



Exploring the Impact of Parent Gathering Programs on Cultivating Religious Character in Early Childhood: A Case Study

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to investigate the positive impact of the parent gathering program implemented at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk on building children's religious character. The motivation for this study stems from the prevalent crisis in the country involving children, characterized by increasing violence, crime, and poor habits. Addressing these issues, the study explores the necessity of implementing a collaborative program between schools and parents to foster children's religious character.

Design/methods/approach – The study was conducted at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk using a qualitative research method presented in a narrative format. Data collection comprised observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was performed using the Miles and Huberman model.

Findings – The study revealed that the parent gathering program included three main components: workshops, socialization, and evaluation. The religious character education implemented encompassed routine activities, periodic activities, and teaching and learning activities. The program's benefits were observed in shaping effective parenting patterns and fostering in children an awareness of worship, faith, and good behavior.

Research implications/limitations – This research recognizes its scope limitations, focusing solely on the parent gathering program for new students.

Practical implications – The findings indicate that the parent gathering program is a valuable tool for building the religious character of early childhood, necessitating cooperation between the school and parents.

Originality/value – The implementation of the parent gathering program has shown effectiveness in nurturing religious character from an early age.

Keywords Parent gathering program, Religious character, Early childhood education

Paper type Case study

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1. Introduction

Early childhood development exhibits distinct growth patterns that are specific to each stage. The rapid physical and psychological growth during this period is of paramount importance (Miranti & Putri, 2021). Child growth and development vary across different stages and cannot be generalized (Ariyanti, 2016). Adequate education is essential for nurturing this growth and development. Early childhood education plays a crucial role in establishing the foundational aspects of a child's personality, preparing them for their future lives in line with the national education goals outlined in Law Number 20 of 2003, which emphasize the development of students to become individuals who are faithful, morally upright, healthy, knowledgeable, skilled, creative, independent, and responsible citizens.

The cultivation of good character requires early education, and character education for young children imparts values that will shape them in the long run. Schools, as important institutions following the family, contribute significantly to character development through character education processes. Zubaedi (2013) argued that strengthening character education is highly relevant and crucial in combating the moral crisis affecting our society. This crisis involves issues such as increasing violence among children and adolescents, peer crimes, theft, and various undesirable behaviors. There is a prevailing perception that these problems have roots in the educational system (Fitriyani, 2018). Current media reports also highlight ongoing crises in Indonesia, including cases of bullying, physical violence, cheating, and more. Isnaini (2013) research revealed signs of the nation's children losing their civility, including disrespectful interactions with teachers, parents, and peers, the use of inappropriate language, dishonesty, and a scarcity of noble virtues. Additionally, the current educational system tends to prioritize cognitive aspects over psychomotor skills, with teachers focusing more on academic content than on teaching ethical character traits (Kartika & Riyanto, 2020). Therefore, concerted efforts are necessary to address these issues and prevent them from becoming entrenched in children's behavior.

Religious values are one of the facets of character education. Religious character refers to values associated with the belief in a higher power, which is particularly significant in Indonesia, a predominantly religious country. Putry (2019) religious character plays a crucial role in building a strong character since the values derived from one's faith can serve as a motivating force for character development. Kurniawan et al., (2019) emphasized the importance of instilling religious character from a young age, as children are highly malleable and receptive to character-building efforts.

The cultivation of religious character through habituation and exemplarship is of paramount importance. Habituation, in this context, refers to activities undertaken to instill thinking, behavior, and actions in accordance with prevailing values. Habituation can occur both at school and at home. The goal is to imbue children with strong religious character within the home, school, and society. The roles of teachers and parents are crucial in training children to develop good habits. Collaboration between teachers and parents is essential for shaping character. Such collaboration involves teachers and parents working together to instill positive habits in young children. Implementing these positive habits requires cooperation with parents since children spend more time at home than at school (Maisaro et al., 2018). Therefore, teachers at schools should establish and maintain effective communication with parents, conduct briefings on programs designed to address issues affecting students in school. This form of communication is anticipated to support the religious character development of young children. One activity that can help harmonize the efforts of teachers and parents is the parent gathering program.

Parent gathering is a collaborative program between teachers and parents with the aim of enhancing knowledge and skills in educating and guiding children through each stage of their development. Parent gatherings, often referred to as Parent Meeting Groups, serve as a platform for parents and teachers to communicate the implementation of education for children aged 0-6 years, both at home and in school. The goal is to enhance knowledge, attitudes, and skills of children (Utami et al., 2022). Research conducted by Jasmana (2021) reveals that habituation activities can be repeated and conducted outside of regular learning hours, shaping children's

character in areas such as religiosity, honesty, responsibility, and discipline. Another study by Kartika & Riyanto (2020) indicates a positive relationship between parenting education and character education in young children. This suggests that implementing such programs with enthusiasm can have a positive impact on both children and parents, enhancing their understanding of effective parenting practices, particularly in character education.

An initial observation conducted at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk indicates that the institution prioritizes the development of religious character in children from an early age. This is evident from the achievements of its students in short letter competitions and memorization competitions at the district, provincial, and national levels. The institution has a program called "parent gathering" or meetings between parents and teachers. Parent gatherings at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk are managed through collaboration between teachers and the Parent-Student Association at all levels.

The parent gathering program at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk involves meetings between parents and teachers that go beyond simply distributing progress reports for children. The program includes providing materials to assist parents in continuing their child's learning activities at home. These activities may include religious practices, reciting prayers and short religious texts, and engaging in virtuous activities. The goal of the parent gathering program is to ensure that parents are aware of character education programs that align with the school's vision of nurturing a generation of Muslims with noble character, creativity, and independence. Parents are encouraged to continue the religious character education that the institution has programmed. The implementation of the parent gathering program at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk involves inviting competent speakers and practitioners in the field of early childhood character development to ensure that the activities are engaging and that the information provided is beneficial and applicable to participants' lives.

Based on the above presentation, the author is motivated to conduct further research on the parent gathering program implemented at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk for instilling religious character education in children. Understanding the implementation of this program and its positive effects on parents in cultivating the religious character of young children is essential.

2. Methods

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method with a case study approach to uncover the meaning behind the Parent Gathering program at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk in fostering religious character. The qualitative descriptive approach is a research method aimed at elucidating a social phenomenon with various interrelated research variables (Abdussamad, 2021). This study employs a qualitative descriptive method with a case study approach to uncover the meaning behind the Parent Gathering program at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk in fostering religious character. The qualitative descriptive approach is a research method aimed at elucidating a social phenomenon with various interrelated research variables (Miles et al., 2014) as depicted in Figure 1.

The qualitative data collected from various sources underwent a rigorous analytical process. This involved the following stages: Data Collection Data was collected through participant observation, interviews, and documentation. Participant observation allowed the researcher to immerse themselves in the Parent Gathering program at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk, gaining firsthand insights into its activities and interactions. Data Reduction: The collected data was systematically organized and condensed to extract essential information. This process involved the identification of recurring themes, patterns, and key concepts related to the Parent Gathering program and its role in nurturing religious character. Data Display: The condensed data was visually presented in the form of charts, tables, and diagrams to facilitate a deeper understanding of the findings. This stage aimed to make the data more accessible and comprehensible for analysis. Conclusion Drawing/Verification: Based on the organized and displayed data, conclusions and interpretations were drawn regarding the significance and effectiveness of the Parent Gathering program in instilling religious character in young children

at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk. These findings were then verified through comparisons with the original data and relevant literature.

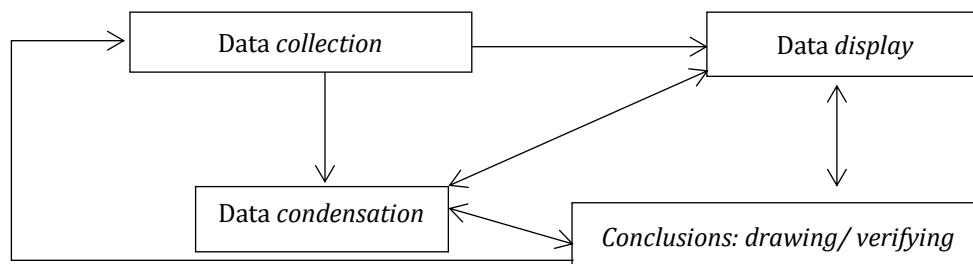


Figure 1. Data Analysis Process

3. Result

3.1. Implementation of the Parent Gathering Program at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk

The Parent Gathering program is one of the initiatives implemented at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk. This program invites all parents of Class A students to participate. The Parent Gathering program at TKIT Baitul Izzah is conducted approximately three times per semester. The activities are jointly organized by the Parent-Student Association (PSA) and the school, with collaboration between PSA and teachers. The Parent Gathering program at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk is managed separately by PSA for each educational level and school.

The first Parent Gathering program involves a workshop focused on instilling positive character habits. The second Parent Gathering, held in the following month, focuses on socialization, discussing the role of good parenting both at school and at home, as well as activities that support children's character development. The third Parent Gathering, conducted in the subsequent month, is an evaluation of the entire semester. The evaluation assesses both the children's progress and the parenting approaches applied by parents.

3.1.1. First Meeting: Workshop

One of the Parent Gathering programs organized by the educational institution for parents is a workshop held on Saturday, March 4, 2023. This event serves as a platform for parents to engage in discussions. The first Parent Gathering program of the second semester was the workshop, which took place in the Baitul Izzah Nganjuk hall and was attended by parents ranging from Kindergarten to High School levels. The session commenced at 08:00 AM local time. Mr. Arif, an expert in the field, was invited as the guest speaker for the workshop. The chosen topic for this workshop was "Building Positive Habits for Fostering Positive Character." During this event, parents received informative materials on how to cultivate positive character traits within their children's environment. Tips on how to appreciate and acknowledge children's good behavior within their surroundings were also provided. Mr. Arif delivered a comprehensive presentation on the topic of building positive character traits in children's environments.

Parents displayed high enthusiasm in participating in this program, especially with the presence of an expert speaker. The content presented during the workshop aligned with the current needs of children. The materials were well-received and efforts were made to implement them. The engaging presentation, coupled with the expertise of the speaker, captured the full attention of the audience, ensuring a fruitful discussion.

Interviews conducted with students' parents regarding their opinions on the parent gathering program that had been implemented at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk gave positive results to parents by knowing more about the characters that children should have or apply from an early age in the environment. Parents can also have an impact in educating good children. Workshop activities as preparation for parents in caring for their children in the future.

3.1.2. Second Meeting: Socialization

The second Parent Gathering program of the second semester was organized by TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk on Saturday, April 1, 2023. This Parent Gathering program focused on the school's

initiatives and children's development. The socialization session aimed to provide insight into parenting practices, children's progress, and school programs. The event featured guest speakers, including Mr. Imron, a psychologist from Kediri, and the head of KB TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk.

The event commenced at 08:00 AM local time and took place in the open area of TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk, with the participation of all parents. The first part of the discussion was led by Mr. Imron, the psychologist, who provided insights into identifying various parenting styles and effective methods for nurturing children's character. Following this, the school's program was presented by the Head of TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk, Mrs. Lastriningsih. The discussion included an introduction to the new school leadership and an examination of the school's vision and mission.

The Parent-Teacher Communication Book was highlighted as a collaborative tool used by teachers and parents to foster character development, including religious character, in children from an early age. Mrs. CL emphasized that the Communication Book served as a means for teachers and parents to communicate about their children's activities. It allowed parents to understand the activities that could be undertaken to instill religious character in their children. The school's head and teachers also conducted a review of the Communication Book. One aspect of the review focused on the implementation of the five daily prayers and whether they were practiced consistently. Subsequently, each class teacher distributed mid-semester reports on the children's progress to the parents.

Interviews conducted with Mrs. IH's parents in providing material for this meeting can provide an evaluation of the care that has been provided to support character in exemplifying good morals for children. Another opinion expressed by Mrs. CL was that with this second meeting, parents could provide self-awareness to care about school activities and also apply this at home.

3.1.3. Third Meeting: Evaluation

The third meeting of the Parent Gathering program at TKIT Baitul Izzah took place on Friday, June 23, 2023. This meeting was organized by the school and involved the school principal and teachers. The focus of the third meeting was to evaluate children's growth and parenting practices, in addition to distributing end-of-semester reports. The meeting began with an opening session, followed by discussions on evaluating children's development and parenting practices that had been monitored by teachers through home visits. The evaluations were based on the information recorded in the Communication Book, which was maintained by each parent.

During the third meeting, teachers aimed to provide guidance to parents, especially those of class A students. Despite the approximately three-week school break, parents were encouraged to remain consistent in implementing the character-building activities, including religious character, as outlined in the Communication Book. The implementation of the Parent Gathering program received positive feedback from parents who regularly attended these meetings at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk. Parents showed enthusiasm, particularly due to the presence of knowledgeable guest speakers. Despite the early morning schedule, parents made efforts to attend the Parent Gathering.

In the interview conducted with the parents, Mrs. IH explained that in the third meeting, the parent gathering program, namely evaluation, provides benefits for parents. The benefits provided after an evaluation are carried out by parents being able to anticipate what roles or actions should be taken for children so that their morals remain ingrained. Teachers provide evaluations so that parents care more about their children's growth and development. The goal is that the child's development can mature to move to the next level.

3.2. Implementation of Religious Character Education at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk

The implementation of religious character education at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk is carried out through routine activities, periodic events, and the teaching-learning process. The detailed explanation is as follows:

3.2.1. Routine Activities and Habits

Routine activities or habit-forming activities are conducted daily to instill religious character at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk. Observations revealed several activities that are integrated into the daily routine, coinciding with the regular teaching and learning activities. These routine activities aimed at fostering religious character include: Morning collective prayers before entering classrooms. Recitation of short surahs from the Quran. Group recitation of surahs and the reading of hadiths to support religious character development.

These routine activities take place in the morning, from 07:15 AM to 01:00 PM local time. The morning prayer is conducted in the school courtyard with the participation of all students and teachers. On Mondays, a morning ceremony and prayer are organized, with students lined up by gender and class level. Students then enter their classrooms to engage in recitation and Quranic studies in groups of 10-12 students. The learning activities continue with the memorization of surahs and the reading of hadiths, all of which contribute to the development of religious character in children.

Another aspect of character development at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk includes teaching students to wash their hands before snack time, recite prayers before and after meals, and line up by gender. After completing the morning recitations, students continue their learning activities, often with themes related to celestial objects created by Allah. To promote religious character, teachers encourage students to say "MasyaAllah" (a common expression of admiration) when observing the creations of Allah that benefit life. Lunchtime involves queuing up, reciting prayers before and after meals, and building character through shared activities. In addition to these activities, religious character education at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk includes daily Dhuhr (noon) prayers conducted at 12:00 PM. Teachers also distribute the Communication Book in the morning, which contains notes from teachers and serves as a guide for activities to be conducted at home in alignment with character-building goals.

3.2.2. Periodic Activities

Periodic activities at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk are conducted on a regular basis, whether weekly, per semester, or annually. These periodic activities play a significant role in shaping religious character at the school. For instance, every Friday morning, a charity activity takes place before classes commence. The purpose of this infaq activity at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk is to train students in giving to charity and fostering empathy towards others. Additionally, teachers organize the periodic Friday morning Dhuha prayer session, attended by all students.

Another recurring activity on Fridays is the "halaqah" or short study session, which lasts approximately 10-15 minutes and follows the Dhuha prayer. These sessions are led by teachers and cover various topics related to Islam, including the pillars of Islam, such as Hajj. The choice of Hajj as a topic aligns with the school's schedule and the significance of the Hajj season. Periodic activities, including Movie Time on Fridays, also contribute to religious character development at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk. During Movie Time, students learn about moral behavior, such as the importance of avoiding criticism, arrogance, and the value of honesty. In the pursuit of building religious character through periodic activities, TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk also conducts communal dhikr (remembrance of Allah) and observes significant religious events, including the commemoration of Isra' Mi'raj. The Isra' Mi'raj event is named "Pawai Ramadhan" at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk and serves as a combined celebration of entering the holy month of Ramadan and commemorating Isra' Mi'raj.

3.2.3. Teaching-Learning Activities

Religious character education at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk is further facilitated through the teaching-learning process, which is outlined in the curriculum and aligned with the school's vision and mission. For example, the school emphasizes good manners in eating and drinking. Students are trained to observe proper etiquette when eating, which includes beginning and ending meals with prayers and sitting while eating. Observations have shown that teachers consistently instill good manners, such as those related to eating and drinking, in students. This success in teaching and learning activities contributes significantly to the development of religious character in children. It is achieved through collaborative efforts between the school and parents at home.

As part of their efforts to build religious character, teachers often share stories with moral lessons before dismissal. For instance, teachers narrate the story of Prophet Yusuf being swallowed by a whale. This storytelling activity engages students in an interactive dialogue with the teacher, allowing for questions and answers. Through these stories, teachers convey moral messages to students, emphasizing that Allah always aids those who are obedient to Him.

3.3. Benefits Derived from the Implementation of the Parent Gathering Program in Cultivating Religious Character at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk

The cultivation of religious character in children is not an endeavor that can be accomplished in a short period but requires sustained efforts over an extended duration. It necessitates continuous reinforcement and cooperation among parents to instill religious values effectively. The implementation of the parent gathering program serves as a means to foster communication among parents, contributing to the development of religious character.

Mrs. CL emphasizes that active parent participation in these activities has helped her understand the appropriate parenting styles that can effectively nurture religious character in children. This collaborative effort between teachers and parents in the school environment, characterized by love and the application of knowledge obtained through the parent gathering program, is instrumental in shaping children's religious character. The practices established both at school and at home, such as regular prayer, prove to be beneficial to children. Mrs. CL's child, for instance, has embraced activities that promote religious character, including prayer and recitation of religious texts.

Mrs. IH provides another perspective, highlighting that the parent gathering program has facilitated her understanding of the role she should play as a parent. Initially facing challenges in managing her easily irritable child, the program implemented by TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk has enlightened her about the essential responsibilities of being a good parent and providing constructive activities for her child. Mrs. IH's active involvement in her child's learning of prayer at home is evident, showcasing her commitment to her child's development.

Mrs. WA, on the other hand, expresses her newfound comprehension of parenting and the importance of effective roles for both parents and teachers. She acknowledges that the parent gathering program has guided her in providing suitable upbringing and activities for her child to support religious character development. Despite her child's independence in performing activities such as prayer, recitation, and polite behavior, Mrs. WA continues to support her child by applying the knowledge gained from the parent gathering program. This dedication ensures that the principles learned in the program are consistently implemented at home.

4. Discussion

4.1. Implementation of the Parent Gathering Program at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk

Parenting is a form of educational effort carried out by families, utilizing available resources within the family and the learning environment. It serves as a means to enhance the quality of parents within the family environment (Lasmini et al., 2022). Parent gatherings serve as a platform for communication between parents and teachers with the aim of jointly encouraging parents to provide the best upbringing for their children. Parenting involves the overall interaction between parents and children, intending to stimulate various aspects of the child, including morality, knowledge, and values that parents deem most appropriate, ultimately aiming to raise independent, healthy, and well-rounded individuals (Yulianingsih et al., 2018).

The parent gathering program is expected to increase parents' awareness, knowledge, attitudes, and skills in providing early childhood education within the family environment. It also facilitates the exchange of information and strategies for child rearing (Kemendikbud, 2017). The involvement of parents in their child's education is vital, as it requires consistent support to achieve educational goals (Haryanti, 2017). Parents play a crucial role in a child's life, as their behavior influences the child's values, behavior, and future life patterns. Therefore, good parenting contributes to the development of a child's positive personality, and conversely, inadequate parenting can lead to negative outcomes (Sutanto & Andriani, 2019). Parents can

shape a child's character by demonstrating positive behavior within the family environment (Astuti, 2021).

Building communication between parents and teachers is an essential agenda at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk, both in the first and second semesters. This objective is realized through the school's parent gathering program, which is specifically designed for parents of Group A students at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk. In addition to introducing parents to the school environment, this program provides parents with new knowledge and insights while introducing the school's programs. The goal of the parent gathering program is to enhance parents' knowledge and capabilities to provide proper care and upbringing for their children. Effective parenting contributes to the creation of a nurturing family environment, fostering the development of religious character in children. In line with the findings of Anisa (2020), a positive family environment has a direct impact on a child's religious character development.

The implementation of parent gathering activities at TKIT Baitul Izzah, involving parents of Group A students, is organized into three sessions. The first session features a parenting workshop conducted by Mr. Arif. The workshop's content focuses on developing positive habits to foster positive character traits. The second session is led by Mr. Imron, a psychologist from Kediri, and Mrs. Lastriningsih, the school's principal. This session covers the socialization of parenting styles, child development, and the school's programs. The third session is conducted by the school's principal and teachers from TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk, addressing the evaluation of child development and parenting styles that have been in place for one semester. The active participation of parents is highly commendable. The presence of parents at the parent gathering program at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk facilitates effective communication and information dissemination from the school. Parents' attendance demonstrates their commitment to supporting the school in achieving optimal child development.

4.2. Implementation of Religious Character Education at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk

Religious character education plays a significant role in shaping individuals with noble morals, emphasizing the importance of religious values. Religiosity encompasses attitudes and behaviors that involve devotion to one's religion, tolerance of other religious practices, and a harmonious coexistence with other faiths (Sutarna, 2018). Strategies for instilling religious character in early childhood education, as proposed by the Directorate General of Early Childhood and Community Education (Dirjen PAUD dan Dikmas, 2019) are integrated into various activities, including daily routines, periodic activities, and enrichment activities.

The data collected from TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk regarding the implementation of religious character education reveals a seamless integration of these values into the school's planned activities. These activities encompass:

Routine Activities: These are daily practices designed to instill religious values in children. Akbar et al., (2019) emphasize the importance of daily routines in maximizing the growth of early-age children. Routine activities include greetings to teachers, prayers before commencing daily activities, and recitation of prayers throughout the day. Examples of routine activities that help build religious character at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk include morning prayers, reciting "MasyaAllah," "murojaah," Quranic recitation (mengaji), reading short surahs and hadiths, congregational Dhuhr prayers, performing ablution (wudhu), prayers before and after meals, teaching boys and girls to form orderly lines, and encouraging modesty and hijab among female students. Apart from the implementation of religious character education at TKIT Baitul Izzah, there are research results Hanafiah et al., (2022) explained that the routine activity before starting teaching and learning activities is to read the Al-Quran and Asmaul Husna which is expected for students to have better morals, with good morals students will be loved by Allah.

Periodic Activities: These activities are conducted at specific intervals and contribute significantly to character development. Periodic activities at the school include Friday offerings, small Islamic discussions on Fridays, the Dhuha prayer, movie sessions featuring stories of moral behavior or narratives of prophets, and the Ramadan parade. The Ramadan parade, held in anticipation of Ramadan and in commemoration of Isra' Mi'raj, involves various competitions for children, such as dressing in traditional sarongs and prayer garments.

Teaching and Learning Activities: Character education is seamlessly integrated into the school's curriculum through

planned teaching and learning activities. One approach involves teachers narrating stories to the students and engaging them in discussions.

Religious character education at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk focuses on several key aspects: Faith: Faith in Islam comprises the belief in one's heart regarding Allah as the obligatory deity to be worshipped, verbal expression through the Shahada, and righteous deeds (Syahrudin, 2019). Young children at TKIT Baitul Izzah are consistently taught to pray before engaging in any activity, be it before or after a lesson. Additionally, they are exposed to stories that explain the meanings of Islamic principles, such as the pillars of faith and the pillars of Islam. Small Islamic discussions are also conducted to foster a deeper understanding of Islamic values. Short films depicting the lives of prophets further enrich the educational experience, nurturing a sense of faith.

Worshi: Worship is an integral part of human life, especially for those who believe in and are devoted to God (Armadis et al., 2022). At the Early Childhood Education Institution, students are taught to perform the Dhuhr prayer in congregation daily, with Friday Dhuha prayers being a special highlight. Other practices include Quranic recitation, the reading of short surahs and hadiths. Teachers initiate the process by instructing children in proper ablution. Morality: Morality refers to moral behavior or conduct that stems from conscience, thoughts, feelings, and habits, forming a holistic and ingrained moral character that influences various actions (Ayu & Junaidah, 2019). The Early Childhood Education Institution instills good manners and etiquette in children as a daily practice. Children are taught to greet teachers and parents politely, including handshakes. They learn to eat and drink while seated, use their right hand when serving or consuming food, and practice charitable giving. The act of charity, or infaq, is encouraged, and children are taught to empathize with others. The school's teachers consistently remind children to begin every activity with the phrase "bismillah" (in the name of Allah) and conclude with "alhamdulillah" (praise be to Allah). Expressions of admiration, such as "MasyaAllah," are encouraged when encountering something beautiful or astonishing. While initially challenging for young children, these practices become ingrained in their memories and are eventually applied in their daily lives. The comprehensive integration of religious character education into the daily routines and activities at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk is instrumental in nurturing a strong foundation of faith, worship, and morality in its students. This approach ensures that children receive holistic character education and grow into individuals with strong moral values and a deep sense of spirituality.

4.3. The Benefits of Implementing the Parent Gathering Program in Cultivating Religious Character at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk

One of the approaches employed to cultivate religious character is through a family-based approach. This approach involves involving families as partners in the educational development of children within an institution (Adriana & Zirmansyah, 2021). In line with the findings of Arifin & Supraptiwi (2018) the family inn program or outing program attended by parents and children contributes positively to the effective implementation of character education, transforming values in the five characters of early-age children. Family involvement in early childhood education includes fostering religious character values within the family environment, serving as role models and educators, and providing motivation (Yuhana, 2022). One of the objectives of the Parent Gathering Program is to ensure that parents have a consistent understanding and knowledge in cultivating religious character. Actively participating parents in the program acquire broader knowledge. Competent parents can better comprehend proper parenting styles when interacting with their children at home, resulting in positive child development (Ngewa, 2019). A conducive family environment supports the cultivation of religious character in children.

Secondly, religious character education at home. Parents who have attended the Parent Gathering Program and received direct education also apply the knowledge gained from the speakers. Research result B. McNeal Jr (2014) suggests that parent and child involvement strategies consistently have a greater influence on student attitudes, behavior and achievement. Parents need to communicate with their children. Implementing this knowledge includes controlling emotions when dealing with their children. Parents' emotional control significantly

influences a child's social development (Fauziah et al., 2022). This development is contingent upon family readiness, which should serve as the primary socialization environment.

Parents, as participants in the Parent Gathering Program, are expected to carry out the tasks assigned by the school. Consequently, this indirectly leads to the alteration of previously unfavorable parenting practices within the home. Parents are tasked with reporting their child's activities daily through communication books. By conducting the Parent Gathering Program on-site at the school, teachers can also monitor parents' caregiving developments at home through home visits. The benefits of organizing parent gatherings at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk are instrumental in shaping the religious character of children from an early age. The increased understanding of proper caregiving leads to an enhanced awareness among parents, enabling them to employ appropriate parenting styles to guide and educate their children. In line with Yuhana (2022) a conducive family environment fosters children's comfort and supports their character development, resulting in individuals with virtuous character traits.

5. Conclusion

The implementation of the Parent Gathering program at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk includes sessions held during the second semester for Group A, where parents receive educational materials or knowledge in three meetings. The cultivation of religious character at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk integrates into three key activities: habituation, periodic activities, and teaching and learning. The religious character instilled comprises moral values, beliefs, and acts of worship. The benefits derived from the Parent Gathering program in shaping the religious character of early-age children at TKIT Baitul Izzah Nganjuk include parents improving their parenting practices, thereby creating a family environment conducive to nurturing the religious character of children. The application of knowledge gained by parents through parent gathering activities supports the formation of religious character in children, fostering awareness of worship, faith, and good behavior.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

Sindy Mey Dwi Utari conceived the idea, conducted data collection, and performed the analysis. Imron Arifin and Yudithia Dian Putra developed the theory of parenting, early childhood education. All authors engaged in discussions regarding the findings and made contributions to the final manuscript.

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Data availability statement

The dataset generated and analyzed during the research is available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.



Declaration of interests statement

All authors declare that they have no financial or personal interests that could influence the work presented in this manuscript.

Additional information

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