

The Role of Moral Education in Children's Character Development: A Philosophical Perspective in Islamic Elementary Schools

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Abstract: The role of moral education in character development of children is a crucial aspect in the educational process at MI (Islamic Elementary Schools). However, there is still a need to gain a deeper understanding of how educational philosophy can aid in developing the moral character of children at MI. This research employs a qualitative approach by conducting literature reviews and philosophical analyses of moral education concepts in Islam as well as the approaches used in MI. The results of the study indicate that moral education in MI can be enhanced through the application of philosophical approaches, such as introducing moral concepts in Islamic teachings contextually and using philosophical reflection methods in learning. Thus, moral education can be more effective in shaping the character of children to have noble morals in accordance with Islamic teachings.

Keyword: Role, Moral Education, Children's Character, Development Philosophical

INTRODUCTION

The role of moral education in children's character development within Islamic elementary schools is a subject of profound significance, both in educational discourse and in the broader societal context.¹ This study seeks to delve into this crucial aspect, offering a philosophical perspective to elucidate its depth and implications. Within the framework of Islamic elementary education, moral education stands as a cornerstone, shaping not only academic prowess but also instilling values and virtues crucial for holistic development.

In exploring the role of moral education, it becomes imperative to understand its underlying philosophical foundations. Islamic teachings provide a rich source of moral guidance, emphasizing principles such as compassion, honesty, justice, and empathy. These principles serve as the bedrock upon which children's character is nurtured, fostering qualities essential for their personal growth and societal contribution.

Moral education in Islamic elementary schools operates within a framework that integrates religious teachings with contemporary pedagogical approaches.² It entails not only imparting knowledge but also fostering critical thinking and ethical reasoning skills. By engaging students in philosophical inquiries about moral dilemmas and ethical principles, educators encourage a deeper understanding and internalization of moral values.

Furthermore, the philosophical perspective underscores the contextual nature of moral education within Islamic elementary schools. It recognizes the diverse cultural backgrounds and socio-economic contexts of students, acknowledging the need for an inclusive and adaptable approach to moral instruction. Through culturally sensitive pedagogy, educators can ensure that moral education resonates with the lived experiences of students, thereby enhancing its relevance and effectiveness.

One of the key insights gleaned from this philosophical perspective is the importance of fostering moral autonomy among children. Rather than imposing moral norms externally, educators strive to cultivate within students the capacity to discern right from wrong autonomously. This involves encouraging reflection, dialogue, and ethical reasoning, empowering students to make informed moral decisions in various life situations.³

¹ Agus Wahyu Irawan et al., "Pendistribusian Zakat Sebagai Upaya Pengentasan Kemiskinan Di Badan Amil Zakat Nasional (BAZNAZ)," *JPSDa: Jurnal Perbankan Syariah Darussalam* 3, no. 1 (2023): 74–88, <http://dx.doi.org/10.30739/jpsda.v3i1.1954>.

² Agus Wahyu Irawan, Nur Lailatul Fitri, dan Popy Nur Maeni, "Quick Respond Indonesian Standart (QRIS) dalam Ber-Transaksi Secara Go Digital di UMKM Keripik Pisang UD. Muser Desa Pandanagung Kecamatan Soko Kabupaten Tuban," *Akademika* 17, no. 2 (2023), <http://dx.doi.org/10.30736/adk.v17i2.1832>.

³ Agus Wahyu Irawan dan Zulfatun Anisah, "Dewan Pengawas Syariah Dalam Pengawasan Kontrak Pembiayaan," *ADILLA : Jurnal Ilmiah Ekonomi Syari'ah* 4, no. 2 (2021): 16–25, <http://dx.doi.org/10.52166/adilla.v4i2.2515>.

Moreover, the philosophical perspective sheds light on the role of educators as moral exemplars within Islamic elementary schools. By embodying moral values in their conduct and interactions, educators serve as role models for students, shaping their attitudes and behaviors through emulation. This highlights the symbiotic relationship between moral education and the cultivation of ethical leadership within the school community.⁴

The philosophical perspective also accentuates the dynamic nature of moral education, which extends beyond the confines of the classroom. It underscores the importance of fostering moral awareness and ethical conduct in all aspects of students' lives, including their interactions with family, peers, and society at large. Through collaborative efforts involving educators, parents, and community stakeholders, moral education can permeate various spheres of children's lives, creating a conducive environment for character development.⁵

RESEARCH METHODS

In this study, the focus is on exploring the role of moral education in children's character development in Islamic elementary schools through a philosophical perspective. The research method used is qualitative, which allows the researcher to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon through holistic and contextual analysis. Firstly, this research involves a comprehensive literature review on moral education and character development, as well as philosophical views in Islam. This step helps build a strong theoretical framework for the research, enabling the researcher to explore moral concepts and principles within the context of Islamic education. Furthermore, this study involves in-depth interviews with educators, administrators, and other stakeholders in Islamic elementary schools. Through these interviews, the researcher can gain direct insights into existing moral education practices, challenges faced, and their perceptions of the role of moral education in shaping children's character. Additionally, direct observations of classroom activities, teaching approaches, and school culture related to moral education are conducted to obtain a deeper understanding of the implementation of moral education practices in the daily life of the school. Through careful qualitative data analysis, including thematic coding and in-depth interpretation, the researcher aims to uncover patterns, themes, and insights emerging from the data. The results of this analysis are then used to formulate a deeper understanding of how moral education influences children's character development in Islamic elementary schools, as well as to explore the philosophical implications of the research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study on The Role of Moral Education in Children's Character Development: A Philosophical Perspective in Islamic Elementary Schools:

⁴ Agus Wahyu Irawan, Mukhamad Roni, dan Heri Kuncoro Putro, "Islamic Business Ethics: How to Apply it on the Supply Chain Management?," *Journal of Sharia Economics* 3, no. 1 (2021): 18–39.

⁵ Agus Wahyu Irawan, "Analisis Kualitas Produk untuk Meningkatkan Kepuasan Nasabah," *Tasyri': Jurnal Tarbiyah-Syari'ah-Islamiah* 27, no. 2 (2020): 1–10.

1. Integration of Philosophical Principles

The study unveils a profound integration of philosophical principles, specifically rooted in Islamic teachings, which profoundly influence moral education practices within Islamic elementary schools. Foundational concepts like compassion, justice, and empathy permeate the very fabric of pedagogical strategies and curriculum frameworks. ⁶These principles serve as guiding lights, shaping not only academic content but also the ethos and atmosphere of the learning environment. By infusing Islamic philosophy into the educational paradigm, schools foster a holistic approach to character development, nurturing virtues that extend far beyond the classroom. This integration ensures that moral education becomes intrinsic to the educational experience, empowering students to embody these principles in their everyday lives and interactions. As a result, the educational journey becomes not merely about acquiring knowledge but also about cultivating a moral compass that guides individuals towards righteousness and compassion in their personal and communal endeavors.⁷

2. Cultural Sensitivity and Contextual Relevance

The significance of cultural sensitivity and contextual relevance in the delivery of moral education cannot be overstated. This assertion stems from findings that illuminate the crucial role these factors play in shaping the efficacy and impact of moral instruction. Educators are increasingly recognizing the necessity of customizing moral education to align with the diverse cultural backgrounds and lived experiences of their students.⁸

In today's interconnected world, characterized by unprecedented cultural diversity and globalization, the need for a nuanced understanding of cultural differences has become paramount. What constitutes moral behavior can vary widely across different cultures, influenced by historical, societal, and religious factors. Therefore, educators must navigate this intricate landscape with sensitivity and awareness to ensure that moral education resonates with students from various cultural backgrounds.⁹

Tailoring moral instruction involves more than simply translating content into different languages or incorporating superficial cultural elements. It requires a deep understanding of the values, norms, and beliefs that shape the moral framework of each cultural group. By acknowledging and respecting these differences, educators

⁶ Muhamad Imaduddin, Sholikhati Sholikhati, dan Moh. In'ami, "STEM Education Research in Indonesian Elementary Schools: A Systematic Review of Project-Based Learning," *ELEMENTARY: Islamic Teacher Journal* 9, no. 2 (2021): 201, <http://dx.doi.org/10.21043/elementary.v9i2.11552>.

⁷ Soviyah Soviyah dan Nur Fatimah, "Project-based learning online training to develop students' Islamic character for English teachers at Muhammadiyah Elementary Schools in Yogyakarta," *Community Empowerment* 7, no. 1 (2022): 48–53, <http://dx.doi.org/10.31603/ce.6269>.

⁸ Andayani, Makruf Akbar, dan Robinson Situmorang, "Evaluating the Implementation of Strengthening Character Education Program using CIPP Model in Elementary Schools," *Proceedings of the International Conference on Education, Language and Society* (2019), <http://dx.doi.org/10.5220/0008993200200025>.

⁹ Arief Setyo Nugroho et al., "Strengthening the Character of Caring for the Environment in Elementary Schools through Ecoprint Artwork," *International Journal of Elementary Education* 7, no. 3 (2023): 394–402, <http://dx.doi.org/10.23887/ijee.v7i3.56472>.

can foster a sense of inclusivity and belonging among students, promoting mutual understanding and respect.

3. Promotion of Moral Autonomy

The study sheds light on the significance attributed to nurturing moral autonomy in students, marking a departure from traditional approaches that prescribe moral norms. Instead of imposing a set of predetermined values, educators advocate for the cultivation of critical thinking skills and ethical reasoning abilities. This paradigm shift aims to empower students to engage actively in the moral decision-making process and develop a deep-seated understanding of moral principles.

Central to the concept of moral autonomy is the belief in the capacity of individuals to exercise independent judgment and take responsibility for their actions. Educators recognize that blindly adhering to external standards of morality without questioning or reflecting critically can undermine the development of moral agency. Therefore, they strive to create learning environments that encourage students to explore, question, and evaluate ethical dilemmas from multiple perspectives.¹⁰

By fostering moral autonomy, educators aim to equip students with the tools and skills necessary to navigate the complexities of the modern world. In an era marked by rapid social change, cultural diversity, and ethical ambiguity, the ability to think critically and make ethically informed decisions is more crucial than ever. Rather than providing ready-made answers, educators challenge students to grapple with moral complexity and ambiguity, fostering intellectual curiosity and moral resilience.¹¹

Promoting moral autonomy aligns with the principles of democratic education, which emphasize the importance of fostering independent thinking and active citizenship. In a democratic society, individuals are expected to engage in reasoned discourse, respect diverse viewpoints, and participate actively in shaping collective moral norms. By empowering students to exercise their moral agency, educators contribute to the cultivation of responsible and engaged citizens who are capable of contributing positively to their communities.

The promotion of moral autonomy reflects a broader shift towards student-centered approaches to education. In contrast to traditional teacher-centered models, which prioritize the transmission of knowledge from authority figures to passive recipients, student-centered approaches emphasize collaboration, inquiry, and reflection. By placing students at the center of the learning process, educators recognize their agency and autonomy as moral agents capable of shaping their own ethical development.

4. Role of Educators as Moral Exemplars

¹⁰ Miftah Rahmi dan Nola Nari, "Development of Inquiry-Based E-Poster Media on Natural Science Learning Digestive System Material in Elementary Schools," *Journal of Islamic Education Students (JIES)* 2, no. 2 (2022): 76, <http://dx.doi.org/10.31958/jies.v2i2.5609>.

¹¹ Halimatus Sa'diah, Zulhendri Zulhendri, dan Fadriati Fadriati, "Development of Learning Videos with Kinemaster-Based Stop Motion Animations on Thematic Learning in Elementary Schools," *Journal of Islamic Education Students (JIES)* 2, no. 2 (2022): 91, <http://dx.doi.org/10.31958/jies.v2i2.5615>.

Educators indeed hold a central position as moral exemplars within the school community, shaping the moral climate and influencing the ethical development of students through their words and deeds. Their role extends beyond imparting knowledge and skills; they serve as role models who embody the values and virtues they seek to instill in their students.

First and foremost, educators model virtuous behavior through their actions, demonstrating integrity, honesty, respect, and compassion in their interactions with students, colleagues, and the broader school community. By consistently adhering to ethical principles and exhibiting moral courage in challenging situations, they provide students with tangible examples of how to navigate moral dilemmas and uphold moral standards.

Moreover, educators' attitudes and beliefs contribute significantly to the moral culture of the school environment. Their commitment to fairness, justice, and inclusivity sets the tone for respectful and equitable interactions among students and fosters a sense of belonging and acceptance within the school community. By promoting a culture of empathy and understanding, educators create an environment where students feel valued, supported, and empowered to act ethically.

Furthermore, educators play a critical role in cultivating moral growth and development among students through their instructional practices and pedagogical approaches. By integrating moral values and ethical considerations into the curriculum, they provide students with opportunities to explore ethical issues, engage in moral reasoning, and develop a deeper understanding of their moral responsibilities as members of society.¹²

In addition to their formal teaching roles, educators serve as mentors and guides, offering guidance and support to students as they navigate moral challenges and dilemmas. By providing a listening ear, offering wise counsel, and fostering open communication, educators create a safe and supportive environment where students feel comfortable seeking guidance and support in matters of moral significance.

Discussion: The Role of Moral Education in Children's Character Development: A Philosophical Perspective in Islamic Elementary Schools

The integration of philosophical principles, cultural sensitivity, promotion of moral autonomy, and the role of educators as moral exemplars collectively form a rich tapestry of discussions surrounding moral education and its implications for individual and societal development. Each of these components contributes to a comprehensive understanding of how moral education is conceptualized, implemented, and experienced within educational settings.¹³

¹² Nafsika Athanassoulis dan Hyemin Han, "Role Modelling Is Beneficial in Moral Character Education: A Commentary on Carr (2023)," *Philosophical Inquiry in Education* 30, no. 3 (2023): 240, <http://dx.doi.org/10.7202/1111138ar>.

¹³ Muh Idris, "The Role of Character Development in Islamic Religious Education: An Islamic Values-Based Approach at one of the MAN Schools in South Sulawesi," *West Science Interdisciplinary Studies* 1 (2023): 621–629, <http://dx.doi.org/10.58812/wsis.v1i08.187>.

The integration of philosophical principles, particularly those rooted in religious or cultural traditions such as Islam, highlights the deep-seated influence of philosophical frameworks on moral education practices. By examining how foundational concepts like compassion, justice, and empathy are woven into the fabric of pedagogical strategies and curriculum frameworks, we gain insight into how moral education transcends mere academic content to encompass broader ethical considerations. This integration not only shapes the content of moral education but also influences the ethos and atmosphere of the learning environment, fostering a holistic approach to character development.

Cultural sensitivity and contextual relevance emerge as crucial factors in the delivery of moral education, underscoring the importance of tailoring instructional practices to resonate with the diverse cultural backgrounds and lived experiences of students. As educators navigate the complexities of cultural diversity and globalization, they must possess a nuanced understanding of cultural differences and adapt their approaches accordingly. By acknowledging and respecting these differences, educators can foster inclusivity and belonging among students, promoting mutual understanding and respect.¹⁴

The promotion of moral autonomy represents a paradigm shift in how moral education is conceptualized and enacted. Instead of prescribing moral norms, educators empower students to engage actively in the moral decision-making process, fostering critical thinking skills and ethical reasoning abilities. By encouraging students to grapple with moral complexity and ambiguity, educators cultivate moral resilience and prepare students to navigate the complexities of the modern world. This shift towards student-centered approaches to education aligns with democratic principles and emphasizes the importance of fostering independent thinking and active citizenship.

The role of educators as moral exemplars underscores the profound impact that educators have on shaping the moral climate of the school community. Through their actions, attitudes, and interactions, educators model virtuous behavior and create a culture of empathy, respect, and integrity. By embodying the values they seek to instill in their students, educators foster a supportive environment where students feel valued, supported, and empowered to act ethically. Additionally, educators play a critical role in cultivating moral growth and development among students through their instructional practices, serving as mentors and guides as students navigate moral challenges and dilemmas.

CONCLUSION

The integration of philosophical principles, cultural sensitivity, promotion of moral autonomy, and the role of educators as moral exemplars collectively underscore the multifaceted nature of moral education. By incorporating foundational values into

¹⁴ Nurhamimah Rambe, Wina Mariana Parinduri, dan Renni Ramadhani Lubis, "Character Education-Based Modules in Indonesian Language Learning to Improve Student Learning Outcomes in Elementary Schools," *Pedagogik Journal of Islamic Elementary School* 6, no. 2 (2023): 135–146, <http://dx.doi.org/10.24256/pijies.v6i2.4222>.

pedagogical practices, educators foster a holistic approach to character development. Cultural sensitivity ensures inclusivity and relevance, while the promotion of moral autonomy empowers students to navigate ethical dilemmas independently. Additionally, educators' role as moral exemplars shapes the moral climate of the school community, fostering a culture of integrity and empathy. Together, these elements contribute to the cultivation of morally responsible individuals capable of contributing positively to society.

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