

Teacher Strategies in Cultivating Good Character in Early Childhood

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ABSTRACT This research is motivated by the phenomenon that instilling morals such as honesty, helpfulness, and responsibility in children needs to be done from early childhood, as these values form the foundation of good character. Character development in education has become a significant concern because many students still show weaknesses in moral behavior. Therefore, early moral education is essential to guide children in forming positive attitudes and preparing them to interact responsibly in society. The purpose of this research is (1) to know Teacher's Strategy in Cultivating Honest Attitude in Early Childhood at RA Darul Muttaqin Taman Harjo Semendawai Tribe III Oku Timur Palembang Sumsel. (2) to know Teacher's Strategy in Cultivating Mutual help attitude in Early Childhood at RA Darul Muttaqin Taman Harjo Semendawai Tribe III Oku Timur Palembang Sumsel?. In this research the authors used a qualitative approach, a descriptive type of approach. In collecting data, researchers used observation, interview and documentation methods. The method of observation and researcher interviews was used to obtain data related to teacher strategies in instilling morals in early childhood. While the documentation method is used by researchers to extract data. The results showed that the strategy used in cultivating akhlakul karimah in early childhood was habituation strategy, giving understanding and motivation to children so that children get used to doing good things.

Keywords: *Teacher Strategy, Cultivating, Akhlakul Karimah.*

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INTRODUCTION

Morality is an ingrained trait that encourages us to act easily without prior thought or consideration (Xiao et al., 2020). From an early age, families must provide learning, education, and understanding about noble morals. Because a child's first education is from infancy, with family and parents, early childhood, or the golden age, from birth to age 6, is a period in which parents play a crucial role in shaping a child's character and personality. This is a time when children experience rapid growth and development (Bonita et al., 2022).

Early childhood also needs learning, education, and an understanding of honest behavior (Suprajogo et al., 2020). Honesty is the act of being honest; honesty can destroy arrogance and lies, and can pave the way for success (Akhter, 2020). Therefore, honesty is essential from an

early age to develop a good character and personality in children that aligns with their religion. In implementing and teaching honesty to early childhood children, parents and teachers play a crucial role in the success of learning. Teachers and parents must have strategies to implement. The importance of such learning strategies also serves as a solution to address the problem of education's inability to prepare human resources for the future (Graham-Clay, 2024). Therefore, these learning strategies are crucial. If teachers and parents lack learning strategies, they will encounter difficulties during the learning process. The importance of strategies also influences learning success.

Social life is inseparable from the environment, from the smallest to the largest. Early childhood is like a blank slate; when they live within the family environment, they will act and learn from every event they see. Good parents will impart Islamic teachings to their children to help shape their character. They are willing to set a good example for their children, so that children will imitate what they see from their parents. Parents and teachers must also impart knowledge that honesty is commendable behavior for all mankind, as it is loved by all. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "You must act justly. For truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Paradise. A person who consistently acts justly and strives earnestly for it is recorded in the sight of Allah as a shddiq (one who is truthful). (Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim).

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Parents and teachers must also impart knowledge that honesty is commendable behavior for all mankind, as it is loved by all. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "You must act justly. For truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Paradise. A person who consistently acts justly and strives earnestly for it is recorded in the sight of Allah as a shddiq (one who is truthful). (Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim). Integrating such religious guidance into daily practice not only teaches children the importance of honesty but also strengthens their spiritual development, linking moral behavior with both social and religious values. Furthermore, the home and school environments must work collaboratively to reinforce these principles consistently. When children see that both parents and teachers value and reward honesty, they are more likely to internalize it as a natural part of their behavior. Consistent reinforcement, guidance, and correction in a supportive environment help children understand the consequences of dishonest behavior and the benefits of maintaining integrity, fostering long-term character development.

Finally, early moral education should also focus on practical applications of honesty in everyday life. Activities such as sharing, returning borrowed items, completing tasks responsibly, and telling the truth about mistakes allow children to practice honesty in real contexts. By experiencing the outcomes of honest behavior, children develop a deeper understanding of its value and are more likely to apply it consistently in social interactions, forming the foundation of ethical conduct that lasts into adulthood.

Parents and teachers play a pivotal role in instilling honesty as a core moral value in children. By actively teaching that honesty is universally commendable and demonstrating it through their own behavior, adults provide children with clear examples of ethical conduct. The consistent reinforcement of truthful behavior at home and in school helps children internalize honesty as a standard for their own actions, creating a foundation for moral decision-making that

extends beyond immediate rewards or punishments. This dual influence ensures that children receive cohesive guidance in understanding the importance of honesty within both family and social contexts (Мамадалиева & Калыгулова, 2024).

Religious teachings, such as the hadith narrated by Bukhari and Muslim, serve as a guiding framework for moral education by linking honesty to spiritual and ethical outcomes. The hadith emphasizes that truthfulness leads to righteousness and ultimately to Paradise, framing honesty not only as a social virtue but also as a divine command. Integrating such religious principles into teaching strategies reinforces the moral significance of honesty for children, helping them perceive it as an integral part of personal character and spiritual development. By connecting ethical behavior to both societal and religious values, educators and parents provide a multidimensional approach to nurturing integrity in early childhood. In addition to parents and the family environment, which instills noble morals, such as honesty and mutual assistance, teachers also play a crucial role in shaping children's character. The two must be interconnected to create a generation of noble character. Half of a child's life is spent at school, so instilling noble morals in children from an early age, with the help of teachers, is expected to foster their daily practices.

RA Darul Muttaqin Taman Harjo Semendawai, Suku III, Oku Timur, Palembang, South Sumatra, teachers make it a habit to set examples that reflect noble morals in their children. Through these habits, children learn from every experience they see. They develop a high sense of tolerance, like to help their friends in times of need, and demonstrate a high level of honesty when entrusted with tasks. For example, during class time, teachers always ask who hasn't done their homework, who hasn't brought their lunch, etc., and when a student is dishonest, the teacher gives appropriate punishment.

Through these consistent habits, children gradually internalize important moral values. They learn to exhibit tolerance toward their peers, develop a willingness to assist friends in times of need, and demonstrate honesty when given responsibilities or entrusted with tasks. Such repeated exposure to positive behavior helps shape their character and fosters a strong foundation for ethical conduct in the future. For instance, during class activities, teachers regularly check students' accountability, such as asking who has not completed their homework or who forgot to bring their lunch. When instances of dishonesty occur, teachers apply appropriate and constructive consequences. This approach not only addresses misconduct but also reinforces the importance of moral behavior, helping children understand the relationship between actions and consequences in a supportive learning environment.

Recent studies have shown the effectiveness of various strategies in instilling moral values in early childhood. For example, research at TKTQ Al-Khansa found that structured Islamic storytelling activities can foster morals such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, and emotional control in children (Nazar & Khan, 2020). At TK Husna Jaya Semarang, research indicated that internalizing moral values through daily activities such as habitual polite expressions ("sorry," "thank you," "please," "excuse me") along with modeling and exemplary stories, can shape Islamic character from an early age (Alfiani & Khunaifi, 2025). Another study at Rumah Quran Al-Fatihah Jambi showed that habituating children to pray before and after activities, greet and show respect to parents and teachers, and teaching hadiths about moral conduct can consistently instill noble character values (Roihan, 2022). In addition, a study in a PAUD program using an integrated moral learning approach (through routine, programmed, and spontaneous activities) found that moral education for children aged 4–6 helps develop well-mannered children through systematic methods, media, and assessment. Most recently, research at North Indralaya Nature School demonstrated that responsibility can be instilled in early childhood through physical activities, allowing character development through habituation in the context of movement and social interaction (Hernowo et al., 2022).

METHOD

In this study, the author used a qualitative approach with a descriptive approach, which aims to describe the phenomenon under study in depth based on facts and conditions occurring in the field (Yusanto, 2020). This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand the meaning, perceptions, and experiences of research subjects holistically without variable manipulation. Through a descriptive approach, the author attempts to present data as is, then analyzes it narratively to gain a comprehensive understanding of the context and situation under study (Firmansyah & Masrun, 2021). Thus, the research results are expected to provide a clear and in-depth picture of the phenomenon that is the focus of the study. In collecting data, the researcher used observation, interviews, and documentation methods. The researcher used observation and interviews to obtain data related to teacher strategies in instilling noble morals in early childhood. Meanwhile, the researcher used documentation methods to extract data.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Teacher Strategies in Instilling an Honest Attitude towards Early Childhood

One of the primary strategies teachers use to instill honesty in early childhood is through consistent observation and role modeling. Teachers at RA Darul Muttaqin Taman Harjo Semendawai demonstrate honest behavior in daily interactions, such as admitting mistakes, giving fair assessments, and acknowledging students' achievements truthfully. By consistently modeling honesty, children can observe the consequences of truthful and dishonest behavior in a safe environment, which encourages them to imitate and internalize these values. This strategy aligns with social learning theory, which emphasizes that children learn moral behaviors by observing and imitating trusted adults.

Habituation is another key strategy used to cultivate honesty in early childhood. Teachers integrate small yet consistent practices, such as checking homework completion, encouraging students to return borrowed items, or asking children to report their actions honestly (Graham-Clay, 2024). When children repeatedly practice honesty in daily routines, these behaviors gradually become internalized and automatic. The process of habituation helps children understand that honesty is expected, valued, and rewarded in their learning environment, making it a natural part of their character.

In addition to modeling and habituation, reinforcement and motivation are crucial in instilling honesty. Teachers provide immediate feedback when children act honestly, such as praise, acknowledgment, or small rewards, while applying constructive consequences for dishonesty in a supportive manner. This strategy helps children connect actions with outcomes, reinforcing the understanding that honesty leads to positive recognition and trust. By combining guidance, reinforcement, and motivational techniques, teachers create a structured learning environment where children feel encouraged and supported in developing an honest attitude that extends beyond the classroom.

Honesty is a self-responsible attitude and behavior that reflects responsibility for what has been done, not lying, not cheating, saying what is true, having the courage to admit mistakes, and being willing to make sacrifices for the sake of the truth (Lase & Halawa, 2022a). Therefore, in forming an honest attitude towards students, teachers use strategies, namely providing motivation, discipline and understanding the importance of being honest in accordance with reality (Suriana, 2024). In giving motivation, for example, the teacher gives an example and understands that being honest is one of the attitudes that emulates the attitude of the Prophet. Apart from that, the teacher also talks about being honest so that students can learn from what the teacher has told them. The following are forms of honesty to be honest with yourself, with others, and with God.

Being honest with oneself means not lying to oneself. For example, during a national exam, we cheat and get a good grade, feeling proud even though we know it's not our own actual score,

but rather the result of cheating (Lase & Halawa, 2022b). Being honest with others means revealing the truth to others without hiding anything. Being honest with others isn't just about saying and doing the right thing, but also about providing the greatest benefit to others. Being honest with God means doing and giving everything, or worshipping only for God. Being honest with God is a matter of conscience; those who are honest with God always feel at ease (Tasmara, 2017).

These are the forms and meanings of honesty. In addition to providing motivation, discipline, and understanding, teachers also make efforts to ask students questions, such as who didn't bring lunch, who hasn't eaten this morning, and who hasn't done their homework. After that, the teacher checks the students and asks the parents of the students, and if there is one student who is not telling the truth, the teacher gives appropriate punishment. Honesty comes from a clean and sincere heart, honesty is the basis of truth and frankness. Honesty is also the key to being an example in all aspects of life (Wahab, 2013). Honesty can be applied to anyone, especially to oneself and to God. Honesty to God can be a sincere action in carrying out all obligations that certainly expect His pleasure. Allah says in Surah At-Tawbat verse 119:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ

Meaning: *O you who believe, fear Allah, and be with those who are righteous.*

Honesty is the door to everything, as taught by the Prophet Muhammad. There are many role models that must be taken from him, he is the one who taught honesty to his people. This is how important it is to instill honesty in children from childhood, so that they become children who can be trusted until adulthood.

Teacher Strategies for Instilling Mutual Assistance in Early Childhood

Humans are social creatures (home social). Human existence in the world greatly requires the presence of others; who knows what would happen if humans lived alone? Therefore, mutual assistance is a necessity in human life. The following is a hadith from the Prophet about mutual assistance, from Anas ibn Malik (r.a.), "Help your brother who is committing injustice or being oppressed." The Companions asked, "O Messenger of Allah, (it is natural) for me to help someone who is being oppressed, (but) how can I help someone who is acting unjustly?" The Prophet replied, "(Help him) by preventing and forbidding him from committing (any further) wrongdoing; in this way, you have helped him." (Narrated by Imam Ahmad and Shaykh Shaykh).

One of the main strategies teachers use to instill mutual assistance in early childhood is by consistently modeling cooperative behavior. Teachers demonstrate helpfulness through daily interactions, such as assisting students when they face difficulties or collaborating with colleagues visibly in front of the children. By observing these behaviors, children learn that helping others is a valued and expected practice (Alfiani & Khunaifi, 2025). This approach aligns with social learning theory, which emphasizes that children acquire social and moral behaviors by imitating adults they trust and respect.

Teachers also utilize structured group activities to encourage mutual assistance among children. Activities like group projects, paired tasks, or classroom chores provide opportunities for children to practice helping each other, sharing resources, and working collaboratively to achieve common goals. Through these structured interactions, children develop empathy, patience, and a sense of responsibility toward their peers, fostering social cohesion and reinforcing the value of cooperation in everyday life.

In addition to modeling and group activities, positive reinforcement is used to strengthen cooperative behavior. Teachers praise children when they assist their peers, acknowledge teamwork, and provide encouragement to those who demonstrate helpfulness. Conversely, they gently guide children who are less willing to cooperate, helping them understand the benefits of

mutual assistance. This reinforcement helps children internalize the importance of supporting others and connects prosocial behavior with positive outcomes, motivating them to act kindly and responsibly (Irsyad & Salim, 2025). Finally, teachers integrate mutual assistance into daily classroom routines to create habituation. Simple practices such as sharing classroom materials, helping classmates clean up, or assisting younger peers in tasks are repeated consistently. Over time, these habitual actions become a natural part of children's behavior, promoting long-term development of a cooperative and supportive attitude. By embedding mutual assistance in everyday activities, teachers ensure that children not only learn the concept theoretically but also practice it in meaningful, real-life contexts.

Instilling a mutual assistance attitude in students is not easy, but teachers must have simple strategies that are easy for students to understand (Utomo & Pahlevi, 2022). Therefore, in developing a helpful attitude, the strategy used by teachers is to provide understanding and examples of helpful behavior to students. In providing examples and understanding, teachers guide students to always practice good behavior, such as helping others. They set an example for students, starting with small things around them, such as always saying "thank you" after asking for something, and providing reinforcement in the form of simple praise. The hope is that by making these habits a habit, they will also develop a habit of saying "thank you" and being helpful to others.

Theoretically, teachers' strategies for instilling a helpful attitude in early childhood are rooted in Albert Bandura's social learning theory. This theory emphasizes that children learn through observation, imitation, and modeling, where the teacher's behavior serves as a concrete example for the children to imitate (Ozoaghuta & Ojukwu, 2022). In the context of early childhood education, teachers play a crucial role as models of prosocial behavior, including helping, sharing, and cooperation. When teachers demonstrate positive behaviors such as helping a friend, speaking gently, or cooperating in class activities, children will imitate them because they learn through direct experience and observation of their social environment. Therefore, teacher role models are a key strategy in fostering the value of helping others in children.

Furthermore, Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development is also relevant in explaining teachers' strategies for instilling a helping attitude. According to Kohlberg, early childhood moral development is in the pre-conventional stage, where good behavior is performed to gain rewards or avoid punishment (Hanafiah, 2024). Teachers can capitalize on this stage by providing positive reinforcement such as praise, awards, or star symbols when children demonstrate helpful behavior (Ibda, 2023). As children grow older and gain social experience, they will begin to understand the moral value behind these actions, not just the rewards. Therefore, a strategy that combines role models, habituation, and positive reinforcement can be an effective foundation for fostering a helping attitude as part of early childhood moral and social development.

CONCLUSION

Instilling honesty in early childhood, the teacher's strategy at RA Darul Muttaqin Taman Harjo is that the teacher provides an understanding of honesty, provides motivation and provides and provides habits such as to always be honest because honesty is an example of the attitude of the Prophet Muhammad, always monitoring students in carrying out assignments, always asking who did not bring supplies, who did not study last night and who did not eat breakfast. When there are students who do not tell the truth, the teacher gives appropriate warnings and punishments to students. In addition, RA Darul Muttaqin Taman Harjo provides guidance with an honesty canteen so that it can accustom students to be prepared to be honest. so from these habits, students will always be accustomed to doing good. Instilling the attitude of helping each other in early childhood, the strategy used by RA Darul Muttaqin Tama Harjo teachers is to provide examples or role models to students starting from small things around children that can be understood by children such as getting used to when teachers ask for help from students or

teachers always get used to saying thank you. Apart from that, RA Darul Muttaqin teachers always advise students to always do good and help each other wherever they are.

Although the strategies implemented by teachers at RA Darul Muttaqin Taman Harjo, such as modeling honesty and mutual assistance, habituation through daily routines, monitoring, and providing guidance like the honesty canteen, have proven effective in fostering moral values in early childhood, there are certain limitations. Some children may still struggle to consistently apply honesty or help others due to individual differences in temperament, understanding, or home environment influences. In addition, the strategies require ongoing supervision and reinforcement, which can be challenging during busy classroom schedules. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers continue to combine role modeling, positive reinforcement, and structured activities while involving parents in reinforcing these values at home. Supplementary programs, such as storytelling, games, or peer-assisted learning, can also be implemented to further strengthen children's understanding and practice of honesty and mutual assistance in varied and engaging ways.

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