

## IMPLEMENTATION OF CHARACTER EDUCATION IN INTEGRATED ISLAMIC KINDERGARTEN CITY OF PALEMBANG

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**Abstract:** This study aims to analyze character education in the Integrated Islamic Kindergarten in Palembang and the factors that influence the implementation of character education in the Integrated Islamic Kindergarten in Palembang. This type of research is qualitative research. The data collection technique used interview, observation, and documentation techniques. In contrast, the data analysis technique adopted an interactive pattern developed by Milles and Huberman: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results of these findings are that the implementation of character education in the IT Kindergarten in Palembang City is by forming and educating children to become children with character, including parenting patterns (*Hadanah*), role models, and habituation. Then, the factors influencing the implementation of Character Education are the educational background of teachers, available budget, facilities, infrastructure, the government as a policy maker, and schools, in this case, kindergartens. Parents as the first shaper of the child's character, and the community or environment that reflects the application of culture and national character in everyday life. The success of character education will be triumphant when all elements carry out their respective functions properly.

**Keywords:** Education; Implementation; Character; Integrated Islam; Kindergarten.

### INTRODUCTION

The education phenomena in Indonesia show many issues surrounding education, whether it is related to infrastructure, curriculum, or output from an Indonesian educational institution. There are many educational institutions whose quality is below standard, there is still cheating behavior on national exams, there are still many fights between students, and there are still incidents of teachers being mistreated by students. On the contrary, there is still harassment of students by teachers. This phenomenon illustrates how Indonesian education cannot be categorized as good quality education in terms of quality to compete in the global era.

Many factors have caused the collapse of the potential of the Indonesian nation at this time. Among education factors, the factors that affect the decline of the Indonesian nation are due to the mental breakdown of officials in the government. Based on the results of the PERC Survey in 2002 and 2006. Indonesia's corruption score is the highest in Asia, with 8.16 (out of 10) (Muslich, 2022). From the data above, it is clear that the Indonesian nation is facing a big problem with various declines in the character of the Indonesian nation.

Indonesian character values decline can also be seen in the decline of cultural education, such as the number of complaints from the community about the negative manners and ethics of school children, where violence often occurs in schools.

Many acts of violence still occur in schools, including continuous bullying by students against other students, ostracizing, insulting, mocking, threatening friends who do not give answers during exams, coercing friends, and humiliating and deceiving friends and others (Muslich, 2022).

Some young people are trapped in narrow pragmatism. They are their future, families, communities, and nations, for example, trapped in promiscuity, drugs, fighting, speeding on the road, and criminal acts. Indeed, the problem of moral and character crises among the younger generation, if left unchecked, they become a generation that only becomes a burden to the family, society, and country.

The state becomes an unproductive nation and finds it difficult to compete with other countries; this deviant behavior requires serious attention from parents, society, and families to invest in youth as hope for the future (Idi, 2015).

Many phenomena have made the government improve various components related to education, be it curriculum, infrastructure, or the competence of educators and education staff. The opinion is in line with public complaints about the nation's children's manners, ethics, and creativity decline. Cultural education and national character must be included in the national education policy. Therefore, character education is needed, grounded in the noble cultural roots of the Indonesian

nation and religious values (Muslich, 2022).

Character education should start from a very young age because it instills personality values that align with Islamic religious norms to live in a good society.

Then in Indonesia's education world, the government has programmed education at the early age level. It has been listed in the national education system so that early childhood education has institutions in national education. Related to character education, The Ministry of National Education has issued that in early childhood education, important character values are introduced and internalized into students' behavior, including love for God Almighty, honesty, discipline, tolerance, love of peace, self-confidence, independence, cooperation, mutual assistance, courtesy, responsibility, hard work, leadership, justice, creative, humble, care for the environment, love for the nation and homeland.

Character-building education is a long process that must be started early in children and will only be successful after the children grow into adults. Character education from an early age is the initial foundation in shaping children's character. Instilling character from an early age is the primary key to shaping a child's positive character and will be the foundation of a strong personality.

The opinion emphasized by Megawangi is that character education must be given to children from an early age because early age is a critical period for the formation of one's character. Failure to instill character in someone early will form a problematic personality in later adulthood (Nadlifah, 2015).

Character education is an essential part of building a complete Indonesian human being. Considering that human resources are pretty dense, Indonesia is a nation that must be able to build superior human resources in science and morality. This development harmony can undoubtedly be carried out since humans know education to realize national education's goals.

Each country has a different character according to the country's goals carried out by educational institutions. So it requires a strategy to realize character education based on religious values simultaneously integration and continuity through official and tiered educational institutions, including Kindergarten (TK) / Baitul An-fal, Elementary School, SD / MI, SMP / MTs, High school / MA, up to college (Salahudin & Alkrienciehie, 2013).

According to government regulations, Permendikbud Number 146 of the 2014 article confirms that Early Childhood Education (*PAUD*) is organized based on age groups and services. *PAUD* for children starting from the birth of a child to the age of 6 years consists of Child Care Parks and *PAUD* and similar units. Ages 2-4 years consist of the playgroup (*KB*), and ages 4-6 years consist of *TK/RA/Bustanul Athfal (BA)* (Susanto, 2021).

In the world of education, of course, there will be many challenges that must be faced, both formally and non-formally, especially from the results of graduates; of course, it requires updating one step by perfecting the education system so that graduates of this educational institution can respond to the challenges and changing times with continue to instill the values of the noble

character of the nation and are based on a solid faith.

In terms of the goals of Islamic education in line with the goals of Indonesian national education. According to Marzuki, Islamic education aims to: carry out the primary mission of humanizing humans, namely making humans able to develop all existing potential, guided by the Qur'an and Al-Sunnah, to create people who have the knowledge and noble character that can be realized. plenary human (Marzuki, 2015).

For this reason, our task includes efforts to internalize noble moral values into the framework of national education to create a complete Indonesian human being, of course starting from the lowest level of education. Besides, this education is critical to get the attention of the household/family, the community, and the government. One of the early childhood education institutions that organize education by developing characters based on Islamic teachings is the integrated Islamic Kindergarten educational institution.

Based on the results of a preliminary study, the integrated Islamic Kindergarten has made progress regarding public interest in entrusting children. Students in kindergarten have achieved various achievements. This educational institution implements an additional curriculum from Curriculum 13 by applying Islamic Character Building learning.

Islamic education in Indonesia has significantly contributed to developing the nation's character. The community carries out education by establishing Islamic boarding schools, study, and recitation institutions that grow in Indonesian society

and provide a pattern of character values for the Indonesian nation. Things that have not been able to answer the educational goals that align with the purpose of human creation on earth. Therefore, the existence of Islamic education that contributes to education in Indonesia is not only material-oriented but is expected to answer the community's anxiety about the shift in the character values of the nation's children.

Based on the previous description and preliminary studies that researchers have done, the quality improvement and quantity of educational institutions have progressed. Therefore, to answer the challenges of such a complex era, the authors are interested in researching the implementation of character education in the Integrated Islamic Kindergarten in Palembang and exploring the factors that influence the implementation of character education in the Integrated Islamic Kindergarten in Palembang.

## **METHODS**

The type of this research is qualitative research and uses a phenomenological approach. *Phenomenology* is a research method requiring researchers to examine several subjects by being directly involved and relatively long to develop patterns and relationships of meaning (Creswell, 2008).

The research informants were five principals to collect information about teachers managing the teaching and learning process and implementing student character education. Meanwhile, four teachers were to determine the extent of the implementation of student character education. Then five student guardians were selected to explore the factors that affect character education in children at home. The identity of research informants

uses aliases TA, RD, R, RL, and HS (for the head of IT Kindergarten), E, UDU, S and YES (for IT Kindergarten teachers), AS, UR, F, N, and R (for Student Guardians).

The researchers applied data collection techniques, including observation, interviews, and documentation, to obtain data related to the research focus. This observation is because researchers can get to know the social world and behavior that is the research focus. After all, in carrying out observations, researchers look directly at the field related to research problems.

Then, the interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner at varying times. This interview is intended to obtain information (views, beliefs, experiences, and knowledge) from a person/informant about a matter related to the implementation of character education in the Integrated Islamic Kindergarten in Palembang, as well as about the factors that influence the implementation of character education.

Furthermore, the researchers used documentation to collect data by collecting and analyzing documents regarding the implementation of early childhood character education based on Islamic values in integrated Islamic kindergartens in Palembang, namely facts in the form of letters, diaries, meeting results, and activity journals.

The data analysis process adopted and developed the interactive pattern developed by Milles and Hierman, namely:

### **1. Data reduction**

Data reduction is an activity of the selection process, focusing on simplifying the abstraction and transformation of raw

data obtained from written records in the field.

## **2. Data presentation**

Data presentation is the process of systematically compiling information in order to obtain conclusions as research findings.

## **3. Verify**

This conclusion is, of course, based on the data analysis results, from field notes, observations, interviews, and documentation. In this way, the researcher can draw solid conclusions not only from one point of view so that the truth can be accepted. In its application, the researcher compares the observational data with the results of interviews and related documentation.

## **RESULT**

### **Implementation of Character Education in IT Kindergarten in Palembang City**

#### **a. Exemplary from school principals, teachers, parents and the community**

Based on the results of observations and interviews, exemplary is a must in the teaching and learning activities contained in every action the teacher takes. At the same time, students are in the learning process following the steps of the learning plan that align with the curriculum to obtain students with Islamic character.

Teachers and employees are always careful in speaking and doing for fear that our children will imitate evil deeds; the teacher should teach children to shake hands, for example, when meeting their parents. Thus, as a teacher, we must shake hands first, and We also want to teach how important it is to say greetings, so every time we meet teachers and students, the

teachers and employees first say hello". (S, personal communication, 2022).

Children's character building is not only done at school but is continued when children are at home because most of the time is spent by children at home. For this reason, as parents, provide examples with all aspects of noble behavior in life so that parents make guides, coaches, and mentors and provide advice to all family members so that children have characters following Islam's teachings. (UR, personal communication, 2022).

Early childhood education uses the exemplary method in conveying habituation to children who must imitate teachers, parents, and other family members. Therefore we should be able to set an example in all our actions during learning. With this method, the value of teaching Religion related to character building should be in line with the goals of education at the kindergarten level (YES, personal communication, 2022).

The example of teachers and parents is something that must be a reflection for students to make students able to absorb good grades based on the teachings of Islam. This exemplary method is a teacher's step to convey the message of education and teaching as a whole, providing a concrete example for students, where at this age, children often do something by imitating. (F, personal communication, 2022)

Exemplary is crucial in guiding and habituating children from school to their respective households so that there is a correlation between education at school and the household environment, based on the teachings of Islam, which is undoubtedly the hope of every parent to

form better character children. (N, personal communication, 2022).

The application of the exemplary method carried out in early childhood mentoring is a must. Considering that at this time, students have not been able to distinguish right and wrong, which is the strongest at this time children imitate what is done and said by teachers, parents, and other family members., Therefore, as educators, we must act and speak correctly so that this child does not imitate bad things in speaking and behaving." (E, personal communication, 2022).

Character education requires an example from all of us, both teachers and parents. Moreover, exemplary is a method in guiding early childhood to guide children to have a good personality and character (W, personal communication, 2022).

One of the keys to our success in developing children's character is the example of each component in our kindergarten, both leaders, teachers and other staff and assisted by parents". (R, personal communication, 2022).

From the various opinions of the respondents above, it can be concluded that early childhood education in guiding and instills habits to become a personality or character through example by teachers, parents, and community members. These three components support each other to work together to realize Islamic value character education that becomes a basic in everyday life in society.

**b. Using the principle of continuity/routine (habituation in all aspects of life)**

Based on the results of observations and interviews, it was found

that habituation is one of the methods used to guide children in forming Islamic values in the Integrated Islamic Kindergarten throughout the city of Palembang.

The things we teach must indeed be included in the curriculum, both the national and school curriculum. So every teacher and employee must obey it. For example, we teach children to always speak gently to parents and teachers (RL , personal communication, 2022).

Habituation is the initial stage of introducing children to the rules that exist in Islam, therefore familiarizing these children with the things that are easiest for them to understand, such as eating, socializing, and other worship activities that we always associate with Islam (R, personal communications, 2022).

Referring to the opinion above, the researchers can conclude that habituation is a method implemented by the IT kindergarten in Palembang City to carry out the process of teaching and learning activities, viewed from the side of stimulus and response learning theory. The connecting theory from Thorndike, introduced by Edward L Thorndike, said this theory refers to "trying and trying" if we fail, we try again and finally succeed. This continuous habituation is a repetitive exercise that becomes a habit (Russell, 1949).

**c. Using the principle of awareness to act in accordance with the character values taught**

From the interview data and observations, we can conclude that every IT Kindergarten in Palembang city provides guidance and education referring to the 2013 curriculum by innovating character values in every step of teaching,

guided by eighteen items of character values. The values are included in Islam's teachings in the learning process at the IT Kindergarten in Palembang.

According to TA, these children are here. When they meet the teacher, they greet the teacher, and when there is food, they want to share it with their friends (TA, personal communication, 2022). Then the children here are cheerful, often play together, and sometimes cry, but the name is children after that forgive (RD, personal communication, 2022).

Our children are taught responsibilities, for example, the responsibility of being careful when playing" (HS, personal communication, 2022), as well as teaching the culture of sitting neatly, learning to be honest in saying what is, being Sincere in giving and giving" (RL, personal communication, 2022).

In educating our children, it is essential how children can grow and develop with honesty, tolerance, kindness to others, obedience, and obedience to religious teachings. This is where the specialty of our kindergarten is compared to other kindergartens in general. (R, personal communication, 2022).

**d. Environmental conditioning that can support character education.**

We teach our children to sit neatly in class (TA, personal communication, 2022). Our children teach Social Care. For example, if there is food, share if there is a friend there is no food, while others do it (RD , personal communication, 2022). The HS also said that our children are taught to care about the environment by teaching them to throw garbage in the trash (HS, personal communication, 2022).

Creating a good school environment, because, in schools where children play and learn, therefore for children to have good character, it must have a suitable environment as well (RL, personal communication, 2022).

**Factors that influence the implementation of the concept of education**

**a. Teachers' background**

From the results of interviews and field data observations, it can be concluded that educational background is one of the factors determining the success of implementing Islamic values-based character education in Integrated Islamic Kindergartens throughout Palembang.

Many IT kindergarten teachers still do not have a PGTK educational background or the equivalent. Teachers who teach not from PGTK usually find it difficult to adjust to the existing situation, while teachers with a PGTK background seem young to adjust, especially with children. To help teachers who do not have relevant backgrounds, the kindergarten includes teachers in training activities held independently and by participating in activities outside kindergarten.

Educational background is one of the benchmarks for teachers to say they are professional or not. The higher the educational background of a teacher, the higher the level of professionalism because the educational background will determine a person's personality, including, in this case, his mindset and insight, factors that influence a person's personality. These factors will affect the professional competence of teachers in teaching.

The quality of adequate teacher education, of course, will positively affect

the potential of students. This educational background is defined as the level of education that a person has taken. The academic qualification is the minimum educational background a person must meet. Minimum education must be met by a teacher as evidenced by a diploma or certificate of relevant expertise following the provisions of the applicable legislation.

The teacher's educational background at the Palembang IT Kindergarten dramatically influences the results of student learning achievement in the future. As a teacher in kindergarten said, "If a teacher teaches something that is not in his field, it is like feeding grass to fish. Their skills are deficient for teachers who do not master what is being taught. This is the main factor that causes the quality of learning outcomes in kindergarten to be low." (UDU, personal communication, 2022).

**b. Budget**

In order for school activities to run smoothly, sufficient finance is needed. In addition to funds from the government, other funds from parents are tuition and monthly contributions. With the smooth implementation of education at TK IT Palembang from a financial perspective, schools only get funds from parents, the government, and foundations. There is no financial support from other communities.

Based on observations, financial conditions are still an obstacle, primarily related to the high amount of income from Kindergarten financial sources from students. The varying number of students is a problem for school income. TK IT finances mostly come from community donations in the form of monthly tuition fees, entry fees, registration fees, and other

contributions, while assistance from the government is relatively small.

The results of an interview with the Head of the IT Kindergarten in the city of Palembang, Mrs. RL, said, "TK IT looks for the main source of finance from community donations in tuition fees, registration fees, registration fees, and government assistance. We manage that financial source as the head of the kindergarten" (RL, personal communication, 2022).

In another interview, HS said, "In my place, finances are still an obstacle because most of it comes from community donations, while government assistance does not yet exist (HS, personal communication, 2022).

In another interview, RL said: for the development of this school, we get support from the community in the form of monthly fees, registration fees, and development money which is used entirely for institutional development, but the finances are still limited (RL, personal communication, 2022).

**c. Facilities and infrastructure**

One aspect that should receive the immediate attention of every education manager is educational facilities. Educational facilities generally include all that directly support the educational process, such as buildings, study rooms or classes, educational tools or media, tables, and chairs. Meanwhile, what is meant by facilities/infrastructure are those that indirectly support the educational process, such as yards, gardens, or school parks, as well as roads leading to the school.

Given the importance of infrastructure in learning activities, students, teachers, and schools are closely



related. The support of learning infrastructure will help students more. Not all students have a good level of intelligence, so using learning infrastructure will help students, especially those with weaknesses, participate in learning activities. The support of infrastructure facilities will help teachers. Learning activities will also be more varied, exciting, and meaningful. At the same time, the school is obliged as the party most responsible for managing all activities. In addition to providing, the school also maintains its infrastructure.

IT Kindergarten facilities and infrastructure need to be improved, especially in procuring goods and completeness of facilities directly related to student or student learning activities in IT Kindergarten in Palembang. The condition of building facilities is still a problem, especially the status of the building, the completeness of the building, limited classrooms, and limited educational aids (APE) (Observation, 2022).

Several Heads of IT Kindergartens also have the same opinion. They said, "the condition of our building is still not ideal for the development of children's potential; therefore, we will try to continue to improve the capacity and quality of existing facilities and infrastructure" (TA, RD, R, RSA, personal communication, 2022).

The mechanism for procuring kindergarten facilities in the city of Palembang is usually carried out by the head of the kindergarten and the foundation that oversees it. As in Raudho Kindergarten, the Principal has identified the need for goods or procurement of APE (Educational Props) procurement of play

facilities and made proposals for submitting goods requirements, always coordinating with the teachers who will be submitted. After the application has been approved, then the goods are spent. The mechanism for implementing procurement at TK IT Raudho is a request for goods, which is then submitted to the foundation. However, in several other kindergartens, the foundation fully gives autonomy to the head of the kindergarten to develop and improve its facilities and infrastructure (TA, personal communication, 2022).

According to RL, the existing suggestions and infrastructure still have many shortcomings, especially (AFE) educational props, prayer rooms, and other game tools, such as slides, swings, and pages that are still joined to the MI page (RL, personal communication, 2022).

Based on the above circumstances, it can be concluded that the problem of facilities and infrastructure significantly contributes to implementing character education in early childhood in IT Kindergarten in Palembang. For this reason, the government should be able to increase the assistance program for facilities and infrastructure to support the success of education.

#### **d. Government support**

Early Childhood Education is not foreign to society today. Its presence has also been recognized by Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System (Sisdiknas) contained in section seven, article 28, paragraphs 1-6, where early childhood education is directed at preschool education, namely children aged 0 to age 6. year.

According to Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education

System, early childhood education is a coaching effort aimed at children from birth to six. The law is carried out by providing educational stimuli to help physical and spiritual growth and development so that children are ready to enter education. Furthermore, early childhood education includes Kindergarten (TK).

Regulations relating to the institution itself, such as regulations relating to the implementation of education, are contained in Law no. 20 of 2003 concerning Sisdinas, which regulates the existence of PAUD in TK. The Head of TK Ulil Albab RL said that by confirming the existence of PAUD in which there was a TK, the TK status was guaranteed" (RL, personal communication, 2022).

This government guarantee impacts other components in early childhood education institutions such as kindergartens.

Government Assistance, With transparent and impartial regulations, the components of the institution itself are equal to other schools, such as teachers. Kindergarten teachers get equal treatment in the 2005 Teacher and Lecturer Law; Kindergarten teachers must have an undergraduate education qualification or equivalent and are entitled to a certification allowance like other teachers. This was acknowledged by the Head of Kindergarten, R, who said, "As a kindergarten teacher until now, we get certification allowances and other benefits from the government" (R, personal communication, 2022).

This situation was also acknowledged by the head of TK Cendikia Faiha RD, saying, "The condition of teachers is greatly helped by certification

assistance from the government so that teachers can live more properly than before and concentrate on teaching" (RD, personal communication, 2022).

Educational facilities assistance from the government is in the form of educational equipment such as tables and chairs, books, and educational teaching aids. In some kindergartens, there is also assistance in building buildings for school development purposes, such as classrooms for learning places.

The government assistance above is based on the role of early childhood education, which is very important for children's growth and development, just like the role of families, the environment, and schools, namely providing early learning with fun methods for children. The development of an educational institution or institution cannot be separated from the role of the government, society, and parents. However, due to the lack of public awareness of the importance of early childhood education, limited funds to include children in kindergarten, and limited allocation of funds from the government, the number of participants in kindergarten has increased. This case must be taken seriously, considering that education is essential for children worldwide, especially in Indonesia.

In addition to the lack of government's role in the development of PAUD, the government also allocates fewer funds for early childhood education needs. Through the Ministry of National Education, especially the Directorate General of Out-of-school Education, the government has prepared funds for PAUD operations. However, these funds are not sufficient for all PAUDs throughout Indonesia, so the government provides a

proposal to increase the contribution of funds to PAUD. This funding problem is reasonably fundamental and contradictory, considering that the fulfillment of the right to education should be free, but in reality, it cannot be accessible. So to get full education rights, people still have to pay.

In general, when considering the above factors, many things must be considered in shaping children's character based on Islamic values, starting from teachers, budgets, learning facilities, and the government's concern for this institution. The role of the teacher as a role model in schools dramatically influences the effectiveness of the implementation of character education. Educators with strong and intelligent characters are needed in the situation and condition of the nation (TA, personal communication, 2022).

Furthermore, according to RD, value education is the implementation of character education obtained from the environment influenced by various factors such as the availability of budget, facilities, and community and government support" (RD, personal communication, 2022). According to the head of the IT Ulil Albab Kindergarten, several things have become our commitment to teaching and learning activities at the Ulil Albab IT Kindergarten. Among them are the educational background, funding, infrastructure, and government support. This is very influential in implementing teaching and learning activities in general, especially the application of character education based on Islamic values (RL, personal communication, 2022).

Based on the above, according to the researcher, attention to the success of character education is inseparable from government support. The government has

implemented many regulations to achieve quality and equitable education.

From the data from interviews, observations, and documentation in this study, the researchers concluded that the factors that influence the application of early childhood character education are based on Islamic values in TK IT in Palembang city. The first is the teacher's educational background, the second is the budget/funds, and the third is government support.

## **DISCUSSION**

The concept of Islamic Value-Based Early Childhood Character Education in Palembang City is an effort to develop the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. The estuary of the cognitive domain is the growth and development of intelligence and academic intellectual abilities, the affective domain leads to the formation of character and personality, and the psychomotor domain leads to vocational and behavioral skills.

Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System article 1 number 14 states that Early Childhood Education (Pendidikan Nasional, 2010) is a coaching effort aimed at children from birth to the age of six, which is carried out through the provision of stimulation education to help physical and spiritual growth and development so that children have the readiness to enter further education.

Character education is behavioral education formed through habituation and using the model of educators, parents, and people in the child's environment. Article 1 of the 2003 National Education System Law (Pendidikan Nasional, 2010) states that the purpose of National Education is to develop students' potential to have

intelligence, personality, and noble character. Thus, education does not only form intelligent Indonesian people but also has personality and character.

*Character education* is a noble character education involving aspects of knowledge, feelings, and actions. These three aspects strengthen the child's character. Children are directed to the development of intelligence, namely intellectual intelligence, emotional intelligence, and spiritual intelligence. In this case, it is responsible for implementing character education for students in TK IT. The implementation of learning combines the values of the nation's character, which include religion, honesty, tolerant, disciplined, hard work, creativity, independence, democratic, curiosity, national spirit, love for the homeland, appreciation of achievements, friendly/communicative, love peace, love to read, care for the environment, and care about social.

As the example that the author has stated before, indirectly, the government brings parents to think passively about the importance of character education, even though the personality aspect that is built from a strong character is something that is needed to underlie various cognitive and psychomotor abilities, so that when they grow up not being a selfish person, look at how many ministers of state are involved in corruption, not infrequently acts of violence, this happens because of the lack of a strong foundation of a good personality in them.

In the history of Islam, about 1400 years ago, Muhammad SAW, the last Prophet in the teachings of Islam, emphasized that his primary mission in educating humans was to perfect morals and strive for morals and character building (Abdul & Andayani, 2012).

The success of a nation in achieving its goals is not only determined by the abundance of its natural resources. However, it is primarily determined by the

quality of its human resources. Some even say that a great nation can be seen from the quality/character of the nation (humans) itself. Understanding the history of something is very important to understand in what context the concept was born and for what the concept was fought. Referring to the opinions of world education figures, leaders, and experts who agree on character building as an educational goal, the history of character education is as old as character education itself. However, character education was lost and forgotten in the world of education, especially in schools (Abdul & Andayani, 2012).

Some say that disorientation in education is the cause of the failure of education. Proper education can build a whole person (holistic), where each person will be able to find his/her identity, meaning, and purpose in life through his relationship with nature, the environment, and spiritual values (divinity), or teach cognitive, affective, and psychomotor, the reality is that it only develops the cognitive aspect and makes children alienated from their environment (Fitri, 2012).

Based on Elkind's research on Early Childhood Education, children who are too forced to master cognitive abilities will become stressed because there is an incompatibility with their age who should play and explore a lot (Elkind, 1967).

Children's academic success is only measured by the achievement of rankings and numbers, not measured in the child's learning process. Consequently, parents and teachers tend to force children to study hard to achieve targets so that children's playing time will be reduced or even lost. This kind of education pattern will print children's personalities which is hard because they have lost their childhood, so

it will be challenging to shape them into character individuals in the future. For this reason, one alternative that can be offered to solve this problem is to implement integrated character education in schools. Namely, education that combines and optimizes informal and formal education activities. Schools must optimize children's learning time by trying to shape children's character (Fitri, 2012). To realize character education oriented to the formation of a strong character, the value factor used as the basis becomes something very vital.

Kertajaya (2010) defines *character* as a characteristic possessed by an object or individual. These characteristics are original and rooted in the personality of the object or individual and are the driving engine of how a person acts, behaves, says, and responds to something (Abdul & Andayani, 2012). Regarding character formation, Munir defines *character* as a pattern, be it thoughts, or attitudes, be it thoughts, attitudes, or actions that are attached to a person very firmly and are difficult to remove (Munir, 2010). Moreover, Islam is a religion full of ideal values, especially those of a noble character or personality or *akhlak karimah*.

Therefore, one alternative character education can be developed from Islamic religious values. For Muslims, the relevant character education is Islamic character education, meaning that education is oriented toward forming a strong character, where a strong character, in this case, is a character that follows Islamic religious values.

Character education must start earlier so children can have a strong foundation. Effective character education

in children is when children are 5-11 years old. This period becomes a golden age for children in developing their character (Alex Hadi Prajitno, 2014).

Rachman (2011) states that one of the most critical stages in human development is the age of 0-5 years, commonly called the golden age, where the development of the intellectual quotient (IQ), emotional quotient (EQ), and spiritual quotient (SQ) is needed. Therefore, providing education that promotes these three developments in a balanced manner by sharing methods is significant.

Furthermore, Rachman (2011) states that ignoring this period is the same as ignoring the most critical asset in one's life. Parents who yearn for sons and daughters with Islamic character should instill Islamic values at that time.

Shaping the character of children requires stages that are designed systematically and continuously. As developing individuals, children have the nature of imitating without considering excellent or bad. Children will see and imitate what is around them; even if it is very attached to the child, it will be stored in long-term memory (LTM). If what is stored in the LTM is positive (good), further reproduction will result in constructive behavior. However, if what goes into the LTM is negative (bad), the reproduction that will be produced in the future is destructive (Fitri, 2012).

Character education is an effort to educate children to make wise decisions and practice them in everyday life to positively contribute to their environment (Megawangi, 2004). Meanwhile, Gaffar, (2010) states that character education is a process of transforming the values of life

to be grown and developed in a person's personality so that they become one in the behavior of that person's life.

said that children trust their parents; their clean hearts are like pearls that shine silently from every twist and image. He would accept any painting written on him and tend to whichever direction he was directed. If he is accustomed to good things and taught kindness, he will grow in goodness and prosper in the hereafter, and his parents, teachers, and guides will also enjoy the reward. Moreover, if he is accustomed to the wrong things and ignores them, as if he neglects pets, he will be harmed and perish, and his sins will cover both his parents and caregivers (Juwariyah, 2010).

Kindergarten has been implemented since the age of 5 years (Juwariyah, 2010). 18 values must also be developed in determining the success of character education in schools, namely: (1) religion; (2) honesty; (3) tolerance; (4) discipline; (5) hard work; (6) creativity; (7) independent; (8) democratic; (9) curiosity; (10) national spirit; (11) love for the homeland; (12) rewarding achievements; (13) friendly/communicative; (14) peace-loving; (15) likes to read; (16) care for the environment; (17) social care; (18) responsibility (Fitri, 2012).

The IT Kindergarten carries out several programs in Palembang City to realize the goals of character education: First, a full-day learning program that makes it easier to carry out character education for students by providing direct examples from teachers and everyone in the school environment. One of the efforts to create a school environment with character is by holding routine activities. The activities are carried out by students

continuously and consistently at all times. For example, the program of spreading smiles, greetings, behaving politely, the dhuha prayer program, morning dhikr, praying, memorizing the Qur'an, and praying in congregation.

Second, the library time program aims to make students love reading, watching movies, and telling Islamic stories. The third is the empathy day program. It is a program to foster a sense of concern for fellow Muslims. Fourth is the market day program. That is a program to foster a creative spirit and entrepreneurial spirit. In addition to the four programs mentioned above, many other activity programs are oriented toward developing students' character. In the evaluation, the IT Kindergarten in Palembang City carries out an evaluation report program to parents in the form of a description, which is held every three months and establishes good cooperation with the guardians of students, one of which is by holding a family day program. The results of the character education system implemented by IT Kindergarten in Palembang City, so far, IT Kindergarten in Palembang City has succeeded in educating students who are honest, independent, care about the environment and behave well, according to the statements of several parents.

The researchers were interested in conducting further research on how to plan, implement, and evaluate character education carried out at the IT Kindergarten in Palembang City. Islamic Character Education-based learning, the first is to provide Human Resources (HR) after it is deemed ready. A meeting will be held to plan a global annual program, where at this stage, the character indicators

will be applied (taught in IT Kindergarten in Palembang City). After deciding on the character indicators, the age group teachers make a more detailed program plan each time they enter the theme. Daily plans are made every weekend after the weekly evaluation is held. At this stage, the IT Kindergarten in Palembang City has carried out according to the stages and standards of making daily activity plans.

The successful implementation of character education in academic units such as kindergartens can be achieved with the involvement of all school members, families, and community members. In his research, even Wening (2012) concluded that value education is the implementation of character education obtained from the family environment, school, peers, and mass media. The family is the first environment for character formation and education that must be empowered, while character education in schools is emphasized, inculcating morals, aesthetic values, and noble character. Besides, the community environment also dramatically affects the character or character of a person. The existence of role models is significant. For example, parents, teachers, and public figures must be direct examples for children or students.

Mulyasa (2011) has a similar opinion that the integration of character education through the learning process of all subjects is a model that is widely applied. This model is adopted with the paradigm that all teachers are character educators. Thus, a teacher is a real example of students applying the character values taught.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the discussion that has been described previously, it can be concluded that the implementation of character education in IT Kindergarten in Palembang City is by forming and educating children so that children can become children with character, including by forming: parenting patterns (Hadanah), role models, habituation, using principles awareness in not complying with character values by referring to the nine character values program implemented in IT Kindergarten, environmental conditioning that supports the implementation of character values, advice, and supervision in the learning process. Furthermore, the factors that influence the implementation of Character Education are teachers' educational background, the available budget, facilities, and infrastructure, as well as the government as a policy maker. The success of character education will be felt when all elements properly carry out their respective functions.

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