would rather do her tasks herself, even though it might turn out better if parents helped. This showed the character building that can occur by encouraging children to work independently.

Rafika’s father also explained that SD Juara teaches students life skills and nurtures their potential. He told about a conflict of opinion between some parents and SD Juara about course goals. The school wants students to grow according to their talents and capabilities. At the same time, the teaching system is not solely for student grades, but also for student character. SD Juara encourages students to become well-behaved persons (*anak shaleh*), even by their extracurricular activities, such as Javanese dancing and *nasyid* singing.

Rafika’s father stated that he agreed with the principle of SD Juara to teach Islamic arts and songs, and he told about a graduated student who has successfully become a *nasyid* singer in Yogyakarta. Rafika’s father asserted that SD Juara prioritizes guidance and caring. If students have problems, perhaps hunger in the morning when arriving at the school, they then need to be observed by the teacher as to why they did not have breakfast at home. The school wants the children to be honest in conveying their concerns. In this honesty the school aimed to become an intermediary. The school develops students’ potentials and motivates Rafika to engage in skill competitions. She has won a coloring competition, for example. Children gain achievements due to the self-confidence that the school has nurtured. The school also encourages discipline through activities such as Qur’anic *tahfidz* on Saturdays. Rafika also engages in traditional dance and *karate*. Other SD Juara activities are painting, theater, designing *batik*, swimming, Boy Scouts, and newspaper clipping.

Rafika’s father asserted that SD Juara cares about student well-being. If some children did not go home after school, the teacher would explore the situation to know the cause. The teacher then would take the children to their homes if their parents did not arrive at the gate. The school also gives extra snacks and milk if

needed. According to Rafika's father, every parent is obligated to provide his or her children with snacks and lunch. No parent is allowed to give more than Rp 4000 (\$40 cents) pocket money to his child, and the school educates the children to use such money wisely. When students buy snacks from food sellers, the teachers observe what is offered, because the teachers want it to be healthy food. If teachers know that a food seller provides unhealthy food, they do not hesitate to caution the seller.

To educate about healthy life and proper clothes, SD Juara has a commitment that on Wednesdays to have students eat food rich in vitamins from vegetables and fruit, and in protein from meat, fish, or nuts. Additionally, Rafika's father asserted that Rafika has been taught to eat quietly. As for clothing, she is taught to recognize how to dress modestly. SD Juara suggests that male students wear long slacks, and that female students wear a headscarf and long inner and outer skirts. He said:

As parents we need to remind our children. There is much homework for us in nurturing our children so that they can obey norms and rules in their family, society, and community."

SD Juara conducts outings to ancient Hindu temples, such as Boko and Prambanan, Klaten, Central Java, in order to give the opportunity to the students to enjoy nature. During outings, students are asked to reflect about the joy and beauty of the environment. For this purpose, for example, teachers have students observe the process of a caterpillar and then mimic this process using sand and red onion skin. Students also make notes on environmental observations for later discussion as a group.

Respondent 3: Aisya's Mother

Aisya's mother has three children. The 17-year-old teenage girl is in eleventh grade. Aisya is 11 years old and in fifth grade at SD Juara. Aisya entered SD Juara in second grade by transferring from public elementary school in Sleman Regency when the family lacked finances. Romi is 9 years old and in fourth grade at SD Juara. Aisya's mother learned about SD Juara in the year 2008 from a friend who was also her fellow worker at a computer disk factory on Batam Island of Indonesia. When the economic crisis occurred, Aisya's mother went back to Yogyakarta while her husband remained in Batam, where he worked for a ferry shipping line. Now he works in general construction in Natuna, Riau Islands, still away from Yogyakarta. His salary covers clothing, food, and electricity for the family, but not food. Aisya's mother did not have a house, so they live in the grandparents' house in Piyungan, Bantul, Yogyakarta. Every day she sews for an

employer. This job is temporary and the work comes only when someone asks her to sew his or her clothing. She stated that most people ask on holidays, such as *Idul Fitr* and *Idul Adha*, but not much at other times.

One of her closest friends in Yogyakarta had told her about the tuition-free education of Rumah Zakat. She registered Aisyah and Romi and they were accepted after a survey by SD Juara about economic, religious, and social aspects. The questions covered parental employment, home ownership, conduct of five-time-daily prayers, and whether parents smoke (since money should be used for food and clothing instead).

Aisyah's mother is a university Mathematics alumna. She understands her children's courses, particularly social studies and mathematics. When asked about courses that are taught in SD Juara, she asserted that SD Juara teaches moral education and everyday practical skills, and that SD Juara develops students' talents, such as drawing, painting, and *nasyid* singing, as well as physical capabilities.

All that is taught here is suitable to Aisyah's hobby. Her talent of drawing grows here because SD Juara nurtures her. SD Juara also develops her singing potential. For example, SD Juara has produced a student named Donna, who can sing well, especially religious songs, such as *nasyid*.

My son, Romi, usually plays soccer, and SD Juara facilitates the play. He also plays *gamelan* regularly. SD Juara also gives the opportunity for the children to learn swimming, including my son, since they go to the swimming pool once a month.

Aisyah's mother described that SD Juara prioritizes moral education and community values, and that by using the Curriculum 2013, it successfully developed the talents of students. Her two children received all textbooks associated with the curriculum. SD Juara starts their morning class with *dhuha* prayer at 7:00 am, followed by Qur'anic *tahfidz*. Her children were able to memorize some verses of the Qur'an. As examples she noted that Romi had memorized *al-Fatihah* to *al-A'la*, and Aisyah memorized *al-Fatihah* to *al-Infithar*.

As useful for children's education, SD Juara encourages parents to attend regular school committee meetings called *Kajian Bunda Juara* (Mother Juara Learning). Teacher Lily Siswati regularly teaches the female parents. Parents also gather during Islamic holidays, such as Islamic New Year, *Idul Fitr*, and *Idul Adha*, to learn and share information about parenting, their children's schooling, social events, and community engagement. For example, when a mother delivers or if someone is sick, then the adults should visit the person. According to Aisyah's

mother, there are reciprocal relationships between the school and the parents, and these remain strong in order to maintain students' achievements. For example, parents can report to the school if they learn that there is a competition in the community, and the school can suggest talented students to take part in the competition.

The teachers at SD, according to Aisya's mother, do not force the students to learn, and this idea is in line with Rafika's father (Client Two). Aisya's mother stated that this mission is in accordance with the 2013 Curriculum, by which parents should cooperate with their children and help with homework. For homework, such as mathematics, languages, and moral education, the parents can guide them by giving suggestions.

I often sit beside the classroom and listen to teachers' explanations. The method they use is persuasion, in which giving stern orders (like 'you must write now!') is not necessary. The approach is encouragement, so that students will do their tasks.

Aisya's mother stated that there is a need for parents to understand the 2013 Curriculum. This system grades students' achievement not with numbers, but with appropriate descriptions of student attitude and achievement. Encouragement at home can coordinate with course topics, as with parents encouraging children to plant trees in parallel with biology study, and if there is not enough land at home, the children can utilize pots and tins. She stated that Romi planted green beans in this way, and she said, "This is a suggestion by the school to nurture character growth."

Respondent 4: Nada's Mother

When enrolling children in SD Juara, each family must be surveyed by the school. In this process, Nada's mother first learned about SD Juara through flyer at her daughter's preschool. Some requirements were the child's birth certificate and an IQ test, in order to assess whether Nada (age 10) eligibility. The IQ test is conducted by the Learning Support Unit of SD Juara for new candidates. Sections include, but are not limited to, drawing, memorization, and reading ability for Arabic and the Qur'an. Nada's mother stated that her daughter was top-25 from 200 candidates. The most important requirement, however, is the economic condition of the family. When surveyed, Nada's mother and the family lived in the grandparents' house. The father works as a security guard at a pharmacy and has a second job as a motorcycle rider. Having no permanent job, Nada's mother occasionally works at a salon, helping her mother-in-law as a cream-bather. The

money from this job is variable; hence, her daughter Nada helps to sell accessories and juices near their house. The money from the sales is for Nada's education.

In 2017 when accepted to be a student at SD Juara, Nada received three kinds of uniforms, namely sport clothing, red-and-white, and yellow *batik*. Additionally, Nada received bags, pens, Tupperware containers, and composition books. SD Juara lends Nada her school textbooks every year. She must keep them clean and tidy. If the school finds that textbooks are torn, then she will need to replace them. According to Nada's mother, this is evidence that SD Juara teaches accountability.

Currently for moral education Nada memorizes verses in the Qur'an (*tahfidz*), as guided by a teacher on Saturdays. She has learned *al-Fatihah* through *an-Naazi'aat*. According to Nada's mother, Nada also receives moral education teachings in order to forge her Qur'anic *tahfidz* at the local afternoon school at SD Juara every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday.

SD Juara also motivates students to play music, and the school has many kinds of musical instruments that the students can utilize. Nada's mother related that one student, after completing his studies at SD Juara, had become a *nasyid* singer. Currently, SD Juara has produced two recorded albums that contain Islamic songs, and those songs can be accessed via *Youtube*. At one time Nada participated in *nasyid* competition, but she did not win. However, by the support of SD Juara, Nada took part in her neighborhood competition of Pakualaman District, Yogyakarta.

Nada's mother stated that the students receive general courses at SD Juara that are inferior to courses that students have at public elementary schools. For example, Nada learns topics in mathematics that are behind her peers in the neighborhood, who are studying at public state elementary schools. According to Nada's mother, from her conversation with the school committee, SD Juara focuses more on good behavior than on courses. However, she wants a balance between moral education and general courses because she wants to educate Nada in a public junior high school, where the tuition is less expensive.

Private schools, such as Muhammadiyah, are expensive, while the enrollment in the favorite public junior high schools is competitive and it is based on grades. I want my daughter to have good grades so she can enter the public junior high school in Yogyakarta.

Nada's mother wants a higher grade for Nada's mathematics because their family is poor. And if Nada finishes her studies from SD Juara with substandard grades, then her mother will be worried about education in the future. She stated that this is her concern. Nada's mother believes that authentic assessment is

important for the students' future education, but she felt that there is something wrong with her daughter. She wondered about her daughter as she does not complain about her courses, whether they are difficult or easy. But she usually does her homework. Furthermore, when she looks at Nada's grades in past courses, she finds that Nada does well for the courses, but possesses insufficient marks for competing with other students. She thinks that if students were educated more diligently, they could become more powerful. She illustrated that there is a study room inside the small mosque at SD Juara, and often this room must be shared with the public, who come for five-time daily prayers. This sometimes disrupts the students' concentration while they learn. She recommended SD to provide extra classrooms so that the students can concentrate and learn comfortably.

In parenting meetings, many parents stress grades based on hard work in addition to personal skills because, with these skills, the students will get jobs in the future. For a solution, she thinks there must be extra courses, and these should support assessment that mirrors the capacities of the students. In addition, she wants SD Juara to teach them diligently. About attitudes, Nada's mother believed that the school is on track because besides learning at the school, the students have the opportunity to go for trips, and the expenses are paid by the school. In addition, the school brings the students to the swimming pool. And often, when the holidays come, such as *Idul Fitr* and *Idul Adha*, the students usually receive a parcel and new clothing. Sometimes, however, they do not get any, and Nada's mother said her daughter did not receive such new clothing in 2015.

Respondent 5: Farida

Farida has three boys: Donni (10), Dhani (8), and the youngest who is a 3-year-old boy. Donni and Dhani study at SD Juara, and they are now in fourth and second grade, whereas the youngest does not go to school. Similar to other families, Donni and Dhani's mother took the opportunity to be observed by the school. Donni and Dhani also went through this process.

Farida completed elementary school, and she works as a homemaker. She sometimes designs *batik* for an employer and at minimum wage. Her husband completed junior high school and works as a stonemason with uncertain wages. When coming to their home for the interview, the researcher observed that their home was too small, given the fact that five persons live in two small rooms without any extra family space, such as a terrace or a living room. The bathroom and toilet, which are also used by other families, are located outside of the home. This rental house is located in densely populated area of Yogyakarta.

According to Farida, to better equip students with skills to understand the courses, SD Juara involves the students in extracurricular activities, such as the

Boy Scouts, which are imperative and held at school on Fridays, as well as playing soccer indoors. Students who do not play soccer can take part in other games and exercises. The students go for swimming once a month. Besides these physical activities, the students take part in arts such as painting, music, and *gamelan*.

There is a spiritual program, Qur'anic *tahfidz*, which they are involved in. According to Farida, her son Donni has memorized verses like *al-Fatihah* to *al-Ghaasyiyah*, and her son Dhani has memorized verses like *al-Fatihah* through *an-Nashr*. In class, the teachers are generous in guiding students, and their teaching is according to the level of students' capacities. Before starting the class, a guide teacher leads the students to do *dhuha* prayer, and then they study until 12.00 pm. Afterward they take a *zhuhur* prayer together until 12.30 pm.

Farida stated that her two sons have difficulties in understanding their courses. She helps them as much she can. Life is difficult for Farida, but she is happy with her sons' school as she confirmed:

I am happy with the free-tuition education, and I am happy with spiritual guidance which is given by the teachers here. My sons can read the Qur'an. There is also regular gathering for the parents, such as parenting and celebrating Islamic holidays such as *Idul Fitr* and *Idul Adha*. What I do like in the gathering is that I can share my concerns, and I am happy if these concerns are heard by some of the teachers. The gatherings sometimes takes place at school, two hours before the students go home.

With her children's education at SD Juara, she hopes that in the future, they will help the economy of the family, who are quite poor. She is happy that even though poor, her sons are educated on how to save and give alms. In general, she is satisfied with education at SD Juara, as well as with the logistics, and with their help for her children.

CONCLUSION

Education is beneficial for each individual to bring his or her best contributions, to attain satisfaction in their pursuits, and to preserve their own well-being. Free-tuition education is advantageous for the disadvantaged children because they lack financial and societal capacities. SD Juara came to Yogyakarta in last decade with the mission to educate urban children and help them to gain equal education rights, as many other children possess. The advantage of gaining free-tuition education from this school is that students may learn general courses as other

children at public elementary school do, and the children at SD Juara also attend the additional courses, such as Islamic teaching, prayers, and Qur'anic *tahfidz*.

The value of moral and societal guidance was also appreciated, especially when a student with a less competitive nature could be buoyed by teachers' kindness. The opportunity to participate in artistic and athletic activities was valued by parents who saw their children's skill and enjoyment increase. The opportunity to discuss parenting concerns with teachers and other parents at school gathering was another aspect appreciated by families of the students. On the other hand, some parents wondered if the instructional topics, the preparation for tests, and the preparation for higher educational levels were given enough time at school, as compared to moral education. Nonetheless, the free-tuition status offered more positives than negatives.

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