CHARACTER EDUCATION IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN PALEMBANG CITY: A Study of Curriculum Implementation and Character Learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract: This study aims to explain the pattern of character education during the covid-19 pandemic and see the *learn from home* policy on weakening the character of elementary school students in Palembang City. The outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic has forced schools to change the tradition and model of implementing education. Basic education institutions must adapt quickly to the covid-19 emergency. The *learn from home* (LFH) policy has formed a new habit where teachers must use a *full* online learning system. The implementation of online learning has had an impact on weakening student character. This phenomenological qualitative research succeeded in finding the fact that the character education curriculum development model in elementary schools during the covid-19 pandemic tends to be unclear. The obstacles experienced by teachers in educating character during the Covid-19 pandemic include the absence of school management support in the form of *support for* learning tools and the weak understanding of teachers and internet-based learning models. The weakening of character in elementary school students is quite serious as a result of the LFH learning system in the form of the emergence of bad attitudes such as annoyance, sadness, anger, low self-esteem, lack of enthusiasm, lack of discipline as a result of the ineffectiveness of the *online* learning system.

Keywords: Character Education; Elementary School; Pandemic-Covid-19.

INTRODUCTION

One of the problems faced by schools around the world, including in Indonesia during the Covid-19 pandemic, is the issue of managing character learning. The core of strengthening character education that relies on the *role model* approach is very constrained because teachers and students do not interact directly. Meanwhile, the condition of parents who are *stressed* and psychologically depressed due to weakening economic and social factors also has an impact on parenting patterns at home (Brown et al., 2020). Meanwhile, the main function of schools as institutions responsible for strengthening the character of students cannot scapegoat the pandemic atmosphere and then become negligent in finding solutions to character education problems during the pandemic. Strengthening character must be a primary issue to think about in any conditions and situations.

Character development is an important issue in the national education system in Indonesia. The *affective domain* is one of the domains of education that must be seen as a potential in learners that is important to develop, as well as the knowledge and skills domains. In terms of academic content, the character education curriculum in the national curriculum structure is distributed in several subjects such as Civic Education (PPKn) and Religious Education. Non-curricularly, efforts to strengthen character education in schools are developed through activities

such as Scouting, Islamic Spirituality, PMR, UKS, and so on.

Character education taught and developed at the elementary school level is education to "shape a person's personality through ethical education, the results of which are seen in a person's real actions, namely good behavior, honesty, responsibility, respect for the rights of others, hard work and so on (Thomas Lickona, 1991). In the 2013 curriculum policy concept (K-13), efforts to teach character or strengthen the affective domain are the responsibility of all subject teachers. Therefore, conveying issues related to the development of morality and attitudes of students can be integrated through the learning process of all subjects. Even in the K-13 concept, from the beginning it was emphasized that the Core Competencies (KI) related to spiritual attitudes and social attitudes were placed in the KI-1 and KI-2 positions. This concept confirms that the nuances of character must animate and color all learning processes whatever is implemented at school.

The fact of weak character education among school-age children is indicated by Sugiarto (2017), through an increase in immoral behavior in school-age children. That 63 percent of teenagers in several big cities in Indonesia have premarital sex. The perpetrators do not seem to have good knowledge of the reproductive process, so they think that if they have had sexual intercourse once it does not cause pregnancy. Other sources also mention that no less than 900 thousand teenagers have had abortions due to free sex. Even teenagers who have abortions account for 60% of the total cases. Cases of student brawls and fights

in several cities have even increased as an indicator of weak character teaching among students. Even during the Covid-19 pandemic when schools implemented a *learn from home* policy, students occupied themselves in accessing pornography through *smartphones*, which increased to 22 percent (Kompas.com, 2020).

Learning problems during the Covid-19 pandemic, which has been running for almost three semesters, are not only on the substantive and methodological sides, but technical problems are also still a problem among elementary school students in Indonesia. Based on survey results, 50% of students do not have laptops, and 80% of students have difficulty getting a signal and are wasteful in using data plans because many students live far from urban areas. The technical problems, in turn, have an impact on the ineffectiveness of learning because as many as 61.5% of students stated that they had never used online learning media before the Covid 19 pandemic. However, the fact of using *online* learning systems has accelerated the digital transformation process of Indonesian education. Thus, the phenomenon of new learning during the Covid-19 pandemic has an extraordinary impact on digital transformation towards the era of education 4.0 (Astini, 2020).

The advantages brought by the online application-based learning model, on the one hand, have a weakening impact in terms of student character. The policy of strengthening character education that has been stated in the *grand design of* strengthening character in schools in the form of habituation and consistent practice so that students become characterized and cultured in the home, classroom, school and community environments, cannot be

carried out during the co-19 pandemic. Whereas ideally the digitization of education needs to be aligned with character values that can be created when learning at home such as the values of independence, mutual cooperation, and creativity. Digitalization of character learning is carried out by utilizing the internet, applications, or digital content itself as a source of character education, as well as through coaching and mentoring by parents or educators to students in utilizing digital technology (Trisiana, 2020).

In that context, it becomes very important to explore the problem of character learning with the application of *learning from home* in elementary schools in Palembang City. From the initial observations, it can be identified various unique problems faced by parents and teachers in assisting students' learning activities through the *online* system, such as unavailability of time, weak internet network, many assignments, and difficulty in controlling students' behavior. In depth, it is important to explore the unique problems that arise among elementary school students related to the implementation of the character education curriculum during the Covid-19 pandemic in Palembang City.

METHOD

This research is a *field research* with a type of qualitative research using a phenomenological approach. The phenomenological approach is used because this research intends to describe the phenomenon of character learning that occurs in elementary schools in Palembang city during the Covid-19 pandemic.

This research was conducted in the context of three elementary schools in Palembang, namely SDN 19 Palembang City, SDN 146 Kemuning Palembang, and SDN 14 Palembang City. The three elementary schools above were taken with the consideration that access to students, teachers, and parents can be done quickly considering the conditions during the covid-19 pandemic with the condition of Palembang city which is included in the red zone. It is very difficult to contact schools, teachers, students, and parents in a pandemic emergency like this. Consideration of the ease of access to information about the person in the three schools is the main reason for determining the research location.

This study used respondents from the school community consisting of school leaders, teachers, students, and parents of students. school leaders consisted of principals, vice principals, totaling six people. The teaching teachers are PABP teachers as teaching teachers who are closer to character education issues. There were six PABP teachers who were used as respondents in this study. Meanwhile, primary school students who became respondents totaled 15 students. Furthermore, parents or guardians of students who were used as respondents totaled 15 people.

The data collection technique used in this research is *in-depth interview,* where the interview process is used to obtain information for research purposes by means of question and answer while meeting face to face between the interviewer and the informant or person to be interviewed, with or without using an interview *guide*. In addition to interviews, data collection also uses observation, and

documentation methods. Observation was conducted by observing the learning process when LFH took place at the learners' homes. This observation process also takes place on several occasions on several cases of *online* learning activities. Documents on learning planning, implementation, and evaluation of character learning in the form of Learning Implementation Plans (RPP), are analyzed to find out how important aspects of affective learning are formulated in the lesson plans designed by teachers. In addition, documentation in the form of news is used to get an overview of the impact of learning implementation during the Covid-19 pandemic obtained from online news sources from 2020 to 2021.

Data analysis, referring to Moustakas (1994) there are five main stages in phenomenological data analysis, namely: First, listing the expressions of the participants' answers or responses by suspending the researcher's prejudice (*bracketing*) to allow the expressions to appear as they are. Each expression of participants' lived experience is treated equally (*horizonalization).* Secondly, the reduction and elimination of the expressions refers to the question: whether the expressions are the essence of the participants' experience and whether the expressions can be grouped to be labeled and themed. Vague, repetitive and overlapping expressions were reduced and eliminated. Then meaningful expressions were labeled and themed. Third, cluster and theme expressions that are consistent, unchanging and show similarities. Clustering and labeling these expressions are the core themes of participants' life experiences. Fourth, validate the expressions, *labeling of* expressions and

themes by (1) whether they are explicit in the interview transcripts or participants' diaries; (2) if they are not explicit, whether they "*work together* without *confict or compatible*". If they were not compatible and explicit with the participants' lived experiences, they were discarded. Fifth, create an *Individual Textural Description* (ITD). The ITD is made by describing the validated expressions according to the themes, complemented by verbatim quotes from the interviews and/or participants' diaries.

RESULT

The Ministry of Education and Culture has officially instructed that the learning process be carried out from home through Circular Letter (SE) Number 4 of 2020 concerning the Implementation of Education Policy during the Emergency Period of Covid-19 Spread. Schools are forced to change the learning system *fully online* or completely close the classroom at school. Teachers are "forced" to use devices to deliver learning instructions and check student assignments. Parents and students are also "forced" to own devices or *gadgets* in order to communicate with teachers in the *online* learning process.

Government policies through the Ministry of Education and Culture such as the policy on short lesson plans or one-sheet lesson plans specifically applied during the Covid-19 pandemic are not widely known among teachers. Schools do not socialize well the use of short lesson plans or concise lesson plans that are only one sheet. Most schools actually let teachers use regular lesson plans without simplifying them as suggested by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The reality that can be observed is that teachers

use curriculum designs and lesson plans that are commonly used during normal times to be applied during the Covid-19 emergency. The fact of learning like this certainly causes many accompanying problems related to the psychological problems of students.

The form of character education curriculum development in Palembang City primary schools tends to be distributed in the form of special subjects such as Civics and Religious Education and Budi Pekerti (PABP). This assertion was made by the Head of Elementary School, S said:

"*Structurally, character education subjects are more attached to lessons such as Civics and Islamic Religious Education. However, our school also controls students' behavior through school rules and role models as a form of strengthening their character education*".

The statement above confirms that the character education curriculum design model is more of a *separated curriculum* because it uses a *separate* subject distribution model. This model of separate distribution of character education materials allows the effectiveness of delivering the material as a whole and completely covering aspects of character knowledge, attitudes, and moral skills. However, the weakness of the separate curriculum design can cause imbalances in the distribution of learning aspects. One teacher, RK, said that:

"*Yes, indeed, when I teach PABP material, I touch more on the knowledge aspect. I teach the material and students answer the post test questions at the end of class. I find it difficult to assess students' attitudes one by one*".

The teacher's statement above illustrates that the teacher's ability to make affective domain evaluation tools is still experiencing obstacles. The focus of PABP learning as a character education subject is more dominant in the knowledge aspect.

Primary schools in Palembang city have not developed too many collaborative programs to strengthen students' character. While excellent schools have conducted various collaborative programs involving parents in the form of home visits, joint seminars, and discussions on *parenting skill* issues, public primary schools in Palembang rely more on curricular programs to instill character values in students. Based on observations so far, superior private primary schools owned by foundations often publicize joint school and parent activities such as *family gatherings*, *parenting seminars*, and competitions for children attended by families. However, during the covid-19 pandemic since approximately two years ago, this joint activity program was not carried out at all.

Schools in Palembang at all levels are very compliant with the government's appeal to comply with health protocols (prokes) to prevent the transmission of Covid-19, including not organizing face-to-face learning. Practically for almost two years students have been learning with an online system from their respective homes. Referring to local news, during the covid-19 pandemic with the distance learning system (PJJ) the quality of learning at schools in Palembang according to around 30 percent (Gatra.com, 2021). The obstacle faced by schools during the PJJ period is that curriculum completion is difficult to achieve because the learning

process is not in accordance with the time allocation that has been determined. The implementation of PJJ, including in Palembang City, has not been covered by a special curriculum so that it has caused many social educational problems.

Referring to the Ministry of Education and Culture's policy, schools in Palembang are encouraged to adjust the curriculum material to the PJJ conditions so that it can be ensured that the learning process is still running even with various limitations. In terms of curriculum implementation, MoEC has socialized a policy on simplifying or streamlining the curriculum so that teachers can focus on essential learning materials only, so there is no need to pursue curriculum completeness targets. Teachers are encouraged to prioritize deepening fundamental concepts. Thus, the implementation of the character education curriculum is more emphasized on strengthening behavior outside of school. This reinforcement process is played more by parents in the family environment.

Regarding the design of the character education curriculum in Palembang primary schools during the Covid-19 pandemic, all principals interviewed stated that there was no effort to change the curriculum in accordance with the emergency conditions of the spread of Covid-19. Teachers who teach religious education subjects still refer to the 2013 curriculum document with the formulation of core competencies, basic competencies according to the 2013 curriculum. Regarding the design of the emergency curriculum with simplification as called for by the Ministry of Education and Culture, one principal, N said:

"Our teachers do not develop curriculum materials for online learning. They deliver the material according to the existing curriculum structure online through google meet. Including for PPKn and PAI lessons, they also do not simplify the curriculum in writing, but motivate children to read and study at home".

The principal's statement above was also confirmed by the PABP teachers. A religion teacher, AA said that:

"It is rather difficult to pursue the target of completing all the material because students do not learn according to time like in class. I still teach the subject matter although not in its entirety. To be honest, I do not compile the simplified curriculum material in writing, but teach the material that is already in the curriculum".

Regarding the Minister of Education's Circular on curriculum simplification and the implementation of one-sheet lesson plans or short lesson plans that can practically assist teachers in implementing *online* learning, it was not implemented in schools. Teachers do not even know how to make one-sheet lesson plans, although they claim to know about the policy. An AM teacher said:

"Yo, we heard about the policy, but we didn't make it. I teach PAI as usual although with less time. Sometimes the students also don't pay attention when we teach online. The signal is also often missing. I still use the usual lesson plan model. It's hard to teach in this Covid-19 era".

Teachers' statements above illustrate that the call for teachers to refer to the Ministry of Education and Culture's provisions on simplifying the curriculum and using concise lesson plans was known to them, but they did not simplify the

curriculum and make one-sheet lesson plans. Teachers in Palembang do not seem to be accustomed to curriculum innovation and curriculum development. Meanwhile, parents were not aware of the government's policy on curriculum simplification and lesson plan simplification issues. A student guardian, DP said:

"No idea, sir. We don't understand what the slaves are learning about. But the slaves were told to look at cellphones to study with the teacher. Every day the slaves study with their cell phones. I don't know what the teacher used to teach the chak. The teacher knows better than us".

The statement above illustrates that parents still do not care about their children's learning process at home. They only provide cellphone facilities, quota and package credit for their children to study. Parents do not know about the new policy regarding the implementation of the curriculum simplification concept and concise lesson plans. The fact that parents and guardians have difficulty controlling the student learning process at home is also proven by Fitria's research (2021), which has an impact on the lack of effective character learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Local news sources released information from the people of Palembang, that the implementation of education during covid-19 was very alarming and sad. Children cannot go to school properly. There is no material that is conveyed properly. Children follow learning through *cellphones* while playing *online* games without their parents knowing. This fact further proves the ineffectiveness of online learning in most communities.

The management of educational administration that has been carried out by teachers, in fact, during the Covid-19 pandemic did not function properly. Character education curriculum planning in schools is automatically constrained. Local news provides quite sad educational social facts, related to the difficulty of parents in supervising the attitudes and behavior of their children at home. the phenomenon of children who often leave the house and wander is a problem of character education assistance that is difficult to do (Kompas.id, 2021).

Student parent M said that:

"It's getting worse, sir. The slaves are getting more and more unruly. They used to go to school and study, but now since they don't go to school they often hang out with their friends. They rarely do their schoolwork. But the teachers don't make much noise either. The slaves are being neglected. The slaves' morals are getting worse during this time of covid".

The above statements from parents and guardians show the weakness of students' character learning during the pandemic. One teacher expressed difficulty in planning the learning curriculum. When referring to the K-13 concept that character strengthening is the responsibility of all subject teachers, teachers are only able to touch a small part of the achievement of cognitive aspects. The *affective domain* in habituation cannot be touched optimally. Schools mostly hand over the function of mentoring for strengthening character education to families.

Based on document analysis, teachers still make mistakes in formulating learning objectives and do not refer to HOTS and TPACK elements. In addition,

there is a mismatch between the formulation of material, learning steps, and evaluation. The assessment of attitudinal aspects is actually ignored in the preparation of this concise lesson plan. One teacher, IW said that:

"*I do not make one-sheet lesson plans. For online system learning, I still refer to the regular lesson plan. We submit regular lesson plan documents to the principal even during the Covid-19 period". For administrative purposes I make Prota, Prosem, and academic calendar, but it does not run as usual because of the constraints of students not being able to study at school".*

The curricular program of primary schools in Palembang city is not running effectively, so the extra-curricular program based on strengthening character in the school environment has also come to a halt. Thus, nothing can be explained about strengthening character values in schools. The ambiguity of education planning and implementation occurs because the curriculum planning emphasizes character strengthening, but in reality the process of implementing character learning is not fully visible. Through observations made when the teacher taught *online* using the *google meet* application, almost the entire 60 minutes of learning time was used to give instructions on tasks that students should do and explain the lesson points. The teacher did not use *slides* in explaining the lesson. During the lesson, the teacher often reminded students to open the video, tidy up their sitting position, and ask questions.

Referring to the phenomenon of learning in elementary schools during the Covid-19 pandemic, there are several character learning problems faced by schools and teachers. In character education, students not only gain moral knowledge, but must gain awareness and action to carry out the character values taught. Character learning that is carried out online with a long enough intensity causes boredom during learning. Boredom can lead to *lost learning* or loss of learning meaning because students do not understand well the substance of the material taught. Psychologically, students lose concentration and do not focus on learning. Based on an interview with a teacher, AA said that:

"*There are so many weaknesses and things that are not effective in this online learning. I often see students are not focused in following online learning. In the middle minutes, students begin to show symptoms of boredom and do not pay attention to the teacher's explanation. Most students have even started to turn off the live video so that only the student's name is displayed on the zoom screen. When I asked students about the material, most of them were unable to absorb the lesson and could not answer questions about the material I taught".*

The duration of *online* learning is usually only 60 minutes, which also does not allow teachers to conduct enrichment. Teachers often instruct students to read a section of the book for a few minutes and then discussed by the teacher to emphasize the core material. However, most students cannot read well and do not understand the material they read, making it more difficult for teachers to teach the material. Regarding teachers' ability to use *online* applications such as *zoom meeting, google meet*, and *whatshap,* all teachers in Palembang have no problems. This condition can be understood because the

Palembang city area can be categorized as an area that has been reached by the internet network widely. In addition, young teachers who teach in primary schools in Palembang are very quick to adapt to technological developments, compared to teachers who are in areas outside the city. The availability of quota or internet network is the main key for the smooth implementation of online learning during the covid-19 pandemic.

Another problem that arises in relation to the implementation of online learning in Palembang primary schools is the ability of school management to facilitate teachers in managing learning by using internet-based learning *models*. The principal admitted that so far the school is not ready with various concepts and designs of internet-based learning. During the online learning period, the principal and school management were only able to instruct teachers to use the online learning application. Meanwhile, internet-based learning models with specific and relevant designs are not well known and understood by teachers. One teacher, N said that:

"Not yet sir. Our school has not done enough training for our teachers on internet-based learning models. So far, what we have done is limited to instructing teachers to do learning with applications such as zoom meeting, google meet, WAG. The implementation is just face-to-face through the application. Our teachers do not yet understand new internet-based learning models with more targeted learning design and planning".

A learning problem that many primary school teachers in Palembang have raised in the context of character education is the inability to habituate

character behavior as has been done in face-to-face schooling. A school principal, N, said:

"The implementation of character education during the COVID-19 pandemic is very constrained. Teachers are only limited to delivering cognitive material, and are unable to train students' attitudes and behavior directly. Therefore, we as principals only instruct teachers to communicate with parents so that they can help assist students in getting used to good behavior, such as discipline in learning when the learning schedule is online, reminding students to eat and sleep regularly, study and read at night, and wake up early. All these behaviors and attitudes, of course, cannot be done by teachers during home learning".

In addition, the non-optimal use of learning facilities and learning media apparently affects students' learning readiness and ability to understand the subject matter delivered by the teacher. One student, MKD said:

"I don't understand sometimes. The teacher is quick to explain the lesson. We just listen to the teacher. The teacher also rarely uses videos. I'm bored learning this subject. I don't understand. There are also assignments that we have to make, but sometimes we don't understand how to make them". (*Sometimes I* don't understand. The teacher explains the lesson very quickly. We just listen. The teacher also rarely uses video media. I'm bored learning like this. Don't understand. We also have assignments to make, but we don't know how to do them).

The student's statement above illustrates the atmosphere of students who are bored with online learning because they do not understand the subject matter

conveyed by the teacher, while the time to ask questions and ask for re-explanation is not available because time is limited. At times like this, the role of parental assistance becomes significant.

Based on the observation of the implementation of *online* learning conducted by the teacher for 60 minutes in one of the students' houses, the teacher seems to prioritize the mastery of the material content by giving instructions rather than students reading the textbook, opening the pages of the book, and working on the questions in the book. In the process of reading and working on these questions, the teacher was silent and gave students the opportunity to work. In this opportunity, many students close the video and the teacher cannot monitor what students are doing at home. This attitude problem is a common phenomenon for almost all teachers in PJJ learning.

The impact of online learning on weakening the character of elementary school students in Pelambang City was explicitly stated by a student guardian, HW, who said:

"There is indeed a change in the attitude of children during the Covid-19 pandemic. They spend more time playing with their cellphones. Sometimes when we ask them to do something they are slow to respond. The orders that their mothers tell them to do are often ignored. They are a little less polite and do not obey parents' orders immediately".

In explaining the impact of online learning on weakening the character of primary school students in Palembang, a PABP teacher, B, said that:

"I think there is a weakening of character education during the online learning period. Among the obvious ones is that

students cannot socialize with their friends. Thus, we can feel boredom as an attitude experienced by students. However, the good impact of conditioning students at home is that they are actually more supervised and educated by their fathers and mothers at home. I think character values and manners can be better maintained by character education by students' families at home".

As a consequence of students not attending school face-to-face, it can be felt that there is a kind of *loss of learning* which also results in *loss* of character. Students pay very little attention to the learning provided by the teacher, so that the subject matter is not well mastered. Furthermore, the result of learning that is difficult to control properly by school management and teachers is a decrease in learning outcomes. Based on observations made, there are facts about differences in access and quality of learning during *online* learning. Teachers seem to lose the orientation of learning assessment. Teachers often have to deal with the feeling of not being able to give students a failing grade, even though academically the students are not able to master the learning well and completely.

Some of the bad attitudes shown by students above are also experienced by primary school students in Palembang. A student guardian, H said that:

"There seems to be a change in my child's attitude since online learning. I am often scolded by my child for not being able to help with homework and answer exam questions. So far, my child has never been cranky and upset, but since online learning he is often sad if he is not on time to submit assignments from his teacher. I

have to persuade him again if he is sulking and doesn't want to do his homework."

The behavior of students who are angry, sad, and even angry at parents is certainly a bad attitude that students should not do. However, character-weakening attitudes like this will continue during the covid-19 pandemic. Regardless of the negative and positive impacts of this *online* learning system, schools, teachers, parents, and students should consider the important goal of school, which is students getting good knowledge. In fact, if you look at the phenomenon of student learning through *home schooling* programs, for example, students are much more optimal in their potential development efforts because they can choose learning time, learning materials, and teachers who teach more freely.

DISCUSSION

An unusual phenomenon of education during the Covid-19 pandemic is that there are 1.5 billion students from more than 165 countries who have dropped out of school due to the Covid-19 pandemic as announced by UNESCO on March 26, 2020. All countries closed schools due to the pandemic. The two studies above are general and do not specifically describe the phenomenon of character education in schools (Wan, 2020). Adnan (2020) argues that schools, teachers, students and parents are not ready to implement *online* learning systems in developing countries. Technical constraints in the form of weak internet network supply and cost factors make parents unable to prepare learning tools properly. In addition, through survey research, the results show that almost 90 percent of students do not like the online learning system, which has an impact on learning motivation and weakening the spirit to excel. This is clearly a character issue that is weakened by the online learning system.

Interesting research conducted by Baloran (2020), shows the existence of anxiety characters caused by the online learning system. Students claimed to have an increased sense of anxiety related to the Covid-19 outbreak and anxiety about the future of their education. That the increase in panic among school-age children has also been signaled in almost all countries as a result of information about Covid-19 on social media networks, thus forming a character easily anxious and panicked which if left unchecked will be difficult to overcome psychologically (Ahmad & Murad, 2020).

In fact, according to a UNICEF survey, 66 percent of 60 million students from various levels of education in 34 provinces admitted that they were uncomfortable studying at home during the Covid-19 pandemic. Of these, 87 percent of students want to return to school immediately (Kompas.com). The learning process carried out in uncomfortable conditions will never be effective. Furthermore, this will affect the psychology of students, which has an impact on motivation and interest in learning which greatly decreases (Abdurrahmansyah, 2021). Comparing with developed countries, Indonesia is not ready to optimize *online* learning. The United States, as a country that is prone to natural disasters every year, has implemented a *package curriculum* that is specifically applied during emergencies. Thus, in the conditions of the co-19 pandemic which lasted for approximately

two years, it did not have much impact on the school system in the country. However, in Indonesia, this pandemic condition has a very broad impact on schools, teachers, students, and society.

For the context of character education in madrasah, it is interesting to follow the research of Sukirman et al (2017) that character education at MAN 2 Palembang has not been implemented optimally. Some things that have not been implemented related to the implementation of character education are: a) not all contextual learning strategies have been used. b) not all teachers have used contextual learning strategies. c) there has been no special effort to revitalize co and extra-curricular activities. d) related to its integration by teachers in learning, there are still 33.33% of teachers carrying it out poorly 20.8% are categorized as poor in the aspect of learning planning, 25% in the aspect of learning implementation, and 4.2% in the aspect of learning assessment. The weakness of teachers' ability to organize character education in learning in madrasah is more due to the difficulty in carrying out routine activities, difficulty in carrying out spontaneous activities, and difficulty in carrying out conditioning activities.

Teachers still have difficulties in integrating character education in the learning process in the form of difficulties in linking character education with materials, methods, strategies and learning media. Schools need to ensure that teachers have good personality competence as a basic ability to oversee character education in schools. With the ability of reliable teachers in terms of personal competence (*personality*), it is hoped that the character strengthening-

based school program can succeed well. Agustini (2021) asserts that character education can be learned in formal education with the support of the environment such as school staff, teachers, and parents. Watz (2011) states that character education can be found in both formal and non-formal education. Character education cannot be learned instantly, it takes a long effort and a long process that takes time (Pala, 2011). This can be found when they observe their students in the classroom. Building good character is not an easy thing to do. Character education should be introduced to students since they are children (Agustini, 2021).

Panda (2021) emphasized that the implementation of learning during the pandemic is highly dependent on the readiness of schools and regions to organize learning effectively. Geographical and economic problems, as well as pedagogical view factors greatly determine the form and model of learning implemented by teachers. Climatic factors and the geographical location of students often have an impact on the many obstacles in implementing learning during the covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, the problem in implementing online learning during the pandemic does not solely lie in technological factors. As most of the needs in *online* learning, it requires the necessary skills to decide what to look for, how to retrieve it, how to process it, and how to use it for specific tasks that drive information seeking.

Azzahra, et al (2021) in a study emphasized that the fundamental problems still faced by schools in online learning are the distance learning process, limited learning tools, limited internet access and

internet quota. The geographical context in Indonesia with islands that are separated from each other makes it difficult to connect network devices which results in people in remote villages not being touched by the internet network. Another problem experienced in Indonesia related to the implementation of online systems in learning is due to policy issues. Government policies, in this case the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, in managing education in madrasas seem slow to respond to the impact of Covid-19 on the world of education. As a result, educators and students walk on their own without special instructions, communication, and guidance from the government.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 2020) data shows that the Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted access to education. Around 1.5 billion students are out of school and around 500 million students are unable to participate in distance learning (PJJ). The Ministry of Education and Culture also reported that 42,159 or 19 percent of primary and secondary schools do not have internet access, and as many as 8,552 or 4 percent of schools do not have electricity. Even the 2018 Central Statistics Agency (BPS) also announced that there are 61.8% of the population in Papua, 58.2% in Maluku, 39.8% in West Sulawesi, 49.4% in North Kalimantan and several more villages on the island. Others who cannot do distance learning (PJJ) in fact, it is unfortunate that in big cities that require internet access, such as Bogor, 11 percent of students cannot do PJJ due to lack of resources such as gadgets and internet quota.

Regarding character education during the covid-19 pandemic, the role and involvement of parents in *online* learning in Indonesia is still relatively weak and not optimal. Research conducted by Takhroji Aji (2020), reported that as many as 164 respondents or 92.1 percent of the total 178 respondents stated that parents could not develop children's character properly without the involvement of educators. 157 or 88.2 percent of respondents stated that children's character cannot be formed at home and in the child's atmosphere without school participation. Furthermore, 175 respondents or 98.3% stated that while children learn from home (BDR) the role of educators in building character is still very much needed. Meanwhile, 104 respondents or 59.4% stated that educators provide a smaller portion of character education material than other subject matter, even 8% or 14 respondents stated that educators do not provide character education. Only 57 respondents or 32.6% stated that character education was given in the same portion as the subject matter.

Snelling & Fingal (2020) reminded that all components of education consisting of the government, schools, teachers, students, and parents, as well as the community must think and act quickly in finding solutions to various educational problems in the covid-19 emergency. They must find new alternatives for implementing learning, and virtual classrooms or online learning are the most likely way forward (Arora & Srinivasan, 2020). However, according to research conducted by Daheri et al. (2021) emphatically states that the application of online learning both in the use of *Whatsapp Group* and *Google Classroom* in elementary schools tends to be ineffective during the covid-19 pandemic.

According to Zubaidah (2021), students are often silent and uninterested in participating in lessons because teachers are considered angry when teaching. The atmosphere on the *zoom meeting* screen that is not active because all students are silent further triggers the teacher's frustration. This condition makes the situation worse so that teachers have to think of other ways to make students active and enjoy learning again. The phenomenon of the negative impact felt by students during *online* learning is also reinforced by a survey conducted by Rizal as the founder of Sekolah Menyenangkan that as many as 1,263 respondents consisting of school students, including 553 elementary school students. From the respondents' answers to the questionnaire distributed, it is known that almost all students experience negative emotions in the form of mental symptoms such as boredom, sadness, lack of understanding of the subject matter, *stress,* confusion, lack of time management, feeling burdened, feeling learning difficulties and lack of enthusiasm (Zubaidah, 2021).

As a consequence of the boredom and saturation experienced by students during the LFH period, symptoms such as *loss of learning* appear, which also results in *loss* of character. Students pay less attention to learning, so the subject matter is not well mastered. Furthermore, the result of learning that is difficult to control properly by school management and teachers is a decrease in learning outcomes. Based on observations made, there are facts about differences in access and quality of learning during *online* learning. Teachers seem to lose the orientation of learning assessment. Teachers often have to deal with the feeling of not being able to give students a failing grade, even though academically the students are not able to master the learning well and completely.

Psychologically, students who do not get grades in accordance with the results of their own learning will cause psychological problems that are detrimental to education. For example, students who feel that they are not doing learning activities properly and seriously so that they clearly cannot master the lessons and fail to answer exam questions, but are given good grades by the teacher. The attitude of teachers who assess students like this will cause students to get used to being lazy to learn because they think that by being lazy and not mastering the lesson and failing to answer exam questions, they get good grades or scores. In character, this way of assessing will cause students not to have a tenacious attitude and learn hard in a disciplined manner. This psychological condition of students will lead to character weakening that jeopardizes the strengthening of academic character in Indonesia.

CONCLUSIONS

The covid-19 pandemic has morally, socially, academically, and psychologically impacted the implementation of character education in elementary schools in Palembang city. Schools do not have an effective learning model to teach character education during the implementation of *learn from home*. Teachers experience many obstacles in planning, implementing and assessing students' affective domain due to constrained interactions that cannot be done *face to face*. The learning stages of character education consisting of the

stages of moral *knowing, moral feeling*, and *moral action* cannot be controlled at all through *online learning*. This condition further emphasizes the weakening of character education for elementary school students during the Covid-19 pandemic. Some facts about the weakening of the character of school students are the emergence of laziness, boredom, annoyance, irritability, indifference, and like to argue with parents. These bad attitudes are the impact of the *online* learning load which is felt to be very boring.

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