



Development of the Religious Character of the Nation through Learning Religious Songs: Teachers' Perception and Challenges

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Abstract

Songs as learning media provide an aesthetic experience for students and can also teach character. Academics in many countries pay little attention to this issue because songs are mostly used to memorize foreign language vocabulary. This study investigates teachers' perceptions of using songs to build students' character. This study focuses on exploring teachers' perceptions of the development of religious character as a core character in the curriculum in Indonesia through songs. The case study design was employed by involving 45 elementary school teachers spread over several districts in West Java province. This research was carried out in several stages; First, by preparing questionnaires distributed online; Second, by following up the answers to the questionnaire by conducting in-depth interviews; Third, by analyzing the data in an inductive-thematic manner in relation to learning problems, psychological and social issues arose. The research resulted in themes related to teachers' perceptions of developing students' religious character through religious songs. Four themes were explored in-depth related to teacher appreciation for songs, the benefits of religious songs, teacher challenges, and instructional design. It can be drawn that the song function was not only limited to developing a cognitive domain that functioned to remember and collect facts and data but could also be a means of developing students' characters, especially religious characters. From the teacher's perspective, religious songs were able to develop students' religiosity dimension, including students' beliefs, worship, appreciation, knowledge, and morals. Hence, this study contributes to the importance of developing songs related to religious themes to develop national character.

Keywords: character education, religious, song learning, teachers' perception

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INTRODUCTION

There is little attention from empirical studies regarding the use of songs as a strategy to achieve learning goals in schools in shaping students' character. Research related to songs as a learning medium is more focused on efforts to enhance foreign language learning, especially in mastering vocabulary (Boothe & West, 2015; Kao &

Oxford, 2014; Mizener, 2008; Pérez-Carmona et al., 2021) and the findings tend to be less strong (Albaladejo et al., 2018). Therefore, exploring the use of songs by teachers in shaping students' character is important. This is in line with the context of education in Indonesia that currently runs the 2013 Curriculum (Hermayawati, 2020; Retnawati et al., 2016; Rumahlatu et al., 2016; Suyanto, 2018). The main feature

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of the 2013 Curriculum, which focuses on character building, is an integrated thematic learning approach (Maba, 2017; Muhtar et al., 2020; Nur & Madkur, 2014; Suherman et al., 2019).

Implementation of the thematic curriculum can't be done without music activities (Sinaga et al., 2018). Through the thematic curriculum, teachers are required to use songs as a medium in delivering teaching materials in class (Azimah & Utomo, 2018; Nugroho, 2021). The consequences of all that require the creativity of teachers to thematically comprehend and compose songs in the learning process as a medium to improve students' ability to understand the material well and develop imagination, morals, and religious values (Ariffin et al., 2019; Azimah & Utomo, 2018; Yeni, 2017). The dilemma is that the results of studies in the field show that only a few teachers in elementary schools, especially in Indonesia, have music competence or have a background in music education. This fact also influences the lack of understanding and mastery of the elements contained in the art of music itself (Julia et al., 2019, 2020).

On the one hand, teachers are required to teach with a thematic approach that is full of character development and musical activities. On the other hand, judging from the educational background of primary school teachers in Indonesia, only a few have competence in the field of music. Therefore, exploring the strengthening of character education through songs as a demand from the curriculum in elementary schools is interesting to study. Several search results related to the use of songs as a learning medium for character development can be found in the research by Mahmudah (2019). The results of her research revealed that the folk song entitled Manuk Dadali can foster the spirit of nationalism. Batara (2016) argues that religious songs can be a medium for shaping prosocial behavior. Regarding song as a learning medium, Supartini et al. (2020) study shows that the song-based learning method has a level of validity, practicality, and effica-

cy above the benchmark for developing children's cognitive and psychomotor elements. However, their research does not explore the improvement in affective aspects.

Some of the research findings only analyze the song material and use the song as a learning method but have not analyzed from the teachers' perspectives who use the song as a medium in learning. Teachers have a significant role in the learning process and student development. In contrast to previous studies, this study was motivated to explore the elementary school teachers' perceptions of the use of songs to strengthen character education in schools. This study focuses on teachers' perceptions of strengthening religious characters in the learning process as a core competency in the Indonesian curriculum through spiritual songs.

Theoretical Framework

At the concept level, perceptions are believed to be an individual's ability to think and comprehend information or the world we live in through their senses (Anderson & Stillman, 2013; Eggen & Kauchak, 2001; Ward et al., 2010). Perceptions are considered as an information-gathering process based on personal experience or recognizing, organizing, and interpreting information (Eggen & Kauchak, 2001; Karaca & Bektas, 2021). This concept implies that the teacher's perception is the key to the learning process. The context of this research 'perception' refers to the understanding or awareness of teachers in doing things that can increase students' knowledge (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020). Teachers' involvement in the learning process in the classroom is critical and strategic. The teachers are no longer the focal point of learning; rather, they serve as a facilitator and motivators. (Grasha, 1994). One way teachers might manage learning is to make learning media a vehicle for teachers and students to investigate scientific concepts. The media referred to in this research is the use of music or songs as audio learning media. This becomes important to explore,

considering that music or songs are things that affect life, including children's life (Arief & Isnan, 2020).

Many teachers use songs to help students store and remember information (Bradt et al., 2019; Tamminen et al., 2017). In addition, music and the voice of the singer have a psychological power to move people's emotions, making them joyful, sad, calm, comfortable, quiet, and tranquil (Livingstone & Russo, 2018; Peyee et al., 2021). Therefore, a song can be motivating, attention-getting in intrinsic ways, and fun for learners of all ages, and it can help them learn better (Ludke, 2018; Ma et al., 2020).

Giving musical activities to children is significant to allow them to discover and express their feelings by using several ways that can support it, including explaining children's musical experiences individually or in groups (Sinaga et al., 2018). This indicates that the function of the song is not only to provide an aesthetic experience but also as a means of educating the nation's character. Moreover, Mintar-go (2018) reveals that song does not only educate a nation's character, but also in building national awareness, work ethic, and the spirit of national discipline in facing global competition. Kim (2017) states that music is an important part of the early childhood curriculum because it helps children improve their cognitive and social-emotional development and aesthetic appreciation. In addition, musical experiences in early childhood education can aid in the development of critical and creative thinking, teamwork, and communication, all of which are necessary skills for success in the twenty-first century (Cipta & Gunara, 2020).

Furthermore, a good song needs to establish reciprocal communication with its fans' environment (Puspitasari & Herdiati, 2020). For example, children's songs as songs listened to by children (preschool and elementary school) must be designed according to their thoughts because songs have a significant role in the development of thinking (Barrett, 2016). The term "children's songs" refers to music

that is frequently performed by children and poetry that depicts the everyday activities of children (Adachi et al., 2004). They addressed how to love God Almighty, fellow humans, parents, brothers and sisters, and the beauty of nature expressed in simple language according to the nature of the children's thinking and can be used to develop ideas, persuade, and educational or moral counsel (Gunawan & Zulaeha, 2017). Therefore, children's songs are cheerful songs reflecting high ethics (Arief & Isnan, 2020; Gunawan & Zulaeha, 2017; Muwati & Mutasa, 2008).

The lack of attention of academics in exploring research on the use of songs as a medium of learning in strengthening student character has become the burning issue of this research. Therefore, exploring the teachers' perception of strengthening religious character through religious songs is novel to fill the research gaps.. Therefore, this research is motivated to analyze how the teacher's perception of religious songs in relation to the character learning process, considering that education is not only a transfer of knowledge but a transfer of values (Kosasih et al., 2021; Taja et al., 2021).

METHOD

Design

This study employs a case study design and a qualitative approach to get and look at the data in a specific context or phenomenon (Aliyyah et al., 2020). In some cases, people, students, or school staff who are part of the school community could be chosen (Creswell, 2011). Case study data were gathered to explain a real-life situation (Yin, 2018) thoroughly and to provide participants with an opportunity to voice their opinions and thoughts through narratives and/or self-reflection (Given, 2008). This design was quite relevant to the context of this research because it sought to explore in-depth the teacher's perception regarding the use of songs as a medium of learning in building students' character.

A literature review was done to establish the conceptual and operational definitions for the topic of the research, which was data about music or song activities (Snyder, 2019). The data collection instrument was developed in line with the operational definition, and the instructions were divided into three major sections: instructions, psychological issues, and social issues. Data collection begins with online questionnaires and is completed with semi-structured interviews to elicit more detailed information. Analyses of the data were carried out in line with established procedures for examining items and observation indicators (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Participants

This research involved 45 elementary school teachers from West Java province who came from 6 regencies and two cities: Bandung Regency, West Bandung Regency, Bekasi Regency, Sumedang Regency, and Majalengka Regency, and Garut Regency; also Cirebon City and Bogor City. The participants were 16 men and 29 women with an average teaching experience of more than ten years, in which 41 teachers had bachelor's degree and the rest four teachers had master's degree. The purposive sample technique was applied by distributing online questionnaires via Google Forms to collect data from colleagues who had access to elementary schools in West Java province. When the questionnaires were handed out, 45 teachers (all of them) said they were willing to take part in the research. For reasons of ethics, participants were required to sign a consent form guaranteeing their privacy about their participation in the research project (Hett & Hett, 2013; Shamim & Qureshi, 2013).

Data Collection

The data was gathered in two steps. To begin, a questionnaire was administered to primary school teachers who were utilizing the 2013 Curriculum, which was thematically organized and included music or song activities in the learning process as responses. Eleven open-ended

questions were included in the survey, which was conducted through the use of Google Forms. Following a review of literature pertaining to our research aims, we came up with questions based on what we learned about how songs might help kids develop their religious character. From August 1 to 25, 2021, a survey was conducted. Each participant's responses were recorded, and the initial code was constructed after the survey data had been gathered.

The second stage of data collection was carried out using semi-structured open-ended questions, with 8 of the 45 primary school teachers participated in filling the questionnaire. A semi-structured interview guide was developed to collect in-depth data and keep participants on topic (Kavenuke, 2021; Muthanna, 2019). The interview guide was created based on the initial cp. The interviews were carried out to collect more meaningful data. From September 1, 2021 to September 3, 2021, interviews were done online for 1.5–2 hours per respondent using the Zoom application. Two people were interviewed every day, and each of them had a pseudonym and guaranteed confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Inductive and thematic analyses were used to identify, evaluate, and create themes expressed by participants (Galloway & Jenkins, 2009). The participants' responses gathered from the first stage were coded using keywords to avoid overlapping. The NVivo 12 plus program was used to develop coding and categorization. Data from surveys and interviews were entered into Nodes and Cases to be grouped into data with certain codes (Jackson & Bazeley, 2019; Kosasih et al., 2021). In order to understand how concepts were arranged on different levels, thematic maps were used to identify possible connections between concepts (Aliyyah et al., 2020). The study team then analyzed all codes and categorization and the idea of integrating codes in order to simplify them. This inductive technique enabled the discovery of themes from responses to research questions pro-

vided by participants (Liu, 2011). Based on the results of data analysis related to the perception of school teachers in developing religious characters through religious songs, four major themes, namely teacher appreciation regarding religious songs, the benefits of religious songs, learning strategies and teacher challenges in teaching character through religious songs.

This research considered credibility and dependability. The preparation of research instruments refers to representative literature sources involving input from experts in designing instruments, such as character education experts, music experts, and pedagogic experts. This study uses member checking for data accuracy. It is a form of clarification from the research team to the respondents. This shows that the contribution of the data given by the participants has been reflected in the previous data. Furthermore, to reduce bias, triangulation is carried out in two stages. Triangulation was carried out in two stages to reduce bias in this study. First, researchers were triangulated by involving three researchers at all research stages through regular conferences or focus group discussions on increasing research dependencies. Second, The involvement of three researchers in examining the same issues provided different points of view in the investigation, thereby supporting the findings' integrity (Aliyyah et al., 2020).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Teachers' Appreciation of Religious Songs

There were three components of the teachers' appreciation of religious songs in the context of this research. First are teachers' views of the concept of religious songs, second, the urgency of religious songs in the context of a teachers' life, and third is the form of teachers' appreciation for religious songs as the impact of the first and second components. Figure 1 is the concept Map.

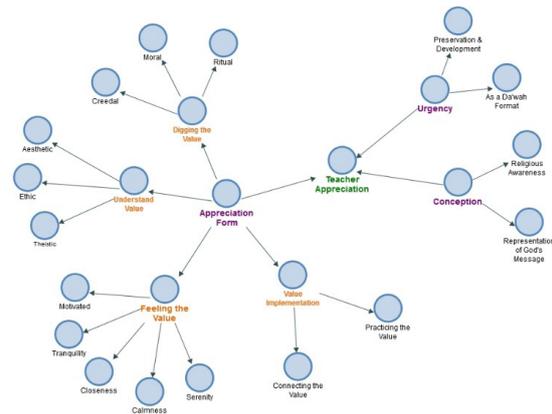


Figure 1. Concept Map of Teachers' Appreciation of Religious Songs

Appreciation is a process carried out by someone to find or determine the value of an object or event (Belke et al., 2010; Seabolt, 2001). Value is a quality or potential that exists in objects or events that are considered valuable and important to the appraiser (Halstead & Taylor, 2005). Religious songs had an important role in teachers. They were not only something of artistic value but also something full of God's messages in growing religious awareness. If it is seen from the teachers' perspective, religious songs were understood as messages wrapped in poetry and music that are able to motivate someone to take religious actions. Three teachers expressed the following opinions.

For me, religious songs are very important and have an effect on me because religious songs are basically God's calls in form of poetry and music. (Teacher 14)

I understand religious songs as works of art that are important to be preserved because they are full of moral values and can motivate a person to do good deeds according to the guidance of his religion. (Teacher 21)

In my opinion, religious songs are a form of appeal to God's way (da'wah) from songwriters whose mission is to raise awareness of the listeners to carry out God's messages. (Teacher 27)

Conceptions related to religious songs and their urgency in these teachers'

perspectives determine the way they appreciated works of art. The forms of artistic appreciation for works of religious songs from the standpoint of the teachers were expressed in the form of interpretation of the values contained even more deeply. The interpretation process was carried out in various forms of activities. First, the religious values were explored in a song to find out if it had a credal, ritual, or moral dimension. Second, the value information obtained from the first stage had implications for the process of understanding these values, whether they are in the forms of divine values (theistic values), true and false values (ethical values), or good and bad values (aesthetic values). Third, the effects of the values in the song were felt, such as feelings of happiness, calm, serenity, affection, and motivation. Fourth, these values were implemented by practicing the values in themselves and connecting them with the material in the learning process related to their profession as a teacher.

The benefits of religious songs in the learning process

Learning media used by teachers during the learning process certainly has its own benefits for teachers: time and energy efficiency (Kemp & Dayton, 1985). The three benefits were to condition students' readiness to receive learning materials, comprehensively implement teacher duties, and become a means of teaching religious values. The three benefits are visualized from the data processing results in Figure 3.

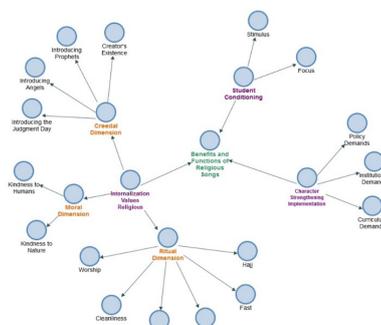


Figure 2. Concept Map of Benefits and Functions of Songs

Seen from the teachers' perception, religious songs were able to help them in conditioning students' readiness to accept the material to be given easily. Moreover, starting learning activities with the activity of singing religious songs was able to stimulate students' psychology in their readiness to receive knowledge transfer. Therefore, it had an impact on the focus of students' attention. Some teachers said that:

Before I deliver the teaching materials, I started the learning activities by singing religious-themed songs to make the students ready and to be more focused. (Teacher 5)

At the beginning of the learning activity, I invited them to sing songs with religious nuances so that their psychological atmosphere became cheerful and happy. Therefore, religious songs became stimuli for students to better prepare themselves for receiving lessons. (Teacher 7).

The teacher's perception regarding the use of religious songs as a technique in conditioning students' readiness to carry out the learning process was in line with what was stated by Good et al. (2015) and Ludke, (2018), that singing a song can motivate students, make students focus, and build a pleasant atmosphere for students.

In addition, in the teachers' perception, carrying out singing activities with the selection of religious songs at the beginning of learning activities was government's real effort in carrying out the duties and roles of teachers as educators to carry out the character education strengthening program (PPK, *Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter*) that had been conducted by the Indonesian government (Kemendikbud, 2017). One of the main characters developed in the KDP was a religious character (Suherman et al., 2019). At the same time, bringing religious songs into the learning process was a form of embodiment of teachers in implementing the demands of the 2013 Curriculum, where teachers were required to develop character in relation to religion that students believed as core competencies in

each subject. Moreover, for teachers who worked in schools with religious characteristics, religious songs were a necessity. These opinions were submitted by three teachers.

For me, the selection of religious songs as a medium in the learning process is not only a learning strategy but a form of my appreciation for government programs related to strengthening character education. In fact, the main character of the Indonesian nation is a religious nation as reflected in the first philosophy of the country, which is belief in the one and only God. (Teacher 1)

In the 2013 curriculum, teachers are required to provide students with core competencies in the learning process in all subjects. The core competence is related to religion, so the use of religious songs is the right choice. (Teacher 3)

For me, choosing religious songs for early learning activities in addition to being a follow-up form of prayer activities as reinforcement is also a demand from the school that incidentally has religious characteristics. (Teacher 6)

From the opinions of these teachers, it could be interpreted that the use of religious songs in the learning process contributed to meeting the demands of the duties and responsibilities of teachers as educators. Therefore, in teachers' perception, religious songs were used as a medium in instilling the values of religious teachings where religious teachings generally included three dimensions: the creedal, ritual, and moral dimensions (Supriyadi et al., 2019, 2020).

In the teachers' perception, creedal values or beliefs instilled in students through religious songs were aimed at growing and strengthening trust. Therefore, the themes of the songs chosen were the existence of God, God's love, God's power, the Angels both in name and in their duties, the Prophets, whether related to their biography, history, for example and the doomsday and God's judgment. In the teachers' perception, the ritual values instilled in students through religious songs were aimed at fostering a strong commit-

ment to the tasks carried out by humans as servants of God. Therefore, the themes of the songs chosen were such as cleanliness, worshipping, fasting, *zakat*, hajj, and praying. Likewise, the moral values instilled in students through religious songs were aimed at fostering commendable behavior in human relationships. Therefore, the theme of the songs chosen as the theme of kindness to humans included the kindness of parents or peers and songs with the theme of goodness in nature. These opinions were expressed by three teachers.

I used religious songs to grow students' belief in the creator so that they believe in His existence, His power, and God's Day of Judgment for every human action, and also to encourage students to do good. (Teacher 2)

Religious songs were useful for growing belief in God and the Prophets as messengers of God, and also for strengthening students' commitment to all obligations from God in order to give birth to virtues (Teacher 4)

I used religious songs to cultivate the moral ethics of students to display commendable behaviors to both fellow humans and the environment. (Teacher 8)

Regarding the three opinions, which refer to the questionnaire question, "Name at least three song titles, maybe more, which you think are appropriate as learning media that can improve the religious character of elementary school students", we found that at least the answers given by the teacher were sufficient confusing. These songs used foreign languages such as English, for example, *Number One For Me*, and *Insha Allah* by solo singer Maher Zein, and *Ya Maulana, Deen Salam*, and *Ya Habibal Qolbi* from the Sabyan Gambus music group, whose lyrics are all Arabic. If the songs were assumed to be for foreign language learning, they might be relevant. However, if they were used to instill values, when they were translated, the diction was complex enough to be understood by students of elementary school age. In addition, the songs given by the teachers had long lyrics, so the time used by the teachers was questionable. In addi-

tion, we did not find the song from the teachers' answers that those teachers made. This also indicated that the teacher only used ready-made works. However, among teachers, there had been an opinion that religious songs made a significant contribution to teachers in the learning process, especially in developing religious character as a core competency in every subject.

Instructional Strategy for Character Development through Song

An instructional strategy is a set of instructional elements used in instructional activities to attain instructional goals (Dijkstra et al., 2013). The learning strategies found in this research were objectives, learning steps, methods, media, time, and learning assessment as presented in the following Figure 3.

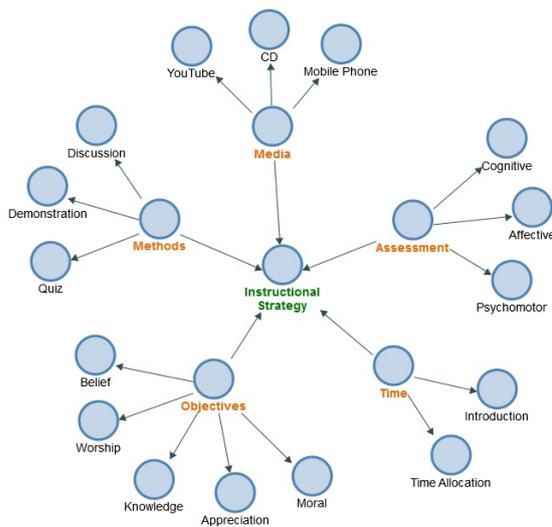


Figure 3. Concept Map of Instructional Strategy

As in the previous point, the songs were used in an effort to grow religious character as a core competency in each subject. To achieve this goal, learning media were required. The use of learning media is aimed at making students easier to comprehend the subject matter (Abdo & Semela, 2010) by facilitating different learning situations to boost students' interest and motivation to learn (Aini, 2013). The simple media that teachers often used were songs downloaded from YouTube or

on CDs. The time allocated for learning the songs was 10-15 minutes at the beginning of the learning activity.

The learning method used by the teachers was to demonstrate the song using a media player guided by the teachers, and followed by the students. To master one song, it took an average of 2-3 meetings at the beginning of the learning activity. In every meeting, the teacher always discussed the content of the song or in a quiz form to explore students' understanding of the content of the song. Then, after that, the teachers explained the values that needed to be practiced by students, and the teacher considered those values to have a correlation with the core material to be studied. Several teachers expressed this opinion:

The song material that I had chosen and downloaded from YouTube was then delivered to students in the initial learning activities by demonstrating directly or through a media player, which was then followed by students. After that, I discussed with the students the moral message in the song. (Teacher 5)

The religious songs that I got from YouTube were then demonstrated in front of the students at the beginning of the learning activity. Then, the contents of the songs were discussed and I informed the values that needed to be practiced. These values were then linked with the material to be studied. (Teacher 7)

I instructed students to listen to the song and memorize it repeatedly until the students mastered the song. At the 3rd meeting, after the students mastered the song, the moral message that students understood was then explored. After the students explained it, I then explained these values to clarify the student's understanding. (Teacher 8)

Regarding the evaluation, the teachers conducted evaluations in three domains: the cognitive domain to measure knowledge of religious values, the affective domain to measure appreciation and belief, and the psychomotor domain to measure students' worship practices and

moral behavior.

Challenges Found by Teachers in Developing Religious Characters through Song

Some of the challenges faced by elementary school teachers in developing characters through songs could be seen from three aspects: teacher competence, carrying capacity, and student conditions. Those challenges are illustrated in the following figure:

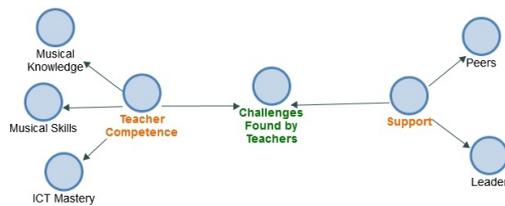


Figure 4. Concept Map of Teachers' Challenges

Teacher competence is fundamental as it affects students' motivation to achieve learning goals (Ghozali, 2020; Symeonidis, 2019; Werdayanti, 2008). In the teacher's perception, the challenge for elementary school teachers in teaching songs was musical competence, which was an insight into chords, rhythms, tones, and vocal techniques. The teachers realized that they did not have a music education background while the current curriculum could not be separated from music activities. In addition, this was also worsened by the lack of mastery of ICT that could support teachers in improving music literacy and choosing the right song material. In addition, the support capacity of the school leadership regarding the minimal availability of equipment to support song learning in class and the same interests as colleagues in need of tools made song learning just a routine. This fact had an impact on the lack of student motivation for religious songs, so this could have implications for the achievement of the goal of learning character through the song. Some teachers expressed the following opinions:

Currently, I need to improve my knowledge and skills in music such as chords suitable

for elementary school students for both boys and girls to support my activities as a teacher (Teacher 2).

Teachers need to master ICT for the learning process involving music activities like now, such as getting good and appropriate song materials, converting songs from one format to another, or finding information to increase teachers' insight related to music activities. This needs to be supported by school leaders, especially in terms of the availability of tools that support it (Teacher 5).

Teachers need to improve their music skills because they only get a little music material in lectures. This is important because the teachers' mastery of music can teach songs in an interesting and varied way so that it can increase students' motivation for the song material (Teacher 6)

The findings above provided a new viewpoint regarding the use of songs as learning media. In the perspective of elementary school teachers, songs were more than just a medium that functions to explore and express students' feelings or motivate and focus students' attention in the learning process (Good et al., 2015; Ludke, 2018; Ma et al., 2020). They also serve as a strategy for instilling, growing, and developing student character. These findings also strengthened the results of research from Mintargo (2018), which revealed that one of the functions of the song was to educate the nation's character. One of the main characters of the nation developed in the context of this research was the religious character. In the teachers' perception, this character was a constitutional and institutional mandate that every student needed to have as a core competency that had to be possessed as a graduate profile of educational institutions in Indonesia for all levels of education. Therefore, one of the products of education policy in Indonesia was rolling out a program to strengthen character education at the basic education level. The program focused on developing five national characters, one of which is the religious character (Muhtar et al., 2020; Suherman et al., 2019).

The formation of a common understanding among teachers regarding songs to strengthen and develop students' religious character indicated consistency and coherence between government policies related to strengthening national character and teachers' understanding of these policies at the implementation level (Setyawan & Doyo, 2020). This indicated the direction of the succession of the government program because teacher knowledge and understanding were strong achievement predictors (Helmke, 2009; Hattie, 2008; Kunter et al., 2013; Stahnke et al., 2016) in achieving learning objectives according to the development of the nation's religious character. However, teacher knowledge alone was not enough. Teacher skills were needed in developing songs to develop students' religious character. This was based on the findings of this research. Teachers had not yet reached the level of ability to compose a song or choose the right song based on the level of thinking development or thinking nature of students at elementary school age.

Referring to Piaget's theory (2013), the substance of the song that is sung by the teacher as a means of moral or character development ideally is a song that is able to stimulate children's awareness of the consequences of actions, on rules that cannot change and can change.

This also included songs that stimulated the understanding that sanctions for violations were automatic and songs whose content was to consider the purpose of moral behavior (See Piaget, 2013). A good song is a song that establishes reciprocal communication with the environment of the fans (Puspitasari & Herdiati, 2020) and is designed according to the child's mind (Barrett, 2016). Therefore, it became a challenge for teachers to compose and create songs that were in accordance with the moral development of children in developing their religious character.

To address these challenges, teachers needed to improve musical competence. The ability of teachers to compose or create songs in the learning process based on

developing students' religious character implied that teachers also had to possess literacy skills by investigating studies that were able to enhance their abilities. This also indicated the importance of liberal arts as an educational program that had to be implemented in every educational institution that produced prospective elementary school teachers. A liberal arts program is one that is required by all at some level. It is important to develop shared values, attitudes, understanding, and skills for the needs of all prospective teachers (see Alberty & Alberty, 1962). One of the contents of liberal arts is to equip someone with musical competence (Zakaria, 2015). That is, liberal arts programs through music content organized by educational institutions must be oriented to equip prospective elementary school teachers to develop and create songs for learning materials in elementary school based on character development. As for the songs in developing the religious character of students, the contents should refer to the five dimensions of religion and the theory of moral development. The five religious dimensions in question were belief, worship, appreciation, knowledge, and morals (Clayton & Gladden, 1974; Glock & Stark, 1970; Pelters & Roxberg, 2018).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the function of songs in the learning process is not only limited to developing the cognitive domain or only limited to remembering and collecting a collection of facts and data, but also as a means of developing student character, especially in religious songs. The importance of the existence of religious songs in the perspective of school teachers indicates the teacher's high appreciation of the existence of religious songs. This has implications for the need for abundant development and materials to enrich religious songs to enhance students' characters during the learning process. Thus, teachers need to improve musical competence in composing and developing songs based

on character development relevant to elementary school learning materials. This also requires encouragement from various parties, both schools, and policymakers, in improving the competence of these teachers through various forms of meaningful activities.

Limitation

This research has limitations both in its research focus, which only explores teachers' perceptions regarding the development of religious character or the research locus, which is only in the scope of the province of West Java. Therefore, this research can be developed with a broader focus related to the development of national character, such as nationalism, integrity, cooperation, and so on. It is also in terms of locus both across provinces and nations to realize research collaboration in building academic diplomacy.

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