

Strengthening Students' Religious Character Education Through Character Apple Activities At SD Negeri Ngaliyan 01

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Abstrak: Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi penting dalam memahami penerapan apel karakter sebagai media pembentukan nilai-nilai keagamaan siswa di SDN Ngaliyan 01 Kota Semarang. Kegiatan Apple yang dilakukan secara rutin terbukti efektif membantu siswa menginternalisasikan nilai-nilai agama, seperti kedisiplinan, kejujuran, kebersihan dan kepedulian terhadap sesama. Hasil penelitian ini sejalan dengan Teori Nilai yang dikembangkan oleh Milton Rokeach yang menekankan pentingnya kebiasaan dan dukungan sosial dalam membentuk nilai-nilai fundamental dalam diri individu. Amalan rutin seperti sholat berjamaah dan penyampaian pesan moral membantu internalisasi nilai-nilai dalam diri siswa. Penelitian ini juga mengidentifikasi hambatan, seperti keragaman agama dan keterbatasan waktu, serta menawarkan solusi. Dengan adanya bukti dampak positif apel karakter, penelitian ini memberikan panduan bagi sekolah dan pemangku kepentingan untuk membentuk generasi yang bermoral dan spiritual. Selain itu, peran guru dan kepala sekolah sebagai role model juga ditekankan sebagai unsur utama dalam mendukung penguatan nilai-nilai keagamaan siswa secara signifikan. Penelitian ini tidak hanya memperkuat upaya pendidikan karakter religius, namun juga dapat menjadi inspirasi bagi sekolah lain dalam mengembangkan program serupa secara berkelanjutan

Kata Kunci: *Apel Karakter, Nilai Keagamaan, Pendidikan Karakter*

Abstract: This research provides an important contribution in understanding the application of character apples as a medium for forming students' religious values at SDN Ngaliyan 01 Semarang City. Apple activities carried out regularly have proven to be effective in helping students internalize religious values, such as discipline, honesty, cleanliness and concern for others. The results of this research are in line with the Value Theory developed by Milton Rokeach, which emphasizes the importance of habits and social support in forming fundamental values in individuals. Routine practices such as group prayer and conveying moral messages help internalize values in students. The research also identifies barriers, such as religious diversity and time constraints, and offers solutions. With evidence of the positive impact of character apples, this research provides guidance for schools and stakeholders to form a moral and spiritual generation. Apart from that, the role of teachers and school principals as role models is also emphasized as the main element in supporting the significant strengthening of students' religious values. This research not only strengthens religious character education efforts but can also be an inspiration for other schools in developing similar programs on an ongoing basis

Keywords: *Character Apple, Religious Values, Character Education*

Introduction

National education has an important role in building an intelligent and dignified nation. Based on Article 3 of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, education has a function to develop potential, shape character, and create a dignified civilization. The goal is to optimize the potential of students to become individuals who have faith, fear God Almighty, have



noble character, are creative, knowledgeable, capable, and able to contribute as democratic and responsible citizens. Through good and competent education, it is hoped that it will be able to give birth to a quality generation that contributes to building a more advanced future (Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003). Education plays a role in shaping character for every student as a provision in socializing and interacting with their environment (Aswat et al., 2022). Adolescent behavior that does not conform to norms becomes a social dilemma that damages the harmony of community values. This action can cause discomfort, insecurity, anxiety, and disturbance to the tranquility of daily life, as well as threaten peace. Negative views of teenagers who are entangled in legal problems are still common, where they are often considered as triggers for public order disturbances. Therefore, special attention to them is very important (Saputra, 2023; Dwi & Mukti, 2019). Through the application of religious values and a religious-based approach, a religious school culture can be created. Religious values are the basis of attitudes and actions based on religious teachings to form a good person. This value teaches the importance of having commendable morals, being polite, and upholding the value of honesty. In addition, the value of religion also instills awareness to respect others, appreciate diversity, and prioritize tolerance in life. The development of spiritual competence in education is carried out through indirect learning (Indirect Teaching), such as setting an example and getting used to positive behavior (Masloman et al., 2024).

So far, research that examines the strengthening of religious character education through character apple activities is still rarely carried out, previous studies have focused more on overall responsibility character education (Triyani, Triairi, & Ansori, 2020; Sahibudding, Kadda & Syam, 2023; Personal, Wahyuni, & Nuraini, 2022; Hapsari, Baedowi, & Mushafanah, 2020) and also in the education of disciplined character (Masruroh, Medika, & Kristiawati 2019; Mar'atusholihah. et al., 2023; Istighfaroh et al, 2023; Maimunah & Islam, 2022; Nisa, Sundava, & Azizah, 2023). In addition, previous studies have rarely examined the view of strengthening character education through character apple activities. Most studies only focus on strengthening character education in character values, discipline and responsibility without linking them to the value of religiosity. Therefore, this study aims to fill this void by examining how students' views on religious character education in character apple activities at SDN Ngaliyan 01, especially in relation to the values and principles of Islamic teachings. This research will reveal an understanding of strengthening religious character through character apple activities in students at SD Negeri Ngaliyan 01.

This research focuses on strengthening religious values through the implementation of character apple activities. In addition, the purpose of this study is to find out the role of character apple activities as a means of habituation in supporting the strengthening of students' religious values at SDN Ngaliyan 01 Semarang City. In addition, this study also identifies the obstacles and challenges faced in the implementation of the program. The results of this study are expected to provide useful recommendations for schools in optimizing the effectiveness of character apple activities to support achieving the goals of religious character education.

Method

This study uses a qualitative method using a descriptive approach to describe in detail the implementation of character apple activities at SDN Ngaliyan 01 and its role in strengthening religious character. Selection of principals, teachers, and all students involved in character apple activities. The principal and teacher were chosen as informants because of their role in planning and supervising the activities of the character apple, while the involvement of students as informants to provide perspective on the impact of their religious character apple activities. The data collection technique is carried out through observation by directly observing the implementation of character apple activities, recording various aspects of the activity and collecting related documentation, such as photos and videos of the activity.

The data analysis follows the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation in the form of descriptive narratives, and drawing conclusions (Salam, 2023), to understand how character apple activities support the strengthening of students' religious character and the challenges faced in their implementation. Data triangulation is carried out by comparing data from observation and documentation results with other sources, such as verses from the Qur'an and scientific journals that are relevant to the research theme. This aims to increase the validity of the results of the research conducted.

Results And Discussion

SDN Ngaliyan 01 is a public elementary school located in Ngaliyan Village, Ngaliyan District, Semarang City. The school was built in 1918. SDN Ngaliyan 01 is located on the side of the Ngaliyan Boja highway, making it easy to reach. Physically this school has quite adequate facilities, with the arrangement of classrooms, teachers' rooms, principal's rooms, UKS, and a neat library. SDN Ngaliyan 01 has 37 Educators and Education Personnel (PTK) consisting of 1 Principal, 24 Classroom Teachers, 3 Islamic Teachers, 1 Christian Teacher, 3 Sports Teachers, 2 Administrative Personnel, 2 School Guards, and 1 School Security Guard. In total, there are 24 teachers to teach 664 students divided into 20 classes, where each class is taught by one teacher. SDN Ngaliyan 01 has implemented full day school or teaching and learning for 5 days and the start of learning starts at 07.20 WIB until the learning time is completed at 09.30 WIB for grades 1 and 3 for grades 4 – 6 is finished at 13.00 WIB, while for grade 2 learning starts at 10.20 WIB until 12.30 WIB.

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of character apple activities at SDN Ngaliyan 01 Semarang City has a significant role as a means of habituation in strengthening students' religious values. The character apple activity which is carried out every Wednesday morning before starting teaching and learning activities aims to familiarize students with religious values, such as appearing to be disciplined, honest, maintaining cleanliness, and caring for others. In this activity, the students are reminded to pray together but for students who are not of the same religion, they are given their own space to pray with their own beliefs, listen to advice about religious or life values given by teachers, and apply positive values in daily life. This routine, students are expected to be able to absorb and apply religious values in their lives. From the results of the observations that the researcher has made, it can be seen that teachers and students enter the classroom according to the predetermined time, and entering the class on time has become a habit that then arises culture. SDN Ngaliyan 01 is a state educational institution that seeks to form the religious character of students. Efforts to create students with religious characters at SDN Ngaliyan 01 do so through coaching in the form of morning character apples and habituation in the form of reading asmaul husna, congregational dzuhur prayers, and prayers before and after learning. The character apple activity is a routine carried out by SDN Ngaliyan 01 every morning with a duration of 20 minutes before starting the learning activity. Character apple activities are carried out as a fun routine and a good alternative (Munjiatun, 2018).

The character apple program is also a forum for teachers and students to get closer to a conducive religious atmosphere at school. This indicates that character apple activities at SDN Ngaliyan 01 have a very important role in creating an environment that supports the formation of students' religious character. However, in the implementation of this character apple activity, there are several obstacles and challenges that need to be considered. It is worth noting. One of them is the diversity of students' religious backgrounds at SDN Ngaliyan 01. Although the apple of character is focused on common values that are acceptable to all religions, sometimes differences of opinion when it comes to worship and religious practices cause some students to feel uncomfortable or less actively involved in the activity. In addition, another challenge that arises is the absence of some students who sometimes do not show up on time when the character apple is carried out, so they cannot fully benefit from this activity. Another factor that is an obstacle is the limited time for the implementation of character apples which is only carried out in a short time, so that not all religious values can be deepened in a limited time. However, the school tries to overcome this obstacle by taking a more inclusive approach and ensuring that every student still gets the same opportunity to follow the character apple and acquire the religious values that they want to inculcate.

Religious Character Education Through Character Apples

Education is a process of changing the attitudes and behaviors of individuals or groups to help humans become more mature through the process of learning and training activities. Meanwhile, character refers to psychological, moral or ethical traits that are characteristics that distinguish a person from others (KBBI). Or it can be defined as the natural traits that every individual has in life and is shaped according to the surrounding environment (Fahmi, 2020). Related to this Wibowo (2012: 33) stated that character education is a means of coaching for the next generation of the nation to have good behavior and be in harmony with the norms that apply in society. Thus, the goal is to create a generation with character that is a common hope. Therefore, character education has a very important role as the foundation for personality formation from an early age. Meanwhile, according to Ratna Megawangi (2018:12), character education is an effort to educate children to help their ability to make wise decisions and apply them in daily life. That way, children are expected to make a positive contribution to the surrounding environment. According to John W. Santrock, character

education applied through a direct approach to students aims to instill moral values and provide learning about guidelines in preventing inappropriate behavior (Suraji & Sastrodiharjo, 2021). So it can be concluded that character education is a conscious effort that is applied consistently and sustainably with the aim of producing a generation of the nation with character and morals to be applied in their daily lives.

Through a structured education system, the formation of students' character can be realized effectively. This is expected to be able to give birth to a generation of graduates who not only contribute to the development of the nation, but also remain based on noble character values as the main foundation (Suryanti & Widayanti, 2018). According to Asmani (2011), there are four types of characters that can be applied in the educational process, namely: 1) Character education that focuses on religious values; 2) Character education that focuses on cultural values; 3) Character education that focuses on the environment; and 4) Character education that focuses on self-potential. The cultivation of character values can begin with character education that focuses on religious values first. Strengthening character education Strengthening character education is designed as a program to improve the competence of students and education personnel in the 21st century in facing various challenges. Therefore, the purpose of character education is first To develop a national education platform that makes the meaning and value of character as the soul or the main source in the implementation of education.

Second, preparing Indonesia's Golden Generation 2045 to face future changes with 21st century skills.

Third, making character education the core and basis of education through a balance of heart (ethics and spirituality), taste (aesthetics), thinking (literacy and numeracy), and sports (kinesthetic).

Fourth, revitalize and strengthen the capacity of the education ecosystem (principals, teachers, students, supervisors, and school committees) to expand the application of character education.

Fifth, building a network of community involvement (public) as sources of learning inside and outside the school.

Sixth preserving the culture and identity of the Indonesian nation to support the National Movement for Mental Revolution (GNRM) (Lestari & Handayani 2023)

Success in character formation for students can be seen from the mastery of multi-competencies which includes morals Knowing, moral feeling, and morals action as an inseparable unit (Cahyono, 2016).

The foundation of character education is mentioned in the Qur'an in QS al-Baqarah verse 129 "O our Lord, send among them an apostle from among themselves, who will read to them Your verses and teach them the Book and Wisdom, and purify them. Truly, You are the Mighty, the Most Wise." The Qur'an teaches to hone the potential of students to become individuals who believe in and fear Allah Almighty, and have noble morals, physical and spiritual health, capable, knowledgeable, and become democratic and responsible citizens (Hamdi, 2020). To strengthen character education, a practical approach is needed in its implementation. One of the approaches that can be applied is the one proposed by Hersh, namely: Rational approach, consideration, clarification of values, development of cognitive morals, social behavior, and instilling values (Maksudin, 2013).

Religious character education, according to Retno, is a process that forms obedient attitudes and behaviors in carrying out the religious teachings that are believed, the existence of a tolerant attitude to the implementation of other religious rituals, and creating harmony with followers of other religions. Religious character is a character that is reflected in faith in God and is practiced through the implementation of religious teachings that are believed. The value of religious character is not only related to the Khaliq and all His creations alone, but in relation to one's neighbor, by showing good attitudes and deeds towards others (Luthfiyah & Zafi 2021). Religious values are the main foundation in character education, acting as a fundamental foundation for the formation of other values. The cultivation of religious values is not only the starting point, but also the core of the entire character education process. Religious values have a great influence on the moral, ethical, and attitude dimensions of individuals, which ultimately form a complete personality (Zubaedi, 2011), and can help internalize moral principles that are used as a basis for acting in daily life, such as the value of honesty in religion which is not only taught as a theory, but also realized through real practice in daily life through the educational environment (Sukiat, 2020). Thus, religious values are

not only a pillar of character education, but also play a guiding role in internalizing values. The cultivation of strong religious values can produce individuals who not only have academic skills, but also personalities who are able to answer moral challenges in the modern era.

Character Apple Program

Character apple is one of the routine activities carried out by schools with the aim of forming and instilling a positive culture through strengthening character values, including religious values. This activity usually involves all elements of the school, such as students, teachers, and principals, to jointly instill good habits through structured activities, such as prayer reading, vow pronunciation, and moral message delivery. At SDN Ngaliyan 01 Semarang City, character apples were developed as a flagship program to support the formation of students' religious character. The results of the study show that character apple activities in this school are carried out every Wednesday morning before class starts. This activity involves religious habituation, such as reading prayers together, chanting asma'ul husna, and listening to advice from teachers that contain moral messages and religious values. Students who adhere to religions other than Islam are given a special space to carry out prayers according to their beliefs, so that this activity can run in an inclusive manner without neglecting diversity in schools. After the joint prayer, awards for outstanding students were also given to motivate other students. This approach aims to instill internalized religious habits in students' daily behavior, such as discipline, a sense of responsibility, honesty, and concern for others.

From observation, the implementation of character apples at SDN Ngaliyan 01 has a significant impact on the formation of students' religious character. Teachers and principals act as role models who actively provide guidance during the activity. The students involved showed an increase in manners, as well as concern for the school environment. However, there are obstacles in its implementation, such as limited implementation time and the absence of some students. To overcome this challenge, schools complement character apple activities with supporting programs, such as additional religious activities and moral value learning in the classroom. This activity has become a strategic means to integrate the learning of religious values in students' daily lives, which ultimately helps to create a harmonious school environment and supports the formation of students' religious character.

The Character Apple activity at SDN Ngaliyan 01 is held every Wednesday morning before class hours start at 07.20 to 07.40 and is attended by the principal, all teachers, and students. The implementation of this Apple aims to strengthen students' character and religious values, as well as form good habits through habituation activities every week. In addition to singing the national anthem, the march song of SDN Ngaliyan 01 and carrying out joint prayers, for students and teachers who adhere to religions other than Islam, a special space is provided to pray according to the religion they believe in and study their religious books. This activity provides an inclusive space for all elements of the school to carry out their respective worship without feeling separate, while maintaining an atmosphere of togetherness. The apple was continued with coaching by the apple coach, namely Mr. and Mrs. Teacher in turn. After the implementation of the character apple, there will be an announcement about outstanding students, which is done once a week.

This study reveals that character apple activities at SDN Ngaliyan 01 Semarang City have a great contribution in strengthening students' religious values. The consistent implementation of apples every Wednesday morning before the start of learning is an effective means to familiarize students with religious values, such as discipline, honesty, maintaining cleanliness, and caring for others. In this activity, students are invited to pray according to their beliefs, listen to advice from teachers, and apply positive values in daily life. The program has shown success, as evidenced by the increased attitude of discipline, responsibility, and mutual respect among students. However, there are several challenges in its implementation. One of the main obstacles is the diversity of students' religions which sometimes causes differences in views, so that there are students who are uncomfortable or not actively involved. Student absenteeism at apple time is also an obstacle because full attendance is essential to maximize the benefits of this activity. In addition, the relatively short implementation time, which is about 20 minutes, limits the in-depth deepening of religious values. Even so, the school seeks to overcome this obstacle with an inclusive approach, such as providing special spaces for students of different faiths and ensuring that all students have the opportunity to get involved. Efforts to improve discipline also continue to be carried out by socializing the importance of character apples to students. With these measures, character apples remain an effective medium to create a conducive religious atmosphere and strengthen the formation of students' character.

The most relevant theory for analyzing the implementation of character apples in SDN Ngaliyan 01 can use the Value Theory developed by Milton Rokeach, which states that value is a fundamental belief that influences individual actions and decision-making. In this context, the character apple aims to shape students' religious values as part of terminal values, such as the development of spirituality, moral responsibility, and respect for religious norms. These values are emphasized through various habits that are carried out regularly, such as reciting prayers, chanting asma'ul husna, and conveying moral messages by teachers. This process of value formation, in accordance with Rokeach's theory, is influenced by consistent habituation and continuous social reinforcement. Principals and teachers act as concrete examples in instilling these values, to help students understand and practice religious values in their daily lives.

The effectiveness of character apples in building students' religious character can be seen from changes in their behavior, such as increasing discipline in starting activities with prayer and showing honesty and manners. A supportive school environment plays a key role in the reinforcement of these values, where consistent social interaction helps students internalize religious values. In addition, these activities help students relate religious values to daily life, not only in a spiritual context but also as a moral guide. By integrating habituation and a supportive environment, character apples have become an effective strategy in religious character education. This proves that character apples not only build students' religious awareness but also encourage them to apply these values in real behavior in their social environment. Thus, through the perspective of Value Theory, character apples become a strategic means to strengthen students' religious values, by integrating consistent habits and environmental support in creating a generation with religious character.

Research on strengthening students' religious character education through character apple activities at SDN Ngaliyan 01 has relevance to a number of previous studies that also highlight efforts to strengthen religious character in basic education. For example, research by Kurniawan (2021) emphasized that the habituation of structured religious activities, such as joint prayer and the recitation of holy verses, can strengthen students' religious values. The study supports the findings of this study that character apple activities not only function as a morning routine, but also become a forum for internalizing moral and religious values collectively (Kurniawan, 2021). This supports the findings in this study that character apple activities at SDN Ngaliyan 01 are not only a routine every morning, but also an effective forum to internalize moral and religious values collectively. In the implementation of the apple, the teacher and the principal played an active role by leading a joint prayer as the opening of the activity, conveying moral messages, and reading verses of the Quran that are relevant to the theme of the character to be emphasized. For example, in one of the apples the theme of sincerity is conveyed through the reading of QS. al-Kautsar and its explanation of its meaning that emphasizes the importance of worshipping Allah with sincere intentions without expecting anything in return from humans. The teacher also gave concrete examples, such as giving alms and helping friends selflessly. This activity is carried out consistently every morning, so that students not only understand these values, but are also inspired to apply them in their daily lives. In addition, research by Amri et al. (2019) shows that the involvement of teachers in providing examples of religious behavior is very important in building students' character (Amri et al., 2019), this is in line with the role of teachers and principals at SDN Ngaliyan 01 as role models during the implementation of character apples, for example when teachers and principals always give real examples through reading prayers together, conveying moral messages, and showing discipline and manners in front of students. In addition, teachers consistently instill religious values, such as honesty and gratitude through daily interactions both inside and outside the classroom. This research also has similarities with the study conducted by Suryani (2018), which discusses the importance of the school environment in shaping students' character values. In his research, Suryani highlighted that strengthening religious character can be more effective if supported by a consistent social environment, including through interaction with peers and teachers. This supports the results of research at SDN Ngaliyan 01 which shows that the school environment plays an important role in building students' religious habits. In addition, research by Rahmawati (2021) which highlights the success of Asmaul Husna's habituation in shaping student discipline is also a reference that strengthens this finding. By comparing this study with previous studies, it can be seen that the character apple at SDN Ngaliyan 01 is a concrete implementation of the principles of religious character education that have been proven effective in previous research.

From the perspective of Rokeach's theory of values, the social environment plays an important role in strengthening students' religious values. Rokeach states that values are formed and maintained through social interaction, which involves repetition and reinforcement of the

surrounding environment. Therefore, to optimize the strengthening of religious character education at SDN Ngaliyan 01, it is important to create an environment that supports these values. The school environment must be consistent in implementing the desired values, such as through school policies that strengthen religious activities and habituation of worship practices. In addition, teachers and principals should act as role models in demonstrating behaviour that reflects religious values, as found in research by Suryani (2018), which states that the role of teachers as role models greatly affects the internalization of values in students.

In addition, the social environment that includes peers also has a great influence on strengthening the value of religious character. Research by Rahmawati (2021) shows that interactions between students who support each other in religious activities, such as prayer readings or religion-based social activities, can strengthen their commitment to religious values. Therefore, schools must provide opportunities for students to interact positively with their peers and with their teachers in an atmosphere that supports the growth of students' religious character. This can be achieved by incorporating religious values into every aspect of school life, from academic activities to extracurricular activities. Students will find it easier to instill and accept religious values if their environment is consistently supportive, both in social activities and daily activities.

Conclusion

This study provides an important understanding of the effectiveness of character apples as a method to strengthen the religious values of students in elementary schools. This research also enriches the literature on character education based on religious values to improve program management for schools. The findings show that apple-like routines are effective in instilling religious values, such as discipline, responsibility, and respect. The school environment is in accordance with Milton Rokeach's theory of values, which plays an important role in strengthening religious values. Regular practices such as joint prayer and the delivery of moral messages help internalize values in students. The study also identifies obstacles, such as religious diversity and time constraints, and provides solutions. With evidence of the positive impact of character apples. So that future research must be carried out again on this theme with a larger number of respondents in order to approach the generalization of the research theme.

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