

THE IMPORTANCE OF PARENTS UNDERSTANDING OF PARENTING AND ITS RELEVANCE TO EARLY CHILDHOOD CHARACTER BUILDING

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ABSTRACT The purpose of this community service activity is to provide counseling to migrant workers about the importance of understanding parenting and its relevance for character building in early childhood. This activity is aimed at Indonesian migrant workers who are generally young couples who have children at an early age. The methods used in counseling are lectures and discussions as well as assistance through workshops and consultations involving migrant workers and their families. Through lectures, the main material on types of parenting and its relevance to character building was presented. The activity was continued with discussions and assistance on various problems faced by migrant workers in caring for their children, consultations for those who experience obstacles in applying appropriate parenting or for those who have difficulty in choosing a parenting pattern that is in accordance with their expectations. This mentoring and consultation process is provided with the hope of increasing parents' knowledge and understanding of proper parenting and its relevance to children's character building. In addition, it also provides skills to overcome obstacles in applying the right parenting to their children. The results of this service activity are the increased knowledge of migrant workers about the types of parenting in early childhood, and increased knowledge about the importance of choosing the right parenting so that good character is formed in children. Thus, even though migrant workers do not have full time to take care of their children, they can choose the right parenting style, so that they still have the opportunity to prepare their children to become human beings with character so that they can achieve a better life in the future. It is recommended that all parents pay close attention to the importance of parenting, so that their children grow up healthy and become individuals with strong character.

KEYWORDS: *Counseling; Parenting; Early Childhood; Character Building; Indonesian Migrant Workers*

1. INTRODUCTION

National character is the most important aspect of human resources in a country. The quality of national character affects the progress of civilization in a country. Quality national character needs to be pursued and formed and fostered since the early age of the nation's cadres. The early age is a strategic age group in character building effectively and efficiently. If this is realized, and supported and implemented collectively by all elements of the nation.

Today, many developed countries in the world prioritize the character education of their people over other education (for example: Japan). In these countries, learning to read, write and count would be secondary to character education. Character education is not learning about science, but it is an understanding of the main values for guidance in living real life. Therefore, character education requires role models from adults around them, needs habituation and acculturation in daily life practices, so that the values learned can be attached to themselves and become a habit and personality that is implemented in their daily life practices.

The formation of children's character needs to start from early childhood. The goal is to form a good child's personality so that when they grow up they become a good and noble person who can provide benefits to fellow humans and their environment. This character building is one of the goals of national education, which is to develop the potential of students to have intelligence, personality, and noble character. This goal is not only to form intelligent Indonesians, but also people with personality or character, so that later a generation of nations will be born who grow and develop with noble values.

Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) in Malaysia are generally young couples with young children. In general, their children are still attending school at the Early Childhood Education (PAUD) level or at Elementary School (SD). In this condition, children are still very vulnerable and need intensive care by their parents. However, migrant workers generally do not have full time to care for their children because they have to work. In addition, they generally also have very little knowledge about parenting, including in choosing the right parenting style for their children at an early age. Meanwhile, parenting is very influential on children's growth and development, especially in character building.

In relation to the issue of early childhood education, it is noted that there are still many groups of early childhood in Indonesia who have not been able to access formal education in schools. Approximately only 68% of early childhood receive formal education. This is due to parents' low understanding of the nature of the purpose of national education, which is to develop learners into

whole human beings with character, faith and devotion to God Almighty. To achieve this goal, education needs to start from an early age.

Meanwhile, many parents still think that learning cognitive aspects, such as reading and writing, is far more important than learning affective aspects, such as instilling character values. As a result, children are more likely to develop their intellectual intelligence potential than their socio-emotional and spiritual intelligence. Of course, this pattern of education can be detrimental to the future of children, because they cannot develop their personality optimally in their time. The demands of parents, who want their children to be smart quickly, to be able to read write and calculate, have actually ignored healthy education about the development of the child's soul, as an infestation for the future in the long term (Elkind, 2000). In fact, healthy education is very important, because it can support the formation of character as set out in the objectives of national education in Indonesia.

Based on the background that has been presented above, through this article, counseling is conducted on the importance of parents' understanding of parenting and its relevance to character building in early childhood, to Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) in Malaysia, with the hope that they can carry out their duties as parents in preparing their children to become a generation with character and have a better future in the future.

2. METHOD

The first step of this activity is to conduct a survey that examines the application of parenting in Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia. The case is limited to the type of parenting and its relevance to character building in early childhood. The survey was conducted on the families of Indonesian Migrant Workers in Malaysia. Data were collected through interviews, observations and documents. Furthermore, it was analyzed using interactive analysis patterns. Data validity was sought through triangulation of methods and sources. After obtaining valid and reliable data, it is concluded that there are still many Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia who do not understand the types of parenting for early childhood.

They also do not understand how it is relevant to the formation of children's character. For this reason, most of them have not been able to choose and apply the right parenting style for their children, even though they generally want their children to have a strong personality and be successful in the future. The Indonesian Migrant Workers, do not know how the right parenting is applied to their children. For this reason, through the results of the survey, counseling activities were carried out which targeted Indonesian Migrant Workers in Malaysia, so that they were able to apply the right parenting to their children, even though they did not have full time to be with their

children, they could still hope that their children would grow up healthy with a strong character as expected from the objectives of education in Indonesia.

The counseling was conducted in collaboration with the Indonesian Embassy and Sharing NGO, in the international Community Service III activity, on Sunday, May 26, 2024 at the Indonesian School Kuala Lumpur (SIKL) Malaysia, which was attended by 113 Indonesian Migrant Workers in Malaysia and 7 foreign national workers. The theme of the event was "Empowering Migrant workers in Malaysia: A Multidisciplinary Capacity Building Approach and Medical Examination". In this activity from Universitas Veteran Bangun Nusantara, the team consisting of 4 lecturers acted as instructors, with the following task details.

Table:1 Counseling Team on Community Service with LSM Sharing in Malaysia

No	Name	The Position on Mentoring	The duty of every member
1.	Prof. Dr. Farida Nugrahani, M.Hum.	Team leader, Keynote speaker	Explaining the material by lecturing to all participants and receiving consultations during the mentoring time.
2.	Dr. Mukti Widayati, M.Hum.	Member of team, the Chairperson in FGD	Leading the discussions and receive consultations during Mentoring time
3.	Dr. Veronika Unun Pratiwi, M.Pd.	Member of team, mentoring consultant	Receiving consultations from participants about cases they face in implementing parenting for their children.
4.	Paramitta Purbosari, S.Pd., M.Pd.	Member of team, activity Moderator	Leading the overall event, both during public lectures; FGDs as well as in consultation and mentoring activities.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 The Explanation of Counseling Material about Parenting and its Relevance to Character Building

This counseling activity began with a general lecture, which contained an explanation of the counseling material to all migrant workers present. The material presented was divided into three themes, namely (1) The role of parents in the formation of children's character; (2) Types of parenting in early childhood; and (3) Character building in early childhood. The content of the material is as follows.

1. Role in Building the Child Character

At this stage of development, the education that children need is not only reading, writing and arithmetic. Character education is very important because it is needed as a provision to shape the child's personality until he/she grows up and lives in society. Character education is education that teaches core values that are beneficial for life. These core values are trust, respect, responsibility, justice, caring and citizenship. Character education in children is very important because these basic life values are needed by children in their future life.

Basically, until now there is no curriculum that is considered very appropriate for the implementation of character education in children, given the many factors that influence it, for example, the factor of cultural values. However, the most important thing about character education is how to instill positive values that will affect the child's personality in the future. This is in line with Presidential Regulation number 87 on Strengthening Character Education (PPK), which applies the values of Pancasila which include: religion, honesty, tolerance, discipline, creativity, independence, respect for achievement, environmental care, social care, and democracy in the formation of children's character from an early age.

The following are among others the importance of character education to children. (1) Encouraging children to grow up with good ethics and morals. (2) Fostering children's motivation so that their good character continues to develop. (3) Cultivating leadership values. (4) Encouraging children to learn to care, to be brave, to value others, and to respect others. (5) Developing children's ability to learn to solve problems. (6) Encourage children to learn how to work together to support each other or compete in a healthy manner.

In principle, teaching character education from an early age can help children instill good habits and learn how to behave well towards family, friends, and neighbors or to everyone. Although the process is certainly not easy, the process of character education needs to be carried out by all parents to their children.

Here are ways that parents can support character education in their children. Among others. (1) Instilling good behavior. Parents can be the first teacher for their children in good behavior. Since children can interact and understand the meaning of their parents' words, they have learned how to behave as their parents model. In this context, parents can teach their children to say the word 'please' if they need help. Then, after getting the desired thing, it can be taught to say the word 'thank you'. Likewise, when children make mistakes, they can be taught to say 'sorry'. (2) Instill discipline.

Discipline is the most important key to success. Discipline can be taught by giving children the responsibility to put their toys back in order. (3) Modeling good habits, which are in line with the character education guidelines. Good examples need to be shown to children, so that children

get used to doing it, so that their personality can be formed. If parents are able to model their children's behavior, it will be easy for children to find their personality, considering that children like to imitate the adults around them. Especially their parents. For this reason, the role of parents in instilling character in children is very important, so that their children grow up to be people with ethics and noble character.

2. Types of Early Childhood Parenting

In psychology, there are four types of parenting in early childhood. All types have distinctive characteristics, and will have a distinctive impact on the development of the child's personality (Nunes et al, 2020). The types of parenting are as follows.

- (1) **Authoritarian Parenting.** Authoritarian parenting is a type of parenting where parents are the highest power holders or authoritarian (Abidah & Novianti, 2020). Authoritarian characteristics, namely being rigid, firm, feeling always right in expressing opinions, and applying punishment if not according to the rules or wishes of the parents. This parenting pattern will shape a child with a disciplined and obedient character. Unfortunately, authoritarian parents often say "anyway" when expressing their opinions, without caring or listening to their children's opinions and wishes. This type of parenting can make children unaccustomed to making their own decisions and afraid to express their opinions. Not only that, children can be stressed and have an impact on their emotional development. Children will become explosive, experience poor interpersonal relationships, and tend to become authoritarian in the future.
- (2) **Indulgent Parenting (Permissive).** Permissive parenting is the opposite of authoritarian parenting. Parents tend to follow all the wishes of the child or the term is 'spoiling' the child. Parents can be good friends to their children, because they provide attention, warmth, and good enough interaction. Another characteristic of this type of parenting is that parents always encourage their children to do whatever they want, rarely set the child's schedule, support the child's behavior even if it is negative, and avoid punishment for the child. Children with permissive parenting will grow creatively because they are used to being free to express themselves in various ways. However, in the long run, they become undisciplined, behave aggressively especially when their wishes are not fulfilled, and lack initiative (Petren et al, 2021).
- (3) **Authoritative (Democratic) Parenting.** This is an example of the most ideal parenting pattern, because there is a balance of parental requests coupled with the high response given by parents to children. This parenting can direct children rationally (Kumar, et al, 2021). Children are given consistent limits and consequences when these limits are violated. Parents provide

emotional support when the child achieves an achievement, and provide punishment if there is a violation of the agreed rules. The goals and consequences are explained and agreed upon with the child. Communication between parents and children is well established so that children also become honest, obedient, and disciplined. Through this parenting pattern, children have a balanced personality, independent in making decisions, disciplined with good communication, have self-confidence, creative, and psychologically happy.

(4) Neglectful Parenting. In this type of parenting, parents only fulfill the child's basic physical needs, such as food, shelter, and clothing. Meanwhile, psychological and emotional needs are rarely met. Various backgrounds cause this parenting pattern, generally because parents are busy or because there are personal problems of the parents (mental health, crime, economic problems, and so on). In ignorant parenting, it is not uncommon for children to be educated more by gadgets, television, or video games. When children are young, they may not be aware of their parents' indifference. However, gradually the child becomes aware that he/she is not 'important' in his/her parents' life so that he/she tends to become an independent child. Children who grow up with ignorant parenting tend to be unable to control themselves, low self-confidence, difficult to establish relationships and communication, uncontrolled emotions to have an impact on poor academic grades.

These are some types of parenting and their impact on character building. Parents need to choose and ensure that they are able to apply the best parenting for their children, in order to support their growth and development and form the best personality during their growth and development.

3. Character Building in Early Childhood

Character building is essentially the result of an understanding of the relationships that every human being experiences, namely relationships with themselves, with the environment, and with God (Koesoema, 2007). Each of these relationships will provide an understanding that eventually becomes the child's values and beliefs. The way the child understands the form of the relationship will determine the way the child treats the world. A negative understanding of something will result in negative treatment as well. Meanwhile, a positive understanding will also affect the treatment of the world positively (Mustakin & Bagus, 2011).

In addition, children's character formation is also influenced by innate factors (nature) and environmental factors (nurture). Every human being has innate potential that will manifest after he or she is born, including potential related to character or virtues. Therefore, early socialization and education related to virtue values both in the family, school and the wider environment (Khofiyah,

2020). The nurture factor, namely the socialization or education process carried out by the family (parents), teachers, the wider environment (society) plays an important role in shaping a person's character. Children will grow into individuals with character if they can grow in a characterful environment, so that the nature of every child who is born holy can develop more optimally.

The formation of children's character needs to be carried out using methods that are adapted to the times in accordance with scientific means and methods that are easily implemented by parents and educators from various social strata (Kemdiknas. 2010) The readiness of parents and educators in the formation of children's character can be seen from the way they treat and pay attention to their children (Dewi et al, 2023). If they pay attention and treat their children with care and affection then this is one indicator that character building in children is being implemented. In addition, it is very necessary to pay attention to the type of parenting chosen, considering that each has logical consequences for the formation of character in children (Kusumaningrum, et al, 2021). The main characters that first need to be developed in early childhood include the following (Permendikbud RI No137/2014).

(1) The value of his relationship with Allah the Creator

The value of religiosity is related to divine values or religious teachings. Children's understanding of God's existence as the creator of nature and its contents needs to be instilled, so that children are able to be grateful for everything that happens to them. Children need to understand that everything that happens is the will of the Creator of the universe, and we need to love all of God's creatures in this universe.

(2) The value of his relationship with others

As a person, one needs to respect the rights and obligations of others. It is an attitude that always respects and carries out what is already the right of others and themselves, and obeys social rules. Through games, children recognize or obey the rules that have been set in the game, so that over time children get used to obeying those that apply in the midst of society. An attitude of obedience to rules that have to do with the public interest or society. Politeness and courtesy also need to be taught to children from an early age so that they get used to being polite with all humans. This attitude includes respect, friendliness and good behavior towards others. Appreciate the work and achievements of others.

(3) The value of his relationship with himself

Patience needs to be instilled in children from an early age. Patience is the ability to restrain oneself so as not to be easily angry, hate, resentment, not easily despair, complain, train oneself to always do obedience and fortify oneself not to commit heinous & immoral acts. Patience is a command of Allah listed in the Qur'an Surat. Al-Baqarah: 153 which means "O you who believe,

make patience and prayer your helpers, surely Allah is with those who are patient". In addition to patience, honesty is also important to instill in early childhood. Honesty is the courage to reveal something in accordance with the actual conditions. Honesty is initially cultivated by giving trust to children, for example in managing time to play, study, do hobbies, and rest. Honesty is also cultivated in the commitment to do tasks with their own efforts and the ability to resist the temptation not to violate the rights/ownership of others. Another trait is Integrity. Integrity is the ability to carry out the tasks undertaken totally or with full dedication. During the task, the teacher guides the child so that in every process, the child carries out the task responsibly. The next is fairness. Fairness can be cultivated in daily life. Courageous nature is also important to convey. To foster this courageous nature, it can be given to children by providing challenging tasks such as daring to ask questions, express opinions, provide opportunities to show abilities and so on.

The nature of the learner can be cultivated through children's curiosity, by giving light problems that exist in their lives, for example seeing an animal that has a broken leg, a broken electric cable, a dead tree drying up and so on. This learner trait can be nurtured from curiosity, which can be fulfilled by reading lots of books and practicing critical thinking. The trait of cooperation needs to be instilled as well, given that the ability to cooperate with others while coordinating tasks with teammates is a form of character. This trait can be trained through group activities. Children are trained to take turns to become line leaders or group leaders in tasks.

(4) The Value of his relationship with the environment

This characteristic is a child's sense of care for the environment. It is an attitude that always prevents damage to the environment, and always strives to repair it if there is damage to the environment and always preserves nature. Social care. It is an attitude that always provides assistance or helps others who are in need of help. Appreciating diversity or differences, is an attitude that respects and appreciates the diversity of cultures, religions, customs and others. National values. It is an attitude that always prioritizes the nation and country above personal interests.

Planting character values in the lives of early childhood needs to be done in a pleasant atmosphere, namely through learning and playing activities. We must be sensitive to children's cues, pay attention to children's interests, desires or opinions, not impose our will, be done with love, and in a pleasant atmosphere, and full of security and comfort (Meral, ed al: 2023).

3.2 Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Mentoring

During the discussion forum, all participants were given the opportunity to ask questions and express their opinions. At that time, the discussion activities ran warmly, participants

enthusiastically shared their experiences in parenting with their respective parenting patterns, and began to emerge an understanding and awareness that the patterns they applied were not ideal in supporting the formation of children's character. Some tend to be authoritarian, some are ignorant, but some are permissive.

Through mentoring activities, directions are given on how these migrant workers should take care of their children with the right pattern, so that their children grow up healthy with a strong character. The activities were carried out simultaneously in four tables with four extension workers serving together.



Figure 1. The Activities Document

4. CONCLUSION

The quality of human character is an invaluable asset of a nation. A nation can progress if its people have a strong character. The character of a nation generally comes from values that have been believed to be true for generations in a nation. Quality character needs to be formed and nurtured from an early age. This requires a long process and involves many parties, such as parents, schools and the environment. This early childhood is a critical period to shape the character of his

personality. Therefore, failure in the cultivation of good character at this early age will generally form a problematic personality in adulthood. The success of adults in establishing parenting patterns in order to shape the character and personality of children at an early age actually determines the success of the child in living social life in adulthood.

Giving stimulation to early childhood must be considered by parents. Various social values, moral and religious values need to be taught from an early age so that they can take root in the child's soul. Through delivery by adult example, and the right methods in accordance with the child's developmental stage, it will be easy to realize a habituation for the character behavior that is being instilled. Facts show that there are still many parents who are not able to understand how good parenting can support their children to grow and develop into healthy individuals with strong character. For this reason, socialization and counseling activities as well as assistance on how good parenting needs to be carried out continuously, in order to produce Indonesia's golden generation in 2045.

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