

Strengthening Character Education (PPK) Using Illustrated Media on the WhatsApp Application in Elementary School

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the extent to which the character education program through visual media in the WhatsApp application is effective for higher grade levels in the elementary school. The goal is to strengthen character education in accordance with the principles of law. The method of this research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore the phenomenon under investigation. Data was collected from both teachers and a select group of students through in-depth interviews. The process of enhancing character education at SDN 7 Rindingallo comprises three key phases: planning involving a student needs analysis, curriculum assessment, character value selection, and the creation of discussion spaces both offline and online; implementations which includes sharing images/videos depicting character values before lessons, collaborating with school principals and parents; evaluation and monitoring, employing tests and attitude journals. Nevertheless, the implementation of Character Education through visual media on the WhatsApp application has encountered challenges, primarily due to limited internet availability and insufficient parental or familial support. To address these issues, solutions have been proposed, such as providing teachers with Indihome WiFi access and encouraging students to study with peers who have data access while actively engaging in conversations to educate parents and garner their support for the character education program.

Keywords: strengthening character education; Whatsapp; illustrated media

1. Introduction

Education is not only about cognitive development, but it also needs to consider the development of attitudes, morals, and skills (Mawardi, 2021). This is also known as character education. Character education is an effort to instill religious, moral, and ethical values in students through knowledge, with the help of parents, teachers, and the community, which is very important in the formation and development of student character (Annisa, Wiliyah, & Rahmawati, 2020).

Through character education, it is hoped that students can develop good moral and ethical values, such as discipline, honesty, responsibility, and cooperation, so that they become individuals with good character and morals. Character education helps students to face challenges in life, such as social pressure and negative influences from the environment around them. With strong character, students will be more able to overcome problems and make the right decisions. Character education helps students to become productive and quality individuals. Students with good character will be more able to develop their potential and achieve their goals. In addition, character education helps students to become good and responsible citizens.

The National Education System (Sisdiknas) Law No. 20 of 2003 emphasizes the need for education that teaches character. In addition, the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud) has a policy that aims to strengthen Character Education (PPK) at all levels of schools in Indonesia. This policy is a concrete step taken by the government in order to realize the noble vision of creating a nation with good and excellent character. In implementing this policy, Kemendikbud works with various educational institutions and related parties to develop a curriculum that integrates character values in every aspect of learning. In addition, character building is also

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emphasized through a variety of extracurricular activities that promote the development of attitudes of honesty, discipline, cooperation, responsibility, and social spirit.

In reality, there is a problem where the education system tends to focus more on the curriculum and knowledge, so character values are often neglected. This is reinforced by symptoms of moral degradation such as violence, cheating, and intolerance (Lickona, 2016). In addition, the industrial revolution 4.0 and social change also affect character development (Pratama, 2019).

The development of information technology can be a threat to the next generation of the nation, because the development of technology makes children have bad characters. Therefore, character education is very important to help students face the challenges of the digital era. In addition, human resources need to be renewed to face moral degradation and global challenges. Therefore, character education must be upheld as recommended by the government (Suparlan, 2016), teaching values through cognitive recognition, affective appreciation, and real practice.

The National Character Education Movement has been running since 2010 and has created model schools for character formation. Character strengthening also supports the development of student talents and potential (Muhajir, 2017). Character education can be integrated into learning in all subjects (Daryanto, 2018). to promote internalization of values in everyday life. In addition, the character education movement can also be through information technology as an effort to combine character education with the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support the development of moral, ethical, and positive values in young people. This approach recognizes that information technology can not only be used for academic or entertainment purposes, but can also be an effective tool in shaping individual character. The implementation of the character strengthening program has been carried out at all levels of school, including elementary school.

The State Elementary School (SD) Negeri 7 Rindingallo has been working to address this challenge by implementing character strengthening through various programs, one of which is through visual media via the WhatsApp application (Dewi & Laelasari, 2020). This program helps the interaction between teachers and students in character formation, especially in values such as honesty, tolerance, hard work, and responsibility (Muhajir, 2017). This study aims to explore the extent to which the character education strengthening program through visual media in the WhatsApp application is effective for higher grade levels. The goal is to strengthen character education in accordance with the principles of law.

2. Research Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore the phenomenon under investigation. The participants in this study include educational practitioners, specifically teachers, as well as students in grades IV, V, and VI. Data was collected from both teachers and a select group of students through in-depth interviews.

The data analysis method used in this research involves several stages. First, the data is organized and prepared for analysis. Next, a comprehensive understanding of the context is achieved by reading and comprehending the entirety of the data. The next step involves coding the data to generate more detailed descriptions. Emerging themes from the coding process are then interconnected to understand the relationships among various aspects. Finally, the researcher interprets the meanings derived from the identified themes, providing a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

3.1.1. Interview results regarding the Implementation of PPK Using Pictorial Media on the Whatsapp Application

The implementation of Character Education Strengthening (PPK) at SDN 7 Rindingallo is divided into three main stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation. The following are the findings obtained regarding the implementation of PPK at SDN 7 Rindingallo, which reflect the school's commitment to forming students' characters holistically.

3.1.2. Planning

a. *Student Needs Analysis*

In previous interviews with the school board, it was revealed that the efforts that had been made in planning and designing the Character Education Strengthening (PPK) program had resulted in a deep understanding of the importance of integrating character values in education. The school board collectively realized that PPK is not just about pursuing academic aspects, but also focuses on the overall development of students as individuals who are integrated, responsible, and empathetic.

In the planning stage, teachers from grade IV, V, and VI of SDN 7 Rindingallo held a meeting to discuss and formulate strategies related to the Implementation of Character Education and Development (PPK) in school. The meeting was aimed at ensuring optimal preparation to run the PPK program effectively. The teachers did not only focus on the subject matter, but also conducted a deep analysis of the individual needs of students before starting the teaching process.

In interviews with some teachers, they expressed the importance of identifying student weaknesses and the characters that need to be instilled in education. They shared their experiences on how they chose images that represent the characters and then discussed them together with the students in groups. All of these steps were taken in order to provide optimal teaching that is in line with the needs and development of students.

b. *Curriculum Review*

The next stage in the planning of Character Education Strengthening (PPK) is the curriculum review process. In PPK, most of the planning is done by teachers. The main goal is to integrate character values into the learning material so that time can be used efficiently and learning can be effective.

For example, in an interview with one teacher (P1), it was mentioned that they first looked at the existing teaching materials and syllabi, then looked for opportunities to insert character values. The teacher also arranged learning strategies and supporting devices such as images and materials.

In this context, the curriculum plays an important role in helping teachers plan the implementation of learning. The Lesson Plan (RPP) is the foundation for teachers in the teaching process. SDN 7 Rindingallo has adopted the right strategy by preparing a PPK program plan. However, there is variation in how teachers review the curriculum. Some teachers, such as the one interviewed (P5), refer to the curriculum as a guide, while others also develop strategies based on personal observations of children. The documentation results show that there are records of the results of the teacher's curriculum review before designing the implementation of learning, such as mapping of Basic Competencies and learning strategies to strengthen character education in SDN 7 Rindingallo.

c. *Choosing Character Values to Teach*

In designing a character education program, the first crucial step is to choose the character values that will be taught to students. The teachers of SDN 7 Rindingallo carefully observed the needs and situations of their students before designing the program. This process involved selecting character values that are considered important to emphasize from an early age. Values such as religious, national, independent, creative, and cooperative were chosen as the main focus of the character education program. In this selection process, teachers and school leaders worked together to identify character values that need to be improved, such as praying regularly, good manners, respecting religious differences, and responsibility for the environment.

The process of selecting character values is based on several considerations. First, the results of intensive observation between teachers and students provide an overview of the characters that need strengthening. Teachers strive to see deeply into the potential and weaknesses of students' characters through everyday interactions. In addition, this selection is also based on the analysis of the curriculum and learning materials. The character values chosen are tailored to the lessons to be taught, so that the integration between learning and character strengthening can occur harmoniously. Furthermore, the school's vision and mission are also an important foundation in choosing character values. The character values that want to be built strongly are also in line with the school's commitment to producing quality generations.

Overall, the selection of character values in the character education program at SDN 7 Rindingallo is based on a deep understanding of students, curriculum analysis, and school commitment. This step is an important foundation in shaping young generations who have a strong and integrated character foundation.

d. Creating Discussion Spaces, Both Offline and Online (Whatsapp)

SDN 7 Rindingallo takes a comprehensive approach to planning Character Education Strengthening (PPK), involving two main communication channels: face-to-face meetings (offline) and online platforms, especially WhatsApp. The early stages of planning also include efforts to socialize the program to ensure that all stakeholders are fully involved.

In addition, teachers also use online platforms, such as class WhatsApp groups, to facilitate discussion and coordination. In these groups, teachers organize learning schedules using images or photos, so that information can be communicated clearly and engagingly to students. Teachers also share lesson schedules, PPK materials, and other program information in these groups. Additionally, these discussion spaces provide opportunities for students to actively participate, ask questions, and share their thoughts about the character values being taught. This creates an inclusive and interactive learning environment, allowing students to feel involved and responsible for their own character development.

The socialization process is an important aspect of this stage. Teachers are committed to explaining the purpose and benefits of the PPK program to students, parents, and school staff. Socialization is done through various channels, such as parent-teacher meetings and online materials shared through WhatsApp groups. With good socialization, all stakeholders will have a clear understanding of the PPK program, so that effective collaboration can be established.

3.1.3. Implementation

a. Sending images/videos of character values before learning

The implementation stage is a critical component of the Character Education Reinforcement (PPK) program at SDN 7 Rindingallo. Before the start of each lesson, teachers of grades IV, V, and VI use the WhatsApp Group platform to send images of characters that illustrate the values to be taught. This approach is intended to arouse students' interest and curiosity, helping them to understand the context and prepare for the lesson.

The images are accompanied by tasks or exercises that encourage students to think critically and creatively about the character values. For example, one teacher might send an image of a person helping another person and ask students to write a story about the incident. Another teacher might send an image of a group of people working together and ask students to discuss the importance of teamwork. The teachers have found that this approach is effective in promoting character education. Students are more engaged in the lessons and are more likely to remember the character values.

b. Collaborating with school principals and parents

The success of character education depends on the collaboration of all stakeholders, including teachers, school principals, and parents. Teachers are responsible for designing and implementing learning activities that promote character values. School principals provide support and guidance to teachers, and they also create a school culture that is conducive to character development. Parents play a role in reinforcing character values at home.

There are many ways that teachers, school principals, and parents can collaborate to promote character education. One way is to develop a shared vision for character education. This vision should be based on the school's mission and values. Once there is a shared vision, teachers, school principals, and parents can work together to develop a plan for implementing it. Another way to collaborate is to share information and resources. Teachers can share lesson plans and ideas for activities with other teachers. School principals can provide parents with information about character education. Parents can share their experiences and insights with teachers and school principals.

3.1.4. Monitoring and Evaluation PPK Program in SDN 7 Rindingallo

SDN 7 Rindingallo uses two instruments to assess student learning: tests and attitude journals. Tests are used to measure student understanding of material and character values. Tests can be written tests, oral tests, or practical tests. Attitude journals are used to measure changes in student behavior. Attitude journals contain records of student behavior in various situations, such as in the classroom, outside the classroom, and in the community.

From interviews with three teachers at SDN 7 Rindingallo, it is known that tests and attitude journals are used to measure student success in learning. Tests are used to measure student knowledge, while attitude journals are used to measure student application of character values in everyday life. However, there are some challenges in using these two instruments. Tests can sometimes be difficult to measure student understanding of character values. Attitude journals can also be difficult to observe directly, so they require more time and effort. Overall, assessment in SDN 7

Rindingallo is already good. However, there is a need to improve the effectiveness of using tests and attitude journals in order to measure student success more comprehensively.

3.1.5. Challenges and Solutions in the Implementation of PPK Using Image Media on the Whatsapp Application

a. Accesbility and Internet Availability

These challenges are further underscored by insights from teachers and fourth-grade students at SDN 7 Rindingallo. The fourth-grade teacher highlighted that many students aren't actively participating in character education (PPK) lessons through WhatsApp due to factors like limited internet accesbility or the absence of an internet data plan. Fourth-grade students also voiced that their struggle in reinforcing character education through WhatsApp stems from the irregular availability of internet data. Beyond data availability, the stability of the internet network poses an additional challenge.

In response to this, the school has taken steps to mitigate the issue. They've provided teachers with Indihome Wifi access, and students are encouraged to collaborate with friends who have data for learning purposes. While this solution aids students in their learning journey, it's crucial to supplement it with further efforts to enhance internet data access for all students.

b. Lack of Parental Support

Based on the results of interviews, moral support is very important in learning using Whatsapp. This moral support can be in the form of motivation, encouragement, and other emotional support. Parents who provide moral support to their children will make children feel more motivated to learn. However, some parents are less supportive in helping their children learn because they are busy with other activities such as work. This can hinder the learning process of children, especially for children who have learning difficulties.

Therefore, teachers and students must find other ways to overcome this problem. One way that can be done is to study together with friends or ask for help from other family members. This can help children get the moral support they need. Another solution that can be done is to always try to communicate with parents to educate them about the importance of moral support in children's learning. Teachers can provide information to parents about the benefits of moral support for children, as well as ways that parents can provide moral support to their children.

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1. Planning

The planning of character education strengthening programs is a process that involves strategic steps to develop and reinforce values and positive attitudes in individuals, especially among students (Andiarini, Arifin, & Nurabadi, 2018). The aim of character education is to shape individuals who are not only academically intelligent but also possess integrity, ethics, empathy, and the ability to overcome various challenges in life (Safitri, Wulandari, & Herlambang, 2022).

Here are the general steps in planning a character education strengthening program according to the Ministry of Education and Culture:

- a) Conducting a needs analysis by identifying the character values that need to be instilled in students is a crucial step. This analysis helps determine the requirements and priorities for strengthening character education. Identifying the character values to be instilled in students can be done through various methods, such as reinforcing the values of Pancasila (Aprilia & Nawawi, 2023).
- b) Setting short-term and long-term goals for the character education strengthening program is essential. For instance, these goals may involve enhancing traits like responsibility, honesty, cooperation, and more. In SDN 7 Rindingallo, the school generally aligns its goals with national program objectives. However, it also specifically aims to honor the cultural and traditional values as part of Toraja culture..
- c) Developing relevant and engaging teaching materials and methods that impart character values is crucial. Interactive teaching methods such as storytelling, role-playing, discussions, collaborative projects, and simulations are utilized at SDN 7 Rindingallo. Additionally, the school leverages online media to implement the Character Education Strengthening Program.

- d) Selecting the character values to prioritize in the program is a vital decision. Examples of character values include honesty, responsibility, empathy, cooperation, discipline, perseverance, and more.
- e) The preparation of a comprehensive lesson plan is essential and should encompass schedules, activities, materials, methods, and evaluations.

3.2.2. *Implementation PPK Program*

One unique aspect of the Character Education Strengthening Program (PPK) at SDN 7 Rindingallo is the use of WhatsApp to send images or videos showcasing character values before the lessons. This approach is designed to stimulate students' curiosity and encourage them to seek reference materials related to the character values embedded in the curriculum (Parlindungan, Mahardika, & Yulinar, 2020; Sari & Hakim, 2020). Utilizing videos in teaching has the potential to visualize complex concepts, promote active student interaction, accommodate various learning styles, ignite interest and motivation, and connect the material to real-life contexts, ultimately enhancing students' learning experiences and academic performance (Yuanta, 2020).

One of the strategies employed by teachers is assigning pre-learning character exercise tasks. This provides students with an opportunity to research and gather information about the character values that will be discussed in class, thereby fostering their curiosity and encouraging them to delve into the subject (Meilantika, Zahara, & Silitonga, 2016). By doing this, students can gain a deeper understanding of these values and become better prepared to engage in classroom discussions and activities. Moreover, teachers can incorporate character values into their lesson plans and employ various teaching methods to help students develop these values. For example, project-based learning can aid students in developing values such as responsibility, critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration (Taryono, Saepuzaman, Dhina, & Fitriyanti, 2019). Teachers can also use contextual approaches to teach values like honesty, discipline, and self-reliance. Finally, teachers can involve parents in the character education process by encouraging them to reinforce these values at home.

Receiving a positive response from students during the implementation phase of character education is highly encouraging. It signifies that the Character Education Strengthening Program has successfully inspired and internalized positive values in students (Yandri, 2022). It also indicates that students are more inclined to embrace the values and principles taught, increasing the likelihood of success in fostering positive changes in their behavior.

During the implementation phase, collaboration with the school's administration and parents is crucial to maximize the effectiveness of the character education program. This is a vital step in ensuring the program's success. Effective communication, involving parents in program planning, open program socialization, active parent engagement at the school, regular evaluation, adequate resource allocation, and a sustainable approach are all ways to achieve this (Sinaga, 2022). With strong collaboration, the character education program can operate more effectively and help students develop positive values and behaviors.

3.2.3. *Monitoring and Evaluation PPK Program in SDN 7 Rindingallo*

Monitoring and evaluating the Character Education Strengthening Program are crucial components to ensure its success and positive impact (Yulianto, Sayekti, & Sugiyanto, 2020). Through monitoring, program implementers can periodically assess the progress and quality of program implementation, as well as identify any issues that may arise during the process. On the other hand, evaluation of outcomes provides a comprehensive picture of the program's effectiveness by measuring tangible changes in students' character, values, and behavior. The results of this evaluation serve as a foundation for program improvement and better decision-making in developing a stronger character education in the school. By conducting structured monitoring and evaluation, schools can ensure that their Character Education Strengthening Program functions as intended and has a positive impact on shaping students' character.

3.2.4. *Challenges and Solutions in the Implementation of PPK Using Image Media on the Whatsapp Application*

The implementation of Character Education Strengthening Program (PPK) at SDN 7 Rindingallo using image-based media on WhatsApp has encountered several obstacles, one of which is the limitation of internet access and data packages. Internet access limitations and data package constraints have become significant barriers in modern learning processes (Mona & Widodo, 2022; Safrianti, Sukama, Susilo, Feranita, & Sari, 2022). Amid technological advancements and the use of online resources in education, many students and teachers still face difficulties in accessing rich and diverse online educational resources. Especially in remote or low-income areas, inadequate access and the high cost of data packages often restrict their educational potential. This underscores the importance of

collective efforts to ensure affordable and equitable internet access so that everyone can access education more easily and effectively (Setiawan, Pape, & Beschorner, 2022).

To address these barriers, the school has taken steps to provide Wi-Fi for teachers and students to learn together with peers who have data to overcome the lack of internet data availability. During the pandemic, the government provided internet subsidies, but this program was discontinued after the pandemic ended. In remote areas like Rindingallo, the procurement of data packages and internet accessibility continue to be challenging due to the high cost of data packages. This emphasizes the need for long-term, sustainable policies to ensure that all citizens can remain economically connected to the digital world, given the growing importance of the internet in education, employment, and access to information.

Parental support is crucial for optimizing Character Education Strengthening Program (PPK). Parents who support their children's learning play a significant role in assisting teachers and students in the learning process. They seek solutions to ensure that their children can submit assignments on time and help them understand the instructional materials received via WhatsApp. However, not all parents are equally supportive of their children's education. Some parents may lack support due to various reasons such as work commitments or a lack of understanding of PPK. This can lead to students struggling to learn independently and being less engaged in learning activities.

To address these barriers, schools can enhance communication and coordination with parents. The school can hold regular meetings with parents to discuss the progress of character education in the school. Additionally, the school can implement programs such as collaborative learning activities, parenting training sessions, or discussions about character education to involve parents more actively in their children's education. This proactive approach can help bridge the gap and ensure that parents are more engaged and supportive of the character education initiatives.

4. Conclusion

The process of enhancing character education at SDN 7 Rindingallo comprises three key phases: planning involving a student needs analysis, curriculum assessment, character value selection, and the creation of discussion spaces both offline and online; implementations which includes sharing images/videos depicting character values before lessons, collaborating with school principals and parents; evaluation and monitoring, employing tests and attitude journals. Nevertheless, the implementation of Character Education through visual media on the WhatsApp application has encountered challenges, primarily due to limited internet availability and insufficient parental or familial support. To address these issues, solutions have been proposed, such as providing teachers with Indihome WiFi access and encouraging students to study with peers who have data access while actively engaging in conversations to educate parents and garner their support for the character education program.

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