

IMPLEMENTATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS CHARACTER EDUCATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION THROUGH HABITUATION

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Abstract: *The amount of waste in Indonesia continues to increase every year, which causes pollution and environmental damage. Garbage scattered everywhere will have a bad impact on living things, for human health. This study was conducted to examine the influence of the implementation of environmental awareness character education through habituation on environmental awareness attitudes in early childhood education. The method carried out in this research was a descriptive method with a case study design. The sample in the study was 3 teachers, 12 group A students, and 6 group B students. The data collection techniques used are interviews, observations, and documenting activities that implement environmental awareness characteristics. The results showed that the habituation of environmental awareness was implemented by: 1) storing shoes and bags in lockers; 2) hand washing; and 3) disposing of garbage in its place. This habituation is supported by teachers as role models for children in applying environmental awareness attitudes. The implication of this study is to increase awareness of environmental awareness through environmental awareness character education in early childhood through habituation.*

Keywords: *Character Education, Early Childhood, Environmental Awareness Character, Habituation*

A. Introduction

The issue of landfills in Indonesia has always been a hot topic. Based on data obtained by the National Waste Management Information System (SIPSN) by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK), waste generation in Indonesia in 2022 will reach 19.45 million tons. When viewed by its type, food waste reaches up to 41.55% of the total amount of waste, and 18.55% is plastic waste (Annur, 2023). From this data, Indonesia entered the ranks of the largest producers of plastic waste and food waste in Indonesia.

The generation of waste that cannot be handled properly will hurt Indonesian society. The amount of waste that continues to increase is difficult to accommodate; eventually, it will be scattered everywhere and cause environmental pollution (Masykuroh & Wahyuni, 2023). Environmental pollution that occurs will cause problems for environmental sustainability and create a nest of diseases (Ismail, 2021). This proves people's indifference to environmental cleanliness.

The environmental damage caused by garbage is not to be taken lightly. There must be effective prevention to reduce the impact that this garbage brings. One of them is by cultivating an attitude of awareness for the environment. Awareness of the environment is defined as an action or effort to prevent damage to the surrounding natural environment and to continue to develop all forms of efforts to repair the consequences of environmental damage that has occurred (Purwanti, 2017). However, environmental awareness and character education cannot be done instantly because the results will not be maximized. It would be better if it were done from an early age; it has been instilled with the character values of environmental awareness both in the family and school environment (Jayawardana, 2016). Thus, the cultivation of environmental awareness character needs to be done with environmental awareness character education at the education level, starting with children in Early childhood education.

The application of habituation in environmental awareness character education modeled in early childhood will form a good personality in children. The habit of children who have started

to awareness of the environment from an early age is an early prevention of environmental damage (Ashuri et al., 2021). When children already have environmental awareness, it will create a comfortable school environment and a respectful relationship between fellow school residents (Sitti Hasnidar, 2019). Therefore, environmental awareness and character education need to be provided from an early age.

But, what happens is just a theory. Lack of implementation in the community is still one of the important causes of waste accumulation in the environment. This could be due to the lack of environmental awareness education implemented in schools. The form of environmental awareness character education is only limited to the habit of throwing garbage in its place, but it is not strengthened by the cooperation of parents and the condition of the home environment and children's play environment. This happens because there are no strict rules in the community regarding violations of littering and people's habits of littering. Parents' awareness of instilling children's environmental awareness character is still low because of these habits. This condition is currently happening at TKQ Little Stars, Gedebage District, Bandung City.

Research conducted by (Cahyani and Joko Raharjo, 2021), states that the inhibiting factors of the process of implementing character education through habituation are one of the children's environmental factors that can have a major influence on the formation of children's character. Although schools and families have succeeded in helping children's character, but not supported by the environment around the child, which will have a negative influence on the formation of children's character. Similar research has been conducted by (Rahmani and Rahiem, 2023), in Raudhatul Athfal, stating that the habituation carried out by teachers has not focused on problem-solving activities that can stimulate children to think critically about environmental problems around them.

The novelty of this research is to analyze the causes of the lack of implementation of environmental awareness in society. This research is expected to contribute to shaping the character of environmental awareness in early childhood through habituation. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to see the

results and impact of the implementation of environmental awareness character education through habituation on students at TKQ Little Stars.

B. Method

This research was conducted using a descriptive method with a case study design. The reason for choosing this design is because it is considered appropriate in proving the relationship between environmental awareness and character education provided early on and the reality that occurs in society.

This research was conducted at TKQ Little Stars, Gedebage District, Bandung City, in the odd semester of the 2023/2024 school year. The subjects of this study were principals, teachers, and students of groups A and B. The principal is a teacher and homeroom teacher at TKQ Little Stars. Parents are not the subject of research because it is difficult to cooperate with and lack research time. The focus of the research was the implementation of character education, which focused only on the character of environmental awareness carried out by teachers towards students. The focus of the research is the implementation of character education, which is focused only on the character of environmental awareness carried out by teachers towards students. The focus of the research is the implementation of character education, which is focused only on the character of environmental awareness carried out by teachers for students at TKQ Little Stars through habituation.

The data collection techniques used in this research are interviews, observation, and documentation. In the interview, the researcher made direct contact with the data source, namely three teachers according to the sample criteria, by holding a question and answer session for 10-15 minutes. In observation, the researcher is directly involved with the data source and directly observes the process of habituation of environmental awareness character education implemented at TKQ Little Stars. Furthermore, the data collection process will be documented in the form of photographs of habituation activities.



Figure 1. Research steps

Source : (Thalib, 2022)

Data analysis uses the Miles and Huberman model (Thalib, 2022). The data analysis process is carried out interactively and iteratively. Data analysis is divided into three stages: 1) data reduction by summarizing, determining the main things, and focusing on the important things. 2) The results of data reduction are presented in narrative form. 3) concluding the results of the data in the form of descriptions based on the findings obtained.

To maintain the validity of qualitative research data, it is important to use triangulation by comparing and confirming results from various data sources, such as observations, interviews, or document analysis. In addition, in carrying out method triangulation, various data collection methods are used such as interviews, observation, and document analysis to obtain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study. After that, compare the findings from various methods to get a more complete and comprehensive view.

C. Result and Discussion

Character Education for Environmental Awareness in Early Childhood

Early childhood is a phase of growth and development that develops very rapidly and cannot be repeated in adulthood. This

period is often known as the 'Golden Age', which explains that at this time the child will more quickly absorb the knowledge gained through his observations of the surrounding environment. Based on the results of their observations, children will responsively imitate what they have seen and heard, both positive and negative. This will shape the child's character. So, in this phase, children need to be given positive knowledge to form good character through character education.

Character education is an effort that has been systematized, planned, and carried out consciously to foster social sensitivity and responsibility, build emotional intelligence, and form highly ethical individuals (Harahap, 2021). Character education can also be interpreted as a conscious and planned effort to do something good and love goodness that can be developed into a positive character and noble morals that can be applied in everyday life (Devianti et al., 2020). Thus, through the process of character education, it will produce individuals who have good character.

Character education needs to be given early because children are in a golden period and this period will determine their quality later when they grow up (Sari & Nofriadi, 2019). At an early age, the level of intelligence that has occurred reaches 50%, which explains that at this time the child will very easily absorb the knowledge provided (Prawinda et al., 2023). So, character education is important to be given early to get better and optimal results. By the statement from G1, "Character education is the same as a dab education, and the process takes a long time, so it is necessary to provide education early in the golden age period where children absorb the knowledge given more quickly". Character education provided from an early age will be sustainable if parents, teachers, schools, and communities can be role models and provide a good environment for children because what shapes children is not due to genes but also the environment, which is equally important in the development of children's character.

Environmental Awareness Character in Early Childhood

Environmental awareness is an attitude or action that is expected to increase awareness of the importance of environmental

cleanliness (Sitti Hasnidar, 2019). The attitude of environmental awareness needs to be instilled in every individual to prevent environmental damage and overcome the impact of damage to the natural environment that has occurred.

The purpose of environmental character education is to form students' habits to manage the surrounding environment, avoid all forms of behavior that can damage the environment, increase awareness of the environment, build an awareness and responsible spirit for the environment, and students can become an example of environmental saviors for anyone and wherever they are. To achieve the goals of environmental education, teachers must design activities with a routine and planned approach, and provide stimulus that is carried out continuously (Priska, 2020). This statement is in line with the answer from G2, namely "In shaping children's character, as a teacher, you must not get bored and tired of repeating good habits to children or students".

Environmental awareness must be implemented by every school at various levels of education. Environmental character education is the main effort to prevent environmental damage. The implementation of environmental awareness character education cannot be done instantly because the results will not be maximized. It would be better if it were done from an early age; the values of environmental awareness have been instilled both in family and school (Rahmani & Rahiem, 2023).

Based on a statement from G1, the form of environmental awareness character that emerges in children starts with personal hygiene. "The character that appears in children is that children are aware of their cleanliness and maintain the cleanliness of the surrounding environment, both at home, school, and play. One example of children's character awareness of the environment is that children are accustomed to throwing garbage in its place, cleaning up after eating, and tidying up toys. In line with the statement from G1, G2 also stated that the attitude of environmental awareness is seen in children, namely "Children show their concern for the environment that is close to them, such as cleanliness and maintaining it, starting from themselves and the surrounding environment".

Character Education for Environmental Awareness Through Habituation

Character education through the habituation method can be said to be effective in shaping children's moral and social aspects of behaving and speaking well (Khofifah & Mufarochah, 2022). To achieve optimal results, character education through habituation needs to be harmonized with the example of educators, all school residents, and parents at home (Hidayah & Ahyani, 2021). The attitude of awareness for the environment can be applied at school, namely by throwing garbage in its place, washing hands, keeping the school environment clean, and bringing food containers and drinking bottles (Yudianti, 2020).

Environmental character education at TKQ Little Stars does not have a specific sub-theme, but teachers apply it to the theme 'My Environment'. In this theme, teachers teach children to awareness of the surrounding environment by always maintaining the cleanliness of the surrounding environment, such as homes, schools, and children's playgrounds. One of the activities is carried out through the methods of discussion, lectures, telling stories, and making works related to the environment around the child. In addition, in the theme of myself, children are taught to maintain personal hygiene by diligently bathing, brushing teeth, washing hands, and other activities to maintain personal hygiene and health.

The process of instilling character by providing understanding, application, and habituation will foster the character of environmental awareness that will underlie children's daily lives (Afriana & Hidayat, 2022). According to the results of the observation, the implementation of character education at TKQ Little Stars is by habituation, which starts from the time the child comes to school. From the statement of G3, who explained that "Planting the character of awareness for the environment at TKQ Little Stars is through habituation, such as storing shoes and bags in lockers, washing hands before eating, throwing away used food waste, and cleaning used toys from playing". This is supported by observations. During observation, children who have come to school must take off their shoes and store them in the shoe lockers that have been provided before entering the classroom. In the classroom,

children are asked to store their bags and belongings in the bag lockers that have been named after them.



Figure 2. Children's routine of washing hands before eating

Source: Research on August 11, 2023, at TKQ Little Stars

Based on **Picture 2**, when it is time for recess, children are asked to wash their hands in turn before going to eat. After washing their hands, children will dry their hands using the cloth that has been provided. Unfortunately, the school does not prepare handwashing soap for children, so they only wash their hands with water.



Figure 3. The child disposes of the garbage after eating

Source: Research on August 11, 2023, at TKQ Little Stars

After eating, children 'clean up' or clean up the traces of their food and dispose of garbage in its place, as shown in Figure 3. The habit of disposing of waste is also applied when children have done experiments when the KBM runs.

Other efforts in instilling environmental awareness attitudes are also made by the teacher, namely that the teacher becomes a role model for children by giving good examples to children by throwing garbage in its place and helping children clean the class. The role of the teacher as a role model is considered to be able to strengthen the character of environmental awareness in children. In addition, character education is strengthened through the singing method with songs with the theme of environmental awareness. This is explained by G1, namely, "In addition to habituation, environmental awareness character education implemented at TKQ Little Stars is also through movements and songs with the theme of environmental awareness. In addition, teachers must also be good role models for children by giving examples such as throwing garbage in its place so that children imitate it".

Despite all the efforts that have been made, not all children have an attitude of environmental awareness. This is because this habituation is still lacking reinforcement. G2 said that "children still see many examples that are not by what has been familiarized at school so that children are confused and it is difficult to apply environmental awareness attitudes in everyday life". As a result of examples that are not by the knowledge that children have absorbed and the habituation carried out at school, children will be mistaken and influenced by what they observe.

The lack of synergy between parents and teachers is also one of the causes of the less-than-optimal results of habituation of environmental awareness in children. The solution presented by G1, namely, "By conveying the school's vision and mission first and sharing the school's KBM goals, so that parents can participate in conveying them to children at home, In addition to giving real examples, we can invite children to see real conditions, such as study trips to landfills, and learn directly. More simply, through storybooks and educational videos about waste". Parents can also participate in instilling the character

of environmental awareness at home by involving children in waste management activities that are carried out consistently (Palupi et al., 2020). Therefore, to optimize the cultivation of the character of environmental awareness in children, teachers must work together with parents in implementing the habituation of environmental awareness both in the school environment, home, and children's play environment.

The cultivation of environmental awareness character provided by the school in the form of habituation activities by teachers received direct support from the principal. Support is not in the form of rewards for teachers, but the principal is directly involved. The headmaster collaborates with teachers in discussing habituation methods in character building, awareness for the environment, and providing facilities that support the habituation process.

Cooperation that is seen with parents is at the beginning of the school year when the principal provides socialization about school rules and invitations for cooperation in supporting children in shaping the character of awareness for the environment. In addition, parents also make sure children follow school rules such as throwing garbage in its place, tidying up toys after playing and washing hands before eating. Coordination between teachers and parents related to the development of children's character is carried out through discussions via chat after school activities and when distributing reports.

D. Conclusion

This study concludes that the application of environmental awareness character education through habituation at Little Stars Kindergarten has been running regularly every day from the time the children come to school until the children leave school. Habituation is applied while children are at school, both when they are playing and learning. Another effort made by teachers is to instill environmental awareness characters in the form of activities inserted in the themes of 'my environment' and 'myself'. However, this effort is still considered less than optimal because the habituation applied is less diverse and has not been supported by other learning methods in strengthening the character of environmental awareness in

children. Also, parental support is still not visible, and there is a lack of cooperation between teachers and parents in strengthening the character of awareness of the environment in children. Teachers should be more innovative and creative in utilizing available teaching media to shape the character of environmental awareness in children.

During this research, there were still some shortcomings, starting with the lack of participants in the research and the observation time being too short. In addition, the lack of sources used are still lacking to support the findings of research results in the field. Thus, recommendations for developing research are to find a more diverse sample, increase observation time, and expand sources that can support the findings.

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