

The Role of Teachers in Shaping Children's Character to Prevent Bullying at RA At-Taqwa, Jepara Kulon, Cilacap

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Abstract: *Character education in early childhood has an important role in shaping positive social behavior and preventing bullying. This study aims to examine the role of teachers in shaping children's character to prevent bullying at RA At-Taqwa Jepara Kulon, Cilacap Regency. The approach used was qualitative with a case study, involving observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. The results of the study showed that teachers at RA At-Taqwa act as role models, facilitators, and providers of reinforcement of character values through fun learning and social reflection. In addition, social emotional activities such as storytelling, playing together, and role play are integrated into learning to instill the values of empathy, tolerance, and cooperation. The implementation of a child-friendly school culture, such as 5S and a peace corner, also contributes to creating a safe environment and supporting bullying prevention. However, the challenges faced include differences in family backgrounds and limited parental support. This study suggests that teachers continue to develop character-based learning methods consistently and strengthen collaboration with parents and schools to create an environment that supports bullying prevention in schools.*

Keywords: *Teachers, Childhood, Role, Education, Intimidation*

Abstrak: Pendidikan karakter pada anak usia dini memiliki peran penting dalam membentuk perilaku sosial yang positif dan mencegah tindakan bullying. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peran guru dalam membentuk karakter anak untuk mencegah bullying di RA At-Taqwa Jepara Kulon, Kabupaten Cilacap. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan studi kasus, yang melibatkan observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan studi dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru di RA At-Taqwa berperan sebagai teladan, fasilitator, dan pemberi penguatan nilai-nilai karakter melalui pembelajaran yang menyenangkan dan refleksi sosial. Selain itu, kegiatan sosial emosional seperti bercerita, bermain bersama, dan role play diintegrasikan dalam pembelajaran untuk menanamkan nilai empati, toleransi, dan kerja sama. Penerapan budaya sekolah ramah anak, seperti 5S dan pojok damai, juga berkontribusi dalam menciptakan lingkungan yang aman dan mendukung pencegahan bullying. Meski demikian, tantangan yang dihadapi termasuk perbedaan latar belakang keluarga dan keterbatasan dukungan orang tua. Penelitian ini menyarankan agar guru terus mengembangkan metode pembelajaran berbasis karakter secara konsisten dan memperkuat kolaborasi dengan orang tua serta pihak sekolah untuk menciptakan lingkungan yang mendukung pencegahan bullying di sekolah.

Kata Kunci: Guru, Masa Kecil, Peran, Pendidikan, Intimidasi

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is the main foundation in the formation of a child's personality and character. At this time, moral, social, and emotional values begin to be intensively instilled. In this context, Raudhatul Athfal (RA) has a very important role, not only as a formal educational institution for early childhood, but also as a vehicle for character formation. One of the serious challenges that need to be anticipated as early as possible in the RA environment is bullying behavior, which although more often associated with elementary and secondary school age, has also been found in the social interactions of early childhood in verbal, physical, and emotional forms.

Bullying is one category of cases that often occur in the school environment, and in every school there should be a teacher or certain party who is tasked with handling these cases. (Aarif Rahmaan et al., 2024). The phenomenon of bullying that appears at an early age is often not recognized directly because its form is not always explicit, such as refusal to play, teasing, or exclusion from the group. However, the impact can be very detrimental to the child's psychosocial development. Children who are victims of bullying can experience decreased self-confidence, anxiety disorders, and even social trauma. Therefore, preventing bullying from an early age is very important.

Teachers as the main figures in the education process at RA have a role in creating a safe and child-friendly learning environment. Not only acting as teachers, teachers also function as guides, facilitators, and role models in implementing positive character values such as empathy, tolerance, cooperation, and respect. Through a character-based learning approach, teachers can internalize these values into daily activities in the classroom, both directly and indirectly. RA At-Taqwa Jepara Kulon, Cilacap Regency, is one of the early childhood education institutions that strives to implement character education in an integrated manner in its curriculum. With this background, this study aims to explore more deeply the role of teachers at RA At-Taqwa in shaping children's character and preventing bullying in the school environment.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of understanding in depth the role of teachers in shaping children's character in order to prevent bullying at RA At-Taqwa Jepara Kulon, Cilacap Regency. (Sugiyono, 2017). This approach was chosen because it is appropriate for exploring the meaning, understanding, and strategies applied by teachers in the real context of school life. The location of the study was at RA At-Taqwa Jepara Kulon, an early childhood education institution located in Jepara Kulon Village, Binangun District, Cilacap Regency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of research conducted at RA At-Taqwa Jepara Kulon, Cilacap Regency, it was found that teachers have an important role in shaping children's character to prevent bullying. This role is realized through various activities that are integrated into learning activities and daily life in the school environment. Teachers act as educators who not only transfer knowledge, but also instill moral values in children. Values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, tolerance, and cooperation are inserted into various subjects and in daily interactions. Through moral stories, educational games, and group discussions, teachers guide children to understand the importance of being kind to others. In addition to being educators, teachers also function as mentors who always provide direction and solutions when conflicts occur between children. Teachers actively observe children's interactions and immediately take coaching action if signs of aggressive or impolite behavior are seen. Coaching is carried out with a persuasive approach, inviting children to understand the impact of their behavior on their friends, and teaching them how to interact more positively. Teachers also serve as role models in every behavior at school. The polite, patient, fair and loving attitude shown by teachers is a real example for children to emulate. With consistent positive behavior from teachers, children learn from real experience how to be kind to others.

In an effort to strengthen character education, teachers not only focus on activities in the classroom, but also actively build communication with parents. Through regular meetings, individual consultations, and communication media such as WhatsApp groups, teachers invite parents to collaborate in instilling character values at home. By building a good communication network, all parties can support each other in handling bullying cases. For example, schools can involve parents in bullying prevention programs and provide information about how to report bullying incidents. (Alkahfi R, et al, 2024). Continuity of character education between home and school has been proven to accelerate the formation of positive attitudes in children. Overall, the research results show that the consistent implementation of the teacher's role in educating, guiding and providing an example has succeeded in reducing the potential for bullying in the RA At-Taqwa environment. Children show more empathetic behavior, are able to resolve conflicts peacefully, and form harmonious social relationships with their peers.

Overview of RA At-Taqwa Jepara Kulon, RA At-Taqwa is an Islamic-based early childhood education institution located in Jepara Kulon Village, Binangun District, Cilacap Regency. This institution carries the vision of forming a generation with noble morals through an integrated thematic learning approach integrated with religious values and character. This RA has three study groups with a total of 35 children. The educators have a BA in PAUD and have participated in the Independent Curriculum and Islamic Value-Based Character Education training.

Forms of Bullying Actions that Emerge

Based on the results of observations and interviews, the forms of behavior that are included in bullying in early childhood at RA At-Taqwa include: (a) Verbal bullying: children tease friends' names or physical appearance such as "short", "fat", or "black" (b) Mild physical bullying: such as grabbing toys, pushing, pinching while playing (c) Relational bullying: repeatedly refusing to play with certain friends and influencing other friends not to invite. Teachers realize that this form of bullying is not yet extreme, but if not prevented early on, it will form an aggressive interaction pattern and affect the formation of children's character.

Teacher Strategies in Shaping Children's Character, teachers at RA At-Taqwa implement character education strategies with direct and indirect approaches, including: (a) Values Habits Teachers routinely get children used to: Saying hello, please, sorry, and thank you, Taking turns when playing and sharing stationery, Helping friends who are crying or in trouble. (b) Attitude Models: Teachers become models of friendly, patient, and fair attitudes in interacting, and avoid harsh responses when facing conflicts between children. (c) Value-Based Thematic Activities: Daily activities such as "role playing" are used to instill attitudes of mutual help, honesty, and tolerance. For example, in the theme "Me and New Friends", children are trained to welcome and accept friends who have just entered the class. (d) Emotional Communication: Teachers routinely reflect with children to discuss their feelings, and introduce positive ways to respond to conflict.

The Role of Teachers in Preventing Bullying, teachers have a key role in preventing bullying through various approaches: (a) Early Detection: Teachers observe children's interaction patterns and note children who show tendencies of dominance or withdrawal. This is the basis for early intervention. (b) Restorative Approach: Instead of giving punishment, teachers guide children who bully to apologize and understand the impact of their actions through simple discussions. (c) Collaboration with Parents: Teachers invite parents to discuss children's social development and align character building approaches between home and school. (d) Strengthening a Positive School Climate or Atmosphere: RA At-Taqwa builds a loving learning environment by avoiding competition that highlights one child, and instead encourages collaboration and collective appreciation.

These findings support the study by Harmilasari & Nugrahini (2021) which emphasizes the importance of character building in overcoming bullying in elementary schools, and extends it to the context of early childhood. The strategies used at RA At-Taqwa are in accordance with the character-based prevention approach as explained by Rizqi et al. (2024) and Pratiwi et al. (2025), namely through role models, strengthening social values, and experiential learning. teachers at RA At-Taqwa also apply the principle of "education from the heart" as developed by Arsyad & Yulius (2024), where character education is not just a transfer of knowledge but the development of healthy emotions and social relationships.

The role of teachers in preventing bullying is proven not only through behavioral interventions, but also through the formation of a value system

embedded in learning activities and daily interactions. Thus, it can be concluded that the role of teachers in shaping children's character is very important in efforts to prevent bullying in the RA environment. The implementation of systematic, consistent, and role model-based character education is the main key to creating a safe, comfortable school environment that supports children's social-emotional development.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research that has been conducted, it can be concluded that the role of teachers in shaping children's character at RA At-Taqwa Jepara Kulon is very important in efforts to prevent bullying from an early age. Teachers not only function as learning facilitators, but also as role models and moral educators who have a major influence on the formation of children's social values. The strategies used by teachers include habituating positive values, being exemplary in behavior, implementing character-based thematic activities, and an empathetic emotional communication approach. In preventing bullying, teachers conduct early detection of children's aggressive behavior, apply a restorative approach to resolving conflicts, and establish close cooperation with parents. Intensive communication with parents also strengthens efforts to form this character, so that value education does not only take place at school, but also continues at home. Consistency in implementing character education has proven effective in reducing the potential for bullying behavior in the RA environment.

Children show development in their ability to socialize positively, respect others, and are able to resolve conflicts in peaceful ways. In line with these findings, some suggestions that can be given are as follows. First, teachers need to continue to improve their competence in character education through relevant training and professional development. Second, there needs to be a more intensive cooperation program between schools and parents to ensure the continuity of the character values taught. Third, schools can develop supporting programs such as extracurricular activities based on moral and social values to enrich children's learning experiences in building positive character. Finally, there is a need for periodic evaluation efforts on the implementation of character education to ensure that the goal of creating a safe and bullying-free school environment is still achieved. Thus, the active and collaborative role between teachers, parents, and all elements of the school is the key to success in building a young generation with strong character and noble personality. A supportive school environment, with programs that promote positive values, tolerance, and empathy, is also an important factor.

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