

Strengthening of Independent Character Through Online Learning in Elementary School

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ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia has resulted in learning activities being carried out online. Online learning patterns make it difficult for teachers, students, and parents because they have to implement a new learning system, especially for students who are still in elementary school. Online learning requires independent learning, discipline, and responsibility of students. Therefore, good adaptation and cooperation between teachers, students, and parents are needed so that online learning can be carried out effectively. Of course, this collaboration must also be supported by teaching materials that are by the conditions of the students. Teaching materials used in the application of online learning are generally technology-based, but teachers can still use other teaching materials that can support learning, such as printed teaching materials. Online learning can be a place to foster character in students, mostly independent characters.

Keywords: Covid-19, online learning, independent character

1. INTRODUCTION

The learning process in Indonesia is generally carried out face-to-face between teachers and students classically. Still, this condition has now changed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which has plagued Indonesia since March 2020. Covid-19 is an infectious respiratory tract disease caused by the novel coronavirus or a new type of coronavirus (SARS-CoV2). This virus can be transmitted through droplets of body fluids and physical contact with infected people. Over time, the number of cases that occur is increasing every day. Besides that, the death rate also continues to increase [1]. This condition led the Indonesian government to issue a study at home policy. The government took this action because students generally enjoyed hanging out with their friends at school. If one of the students is positive for the virus, it is feared that all students in the school will also be infected. As a result, learning patterns that are usually carried out face-to-face between teachers and students now have to be done online to break the chain of virus transmission. The implementation of online learning is a new thing, both for students, teachers, and parents, so not all parties are ready to implement an online home learning system [2]. There are still some obstacles and constraints experienced by each online learning implementer.

Teachers carry out online learning by utilizing technology. The use of this relatively new technology often confuses students, especially elementary school students. Online learning is difficult for elementary

students because they are not old enough and are not familiar with the use of technology [1]. There need to be teaching materials that are easy to understand by all online learning implementers especially parents, because, in this situation, the role of parents is crucial to assist students in learning at home. Parents must guide their children so that their learning independence can be formed. In essence, the success of learning is not only determined by the teacher, but also needs to be supported by the availability of infrastructure, environment, and the willingness and motivation of students to actively develop their potential [3]. The teacher does not only act as a conveyor of material to students, but the teacher is also a motivator, giving direction, and a good role model for students. Through suitable learning activities, it will certainly form the quality of useful human resources.

If the implementation of online learning correctly, it can manifest character in students, especially independent character. Independent is the attitude or behavior of an individual who is not easily dependent on others [4]. To realize the independent character of students while studying at home, good cooperation between teachers and parents is needed. Teachers need to educate parents about the stages of good learning to foster student learning independence. This is where online learning plays a role in forming students' independent character. The purpose of this study was to describe the benefits of online learning for students' independent character building.

The results of a learning process are not only seen from academic achievement, but there are changes in behavior and character that are better than before. In other words, education should form intelligent and characterized individuals so that they will be able to produce superior human resources in achievement and politely interact by the noble values of the nation's culture [5]. These characters will later become guidance for students to live in society.

2. METHOD

This research uses descriptive qualitative research methods with a literature study. Literature research is a theoretical study, references, and other scientific literature related to culture, values, and norms that develop in the social situation under study [6]. The objectives of qualitative research are to understand the views of individuals, to tell the findings and to explain processes, and to extract in-depth information about a limited subject or setting of research [7]. In this research, the literature study is carried out by removing information from books, research results, and other supporting reading materials.

The following is the sequence of research steps. First, determine the focus of research, namely in the form of topics to be studied with literature studies. Second, determine the source of books, research results, and other supporting materials according to the research focus. Third, compiling literature analysis instruments according to the variables of the topic under study, namely about strengthening character, online learning, and the application of both in elementary schools. Fourth, carry out reference collection and analysis according to the previously prepared instruments. Fifth, perform data reduction and draw conclusions according to the focus of the study.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia has had a significant impact on various aspects of life, including economic, social, and tourism aspects. All activities in this aspect must be stopped due to a pandemic, which requires people to reduce activities outside the home. Also, the significant impact of Covid-19 has been felt in the education sector. So far, the learning process in Indonesia has been carried out face-to-face, but due to the Covid-19 pandemic learning activities have had to be carried out online. The Indonesian government has issued a study at home policy by Law Number 6 of 2018 concerning Health Quarantine, then confirmed by Presidential Decree Number 21 of 2020 and Regulation of the Minister of Health Number 9 of 2020 concerning Large-Scale Social Restrictions. This is done to prevent more comprehensive virus transmission. For junior high school, high school, and university students, the online learning system is not too difficult to implement. Still, for

elementary school students, online learning is not very useful if applied in the long term because elementary students need more assistance.

Online learning is learning that utilizes internet network technology, both computers, and mobile-based, so that there is no face-to-face interaction between teachers and students [8]. The implementation of online learning in elementary schools is carried out in various ways according to the circumstances of the students and their respective environments. Based on the results of the study, explains that one of the ways teachers implement online learning is by giving assignments to students through the WhatsApp class group consisting of students and parents [9]. Every day the teacher gives assignments and explanations for the material in the form of videos that are accessed via YouTube or self-made, then sent to the group for students to do. The assignments given are then carried out by students in the assignment book and collected once a week.

The success of learning activities cannot be separated from the role of teaching materials. Dick et.al explained that "instructional material contains the content either written, taught material, or facilitated by an instructor that a student as used to achieve the objective also includes information that the learners will use to guide the progress [10]. "Based on the expression of Dick, et al., It can be concluded that teaching materials are everything that students need in learning activities to achieve specific goals, be it in the form of printed or non-printed materials, which in practice are provided by the teacher. In the application of online learning, teachers generally use materials technology-based teaching.

Besides used teaching material technology-based such as videos and power points, teachers can use additional teaching materials such as textbooks to support the implementation of online learning. Books can be teaching materials that are in the current situation because, in essence, learning using books gives students the freedom to repeat the material being taught at the speed of learning of each student [11]. Textbooks can be easily used by anyone because they contain extensive explanations and material. Some of the uses of books include: (1) an alternative learning resource for students, (2) make it easier for teachers to teach learning materials, (3) gives students the freedom to repeat the material being conducted at the speed of learning for each student, (4) students can be motivated to learn because exciting material is available, (5) assisting teachers in implementing the applicable curriculum, (6) providing new knowledge for educators and students [11].

There are so many benefits of textbooks for students, teachers, and parents. Books can help smooth class management, add teaching materials, and help students study at home with their parents so that textbooks can become functional supporting teaching materials in the implementation of online learning.

So far, textbooks have become the primary teaching material in classroom learning, both at the primary and secondary school levels. Regulation of the Minister of National Education Number 11 of 2005 explains that textbooks are reference books used in schools that contain learning material in the context of increasing faith and piety, character and personality, the ability to master science and technology, sensitivity and aesthetic skills, as well as physical potential. And health, which is prepared based on national education standards [12]. Based on the above statement, it can be said that a textbook is a book that contains a collection of materials and subject matter used by students and teachers in learning activities. If students feel like adding study material, textbooks can be an alternative teaching material and learning resources that students and teachers can use.

The material in the textbook can be easily modified by the teacher and adapted by needs. Books can also be a means of cultivating independent character because important components in supporting independent learning are included in textbooks, both material and question exercises. Students can practice their understanding through practice questions contained in books. Students can also read over and over again material that they do not understand. To support the cultivation of students' independent character, textbooks can also add character education, such as examples of actions that reflect independent personality. This character education is expected to indirectly change the character of students, by reading and observing students later will imitate the attitudes in the book so that they can apply it in their daily life. With the existence of textbooks, parents will be helped in guiding their children when implementing online learning.

The role of parents is significant in implementing online learning. Parents of students are the primary guides in learning at home when there are no teachers. As explained by Winingsih that there are four roles of parents during online learning, including: (1) parents have the part of teachers at home who are tasked with guiding their children when they cannot do learning in school, (2) parents act as facilitators in implementing online learning, (3) parents act as support providers, motivators, and enthusiasm for learning for their children, and (4) parents as directors [13]. Based on this statement, it can be concluded that when students study at home, parents become the primary educators for students. Therefore, in delivering the material, teaching materials are needed that are easy to use and understand by parents who, of course, have different backgrounds.

There needs to be coordination between teachers, students, and parents before implementing online learning activities so that learning can run effectively. In addition to providing instructions to students regarding the assignment given, teachers also need to provide

direction to parents so they can assist and guide learning activities at home. Parents as a substitute for teachers at home only supervise and help when students experience difficulties [14]. This is where parents play an essential role in building students' independent character while studying at home. Parents only become mentors, not replace the part of students in doing the assigned assignments. Parents need to familiarize students with doing the projects given by the teacher individually. For example, if students get a math assignment from the teacher, parents first provide direction to students about how to do it correctly, after which students are allowed to work on these problems independently. Parents are only in charge of monitoring student learning, not giving direct answers to given assignments. It is intended that students do not always depend on their parents and friends, in addition to training how to think and improve student understanding.

When students have finished working on the questions, parents must check the students' answers, and if there are wrong answers to questions, the parents indicate where the students went wrong so that they can be corrected independently. Parents of students should not help as a whole or provide answers directly to the questions given by the teacher. Allow students to work on complex assignments independently, but instructions that can be used as specific references for students are needed to be used as guidelines in working on questions

Students must be able to do assignments independently and not always depend on others. That way, student learning independence will be formed. Independent learning is a learning process that is carried out on internal encouragement from individuals without depending on others, has its responsibility to master competencies to solve a problem [16]. In addition to the potential that is owned since birth, the development of independence is also influenced by various stimulations that come from the environment.

Children who have learning independence will show unique characteristics in the learning process. These characteristics usually appear in the various actions he performs. According to Desmita [17] independence is generally characterized by various factors, including the ability to determine self-determination, creativity, and initiative, regulate behavior, be responsible, be able to hold back, make your own decisions, and be able to solve problems without any influence of others. Independent learning is a condition of independent learning activities that do not depend on others, have a willingness, and are responsible for solving their learning problems. Learning independence that has been formed in students over time will strengthen their independent character. Independence in learning can also foster high motivation and self-confidence in students [14].

Online learning has many benefits. Among other things: increasing the level of learning interaction

between teachers and students, allows learning anywhere and anytime, reach a wide range of students, facilitate the completion and storage of learning materials [18]. Online learning can be a place to develop students' independent character. The results of research conducted by [19] showed that online learning was able to foster self-regulated learning. This statement is also reinforced by the opinion of Kuo et.al which states that online learning is more student-centered so that it creates responsibility and autonomy in learning [19]. Students are required to prepare and manage study time and maintain their learning motivation independently. Based on this statement, essentially, online learning requires high learning independence, responsibility, and student discipline. This attitude will emerge and become a habit if practiced every day. When students can apply online learning effectively and optimally, of course, the character of independent learning will naturally form.

In addition to independent learning, teachers and parents can work together to supervise student activities at home. For example, students are asked to get used to living independently by making their beds, sweeping the yard, washing their clothes, washing plate, watering plants. Then as evidence that students have done the task, parents secretly take photos and send them to the teacher via the WhatsApp application [1]. This activity is one of instilling an independent character in students. Elementary students prefer activities that involve physical activity rather than having to work on questions continuously. The students' independent activities above are also in line with the government's appeal to adopt clean living habits in their daily life.

Independent character needs to be accustomed since the child is in elementary school because at this age is the most appropriate time to lay the first and foremost foundation in developing various potentials and abilities of physical, cognitive, language, art, social-emotional, moral, religious, self-concept, discipline, and independence [20]. This statement is also confirmed by Wibowo's opinion that the psychological characteristics of elementary school-age students are the dominant times in character and personality formation, if at this time, the cultivation of independent character is carried out optimally, it will become the necessary foundation of student personality until adults someday [5]. Independence is also one of the components of forming social life skills or basic abilities that students must have to be able to adapt to their social environment. Independent character in students can be seen if these students can take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in determining learning activities, formulating learning objectives, knowing resources, and controlling the learning process by themselves [21].

Students who are accustomed to implementing an independent character in themselves tend to have a high enthusiasm for learning. This statement is also supported

by the results of research which states that students with good learning independence tend to learn well and can evaluate what they do [22]. This also affects the way students think which is more critical, able to analyze and solve problems in daily life, active, never give up, responsible, self-confident, and able to take advantage of free time by doing useful activities.

Through the 2013 curriculum, the government has launched the KDP (Strengthening Character Education) program which consists of 18 characters values. This is by Law number 20 of 2003 in Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Number 20 of 2018 concerning Strengthening Character Education (PPK) states that PPK is implemented by applying Pancasila values in character education, especially covering religious values, tolerance, hard work, discipline, creative, democratic, independent, honest, curiosity, love the country, respect for achievement, love peace, communicative, love to read, care about the environment, national spirit, care socially, and be responsible [23].

The PPK program launched by the government through the 2013 curriculum aims to make Indonesian education not only prioritize student cognitive aspects but also encourage affective and spiritual aspects to develop. This is by Law number 20 of 2003 concerning the National education system article 1 paragraph 1, which states that education is a conscious effort to realize an active learning process, to develop students' potential in spiritual attitudes, shape personality, intelligence, and skills needed in social life. Based on this law, we can all know that the purpose of education is not only about the cognitive aspects but also coupled with the formation of character and spiritual attitudes of students.

Character education is crucial to be used as a basis for behavior in everyday life so that students have a good personality [1]. Character education itself has three main functions, namely: (1) the function of forming and developing potential, namely creating and developing the potential of students to behave by the Pancasila philosophy, (2) the function of improvement and strengthening, namely improving and strengthening the role of the family, educational unit, community, and the government to participate and be responsible for developing the potential of citizens and nation-building, and (3) filter function, namely character education, sorting out the culture of the nation itself and filtering the culture of other countries that are inconsistent with national cultural values and noble character [3].

Efforts that can be made by the teacher to continue to foster independent character for students even though online learning include (1) providing clear learning instructions and easy for students to understand, (2) the teacher needs to provide a summary of the material that is in accordance with the core competencies and essential competencies in the questions - problems that are done by students, and (3) assignments that are given do not

always have to work on items, but the teacher can assign the task of reading the learning material as an effort to implement literacy activities during online learning, so that the literacy culture that has been carried out in school is still carried out even though the students are learning at home, besides that the teacher can also give assignments in the form of physical activities such as giving students tasks to clean the house, praying *dhuha* (morning sunnah praying for Muslim), washing clothes and dishes by themselves, as well as activities that can foster an independent character in students. Activities to train independence, if carried out continuously and repeatedly every day, will become a habit until the students mature.

Online learning includes a new learning system for students, parents, and teachers, so there are various obstacles in its implementation. These obstacles include the ineffectiveness of the teaching and learning system. Students are more challenging to understand the material, causing addiction to playing social media resulting in dependency, endangering eye health if it is done continuously, besides that the teacher cannot monitor the development of student learning optimally [24]. Other obstacles are also explained, these are (1) not yet accustomed to applying technology in learning, (2) not all teachers have the same literacy skills, some are relatively more able to adapt, but some are less able to adapt, (3) not all teachers and students have the minimum devices that can be used, and (4) the quality of the connection and the availability of data packages are still limited, so it requires a large amount of money [25].

Although the effectiveness of online learning is not as good as face-to-face learning, if online learning is well planned and implemented by all learning implementers, the results will also be optimal. Apart from the various obstacles experienced by teachers, parents, and students, as a new form of learning, online learning can be a means to foster character education in students, especially independent character.

4. CONCLUSION

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia, teaching and learning activities were carried out online. Based on studies that have been carried out, online learning can foster and strengthen independent character for students, especially elementary school students. There needs to be good cooperation between teachers and parents to foster this independent character. Teaching materials that are appropriate to the current situation are also required. Learning textbooks can be an alternative teaching material that can be used in online learning besides technology-based media. Textbooks can adjust the learning speed of each student; with textbooks, students can easily apply to learn independently. Students 'independent behavior affects students' more critical thinking, can analyze and solve problems in daily life, is

active, never gives up, is responsible, is confident, and can take advantage of free time by doing useful activities. Parents need to provide opportunities for students to do their assignments individually to strengthen their independent character.

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