

The Importance of Character Education in Shaping Elementary School Students' Politeness Attitude

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Article Info	Abstract
Keywords: Character Education, Elementary School, Politeness, Student Behavior, Teacher's Role	The erosion of polite behavior among elementary school students poses a significant challenge in strengthening character education in today's digital age. This study explores the politeness attitudes of third-grade students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Muhammadiyah Krasak and investigates the strategies employed by teachers to instill these values. Using a qualitative approach with a case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews with teachers, classroom observations, and documentation of daily school routines. Findings reveal a noticeable decline in students' courteous behavior, particularly in speech and social interactions, influenced largely by exposure to social media, television, and external environments. To address this issue, teachers apply strategies such as routine habituation, role modeling, affective engagement, and the imposition of constructive disciplinary measures. These efforts have shown effectiveness in gradually fostering student awareness and behavioral transformation. The study underscores the necessity of implementing politeness-oriented character education consistently and collaboratively among educators, schools, and parents.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental necessity that every individual should possess, as it plays a vital role in enhancing the quality of human resources. Essentially, education encompasses the processes of educating, training, and teaching both knowledge and values. Based on the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005, specifically in Chapter I Article 1, teachers are recognized as educators holding professional status. The primary role of a teacher comprises a diverse range of educational activities, from educating, teaching, guiding, directing, and training, to conducting assessment and evaluation of learners within formal education. The scope of this education covers early childhood education, basic education, and secondary education (Republik Indonesia, 2005). Education is inherently a process of shaping and developing individual attitudes and mindsets to foster creative thinking capabilities. Training is oriented toward skill enhancement, both in terms of attitudinal and motor aspects. Meanwhile, teaching activities focus more heavily

on developing the intellectual functions and cognitive abilities of learners (Putri et al., 2024). There are still many people who do not fully comprehend the significance of Article 31 Paragraph 1 of the 1945 Constitution, which states that every citizen has the right to receive an education. In fact, the right to pursue an education is paramount and cannot be violated by anyone. A good and proper education is not only beneficial for oneself but is also highly critical for the future progress of the nation (Fitri, 2021).

Character serves as the primary foundation in shaping the quality of the nation's generation. One of the fundamental character values is politeness, which entails attitudes of respect, courtesy, and appreciation toward others. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemdikbud, 2017), character education is a process of internalizing moral values into students' actual behavior. Politeness reflects morality, which, if not instilled from an early age, can negatively impact a child's social life. Character building is a crucial aspect of the education system, functioning to develop the personality and moral values of learners. Alongside rapid technological and informational advancements, as well as the influence of globalization, character education has become increasingly vital to protect the younger generation from the negative impacts of poorly filtered information. In this regard, schools hold a key role as formal institutions responsible for instilling character values in learners (Abdurahman et al., 2023; Hubbi et al., 2020).

Technological advancements and digitalization have shifted the way children interact, including in terms of courtesy. This aligns with observation findings at MI Muhammadiyah Krasak, where teachers reported a decline in polite attitudes, particularly among third-grade students. The development of digital technology has caused significant changes in children's social interaction patterns, especially regarding courtesy and etiquette. Children now more frequently communicate through digital devices such as smartphones, social media, and instant messaging applications, which reduces direct face-to-face interaction (Dwi et al., 2024). This shift has the potential to alter the values of politeness conventionally taught, as digital communication often disregards the norms of courtesy typically applied in direct interactions (Egi R. F Ardiani & Ima Noviana, 2021). Teachers, as educational facilitators, face major challenges in maintaining and instilling the value of politeness in the daily learning process. This study aims to describe in detail how polite behavior is demonstrated by third-grade students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Muhammadiyah Krasak. Furthermore, the focus of this research also lies in the teacher's efforts to implement various effective strategies and methods to instill a polite attitude in students. It is expected that the results of this study can serve as a beneficial reference and consideration in strengthening character education at the elementary school level, in order to cultivate courteous learners with noble character and good personalities.

METHODS

This study was conducted using a qualitative approach through a case study method to obtain a deeper understanding of the impact of character education on students' learning behavior, in accordance with the guidelines proposed by Creswell (2018). Through this approach, the researcher can comprehend in depth the experiences, perspectives, and perceptions held by students, teachers, and parents, without directly intervening in the variables under study (Rofi'i, 2021). Data collection was carried out through observation, interview, and documentation study techniques to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of character education within the school environment.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the interview results with Mr. Hari M. Tamir, S.Pd.I, the third-grade homeroom teacher at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Muhammadiyah Krasak, it was revealed that there has been a

noticeable decline in students' polite attitudes compared to several years prior. This decline is most apparent in aspects of speech and daily behavior within the classroom. The teacher observed that students now more frequently speak without considering politeness, both toward their peers and to the teacher. The teacher also conveyed that this discourteous behavior does not emerge abruptly but is influenced by numerous external factors. Among these, the influence of social media, television, and online games has become highly dominant. Children at this age tend to mimic what they see and hear, and unfortunately, not all content they consume teaches positive values.

To address this issue, the school has implemented several methods for instilling character values, one of which is through routine activities such as morning assemblies, joint prayers, and the habit of reciting short chapters of the Quran (surah) and the Asmaul Husna (the 99 Names of Allah). The teacher also emphasized the importance of exemplarity. In daily classroom life, the teacher strives to serve as a concrete example in speaking and behaving politely, as children learn more easily from what they directly witness rather than merely from advice. Nevertheless, challenges persist. Some students, particularly boys, are more difficult to direct compared to female students. In dealing with students who frequently use harsh language or exhibit impolite behavior, the teacher applies a gradual approach: ranging from advising and issuing repeated warnings to ultimately enforcing consequences in the form of educational punishments, such as standing in front of the class or writing a pledge not to repeat the mistake.

This study demonstrates the paramount importance of contemporary character education, particularly the value of politeness, as an inseparable part of the learning process in elementary schools. Similarly, a study by Lestari et al. (2024) emphasizes that character education is vital in shaping children's morals in elementary school, including the value of politeness. Ria Indrawati et al. (2024) state that developing learners' character values, specifically polite behavior, requires habituation and exemplarity from teachers, as well as support from both the school and family environments. Furthermore, the influence of digital media presents its own challenge, as children are easily exposed to negative content without parental supervision. Therefore, the role of parents and the surrounding environment is highly critical to support children's character education today. The teacher at MI Muhammadiyah Krasak implements a positive and affective habituation approach that aligns with the developmental stage of third-grade elementary students according to Piaget's theory. Although students initially tended to reject advice, over time they began to understand and display positive behavioral changes. The teacher also utilizes educational sanctions to build student awareness, in accordance with the principles of positive discipline that emphasize education over punishment. Overall, politeness education in elementary school remains highly relevant, and its success requires collaboration among teachers, schools, and parents.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the polite attitude of third-grade students at MI Muhammadiyah Krasak has experienced a decline, particularly in the ways they communicate and interact. The primary contributing factors are the influence of digital media and an unsupportive social environment. The teacher plays a vital role in responding to this shift through a patient approach, providing an exemplary model, and habituating students to positive and religious activities at school. Implemented strategies, such as repeated advice, the habituation of virtues, and educational punishments, have proven to be quite effective, even though challenges persist, especially with male students who are more difficult to direct. This study confirms that character education, particularly the value of politeness, needs to be instilled from an early age through a continuous process that involves collaboration among the school, teachers, and parents. In this manner, children can grow and develop into more courteous individuals with noble character, whether within the school, family, social environments, or wherever they may be.

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