

# CONTRIBUTION OF FAMILY AND BOARDING SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CHARACTER BUILDING

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**Abstract.** Family and boarding school environment are important elements in supporting the development of early childhood character. This study aims to analyze the contribution made by families and boarding school environments in shaping the character of early childhood. This research uses a qualitative research approach with a case study type of research. Data collection techniques were conducted with semi-structured interviews and non-participant observations. The data analysis technique used is the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana model which uses three stages of data analysis, namely condensation, data display, and data verification. The author uses triangulation of sources, techniques, and research time. The results revealed that families and boarding school environments contribute to shaping the character of early childhood, namely independent, responsible, and religious.

**Keywords:** family, boarding school environment, early childhood character.

## INTRODUCTION

Whether we realize it or not, the world has entered the era of digital society 5.0 where technological development is very fast and all changes in life are uncontrollable. Children today have even been treated to technology from an early age. The type of technology that is widely used by society today is gadgets. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) reported by Kompas.id that in 2022 the use of cellular phones is included in this case as much as 25.5% for children aged 0-4 years, as much as 52.76% for children aged 5-6 years. The total use of gadgets in early childhood in Indonesia in 2022 aged 0-6 years reached 33.44%. While in the case of using internet access as much as 18.79% for children aged 0-4 years, as much as 39.97% for children aged 5-6 years. The total use of internet access for early childhood 0-6 years in Indonesia reached 24.96% in 2022 (Napitupulu, 2023). This continues to increase according to data provided by BPS in the 2023 Early Childhood Profile, that as many as 38.92% of early childhood children use mobile phones or gadgets and there are 32.17% of early childhood children who access the internet (Silviliyana et al., 2023).

Based on these data, it is known that the higher the age of the child, the intensity of gadget use and internet access tends to be higher. While the intensity of overall gadget use has even reached almost half of the total early childhood in 2022 and continues to increase by the end of 2023. Of course this is fantastic information as well as concerning. Especially considering that Indonesia is even ranked fourth highest in the use of gadgets after China, India, and the United States (Sadya, 2023). Various challenges of the presence of technology certainly await in front of our eyes, especially for early childhood who really need the direction of parents and adults around them.

Currently, there are many phenomena of children who have experienced gadget addiction so it is difficult not to hold these sophisticated devices even for a while (Putri et al., 2023). Children also find it difficult to concentrate in lessons because their eyes are tired from looking at too many gadget screens. There are even some cases of children falling into spectacles that shouldn't be. If this continues to be allowed then the child will grow into a human being who is less social, individualist, and does not care about the surrounding environment. The use of gadgets in early childhood can certainly have a positive or negative impact on the child. The thing that affects the future is the presence or absence of controlling and regulations imposed by adults around the child.

It is common knowledge that the first and foremost education is in the family, namely both parents. For this reason, parents have an important role in directing children in the use of digital

technology (Asmawati, 2021). The family plays an important role in the formation of early childhood character. The family should be used as an effective and conducive means for children to form character and develop their potential. In other words, families must have strategies used in educating early childhood, especially in the current era of digital society 5.0. Some strategies that are appropriate for example by practicing a religious-based parenting model, holding quality time with children, and making regulations and controlling the use of technology in children.

Environmental conditions are no less important in the formation of early childhood character. Basically, the character or personality of the child is influenced a lot by the quality of the environment in which the child grows and develops (Irhamna & Purnama, 2022). If the child grows and develops in a good environment, the child tends to have a good character as well, and vice versa if the child has already grown and developed in a toxic environment, it is likely that the child will be carried away to the negative things around him. Children are great imitators, so when there is someone who does bad things around him he will imitate it automatically through his subconscious. Therefore, the environment around the child must be designed conducive and support the development of the child's character.

One good environment for early childhood growth and development is a religious environment and thick with religious values. This is because religion is the foundation of daily behavior (Qathrunnada Zahra & Kuswanto, 2021). The boarding school environment is an example of a religious environment that can accommodate the formation of early childhood character. Boarding school is a special environment where students study with teachers. Most of the activities carried out at boarding schools are religious-based activities that only involve students in carrying out knowledge in boarding school or involve the surrounding community who benefit from the presence of the boarding school (Susilo & Wulansari, 2020).

Based on the description above, the author focuses on the contribution of families and boarding school environments in building children's character with case studies of early childhood living in the Boarding school Ath-Thohiriyyah, Parakanonje, Karangasalam Kidul, Kedungbanteng, Banyumas. The child's family practices parenting that is designed in such a way that it supports the mission that the family wants to achieve. The existence of a thick boarding school environment also greatly contributes to the formation of the child's character which is rarely found in other non-boarding school environments. Therefore, the author tries to reveal about the contribution made by the family and boarding school environment to the formation of the child's character.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses qualitative research methods that are descriptive. Qualitative research methods emphasize events or social realities that occur in the field and are explained thoroughly without reducing the nature of the object of research (Moleong, 2016). The object of research that the author examined was the contribution made by families and boarding school environments in the formation of early childhood character. This research is included in the type of case study research because it looks at individuals specifically (Sugiyono, 2018). The special subject of this study was Ning Fatmah's daughter named Warida Sofia Diantika who was given special stimulation from the family and boarding school environment that was able to support the formation of children's character within a certain period of time.

Data collection techniques carried out are semi-structured interviews and non-participant observations. Semi-structured interviews were conducted by the author on two informants involved. The main informant is Ning Fatmah as a parent who has an early childhood, and the supporting informant is Titis Melindasari as the captain of Ning Fatmah's family who lives at Boarding school Ath-Thohiriyyah. The observations made by the author have been carried out at a certain period of time by looking thoroughly at the forms of activities practiced by the family and the boarding school environment in order to build children's character.

The author triangulates the sources, techniques, and time of research in order to obtain complete and comprehensive data. Triangulation allows authors to dig into data in more detail from a data that has been obtained (Moleong, 2016). The data analysis technique used is the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana model which uses three stages of data analysis, namely condensation, data

display, and data verification (Miles et al., 2014). The data analysis conducted by the author aims to obtain the final results of valid and scientifically accountable research.

## RESULT AND ANALYSIS

### Result

Research on the contribution of families and boarding school environments in the formation of early childhood morals conducted by the author in the case of early childhood at Ath-Thohiriyyah boarding school is reflected in three habits that are often done, namely (1) religious-based parenting, (2) quality time of children with parents, and (3) regulation and monitoring of parents.

#### 1.1 Religious-Based Parenting

The parenting principle practiced by Ning Fatmah on her daughter is the principle of religious-based parenting. The parenting model applied is a mixture of democratic and authoritarian depending on the situation and conditions being faced. Ning Fatmah stated in her answer when she was interviewed about the reason she chose the two parenting models, namely "because we want to be parents who can be a safe space for children, so that their nature can grow well and optimally."

The principle of nature emphasized by Ning Fatmah considers that children have various potentials since they are in the womb. One of them is the potential for faith that is closely related to religious principles (Tullah & Hidayatullah, 2023). Without religion, people will fall. Similarly, parenting is practiced within the family. Religion plays a very important role in shaping children's morals. Religious science is full of moral teachings in humans from early childhood to old age. Therefore, parents must provide parenting based on religious values, especially Islam.

As an example of a real case, the author provides an overview of parenting practices based on Islamic values that occur in the Boarding school Ath-Thohiriyyah Parakanonje, Kedungbanteng, Banyumas. The author focuses on the subject Warida Sofia Diantika (Dek Fia) who is currently (April 2024) five years and six months old. Thanks to the boarding school environment and also the religious parenting style, Dek Fia grew into an early childhood with Islamic character, ethical, intelligent, and even critical of what happened around her.

Based on the observations made by the author during May 2024, there are several real examples of religious upbringing and parenting, for example Ning Fatmah who also invited Dek Fia when she wanted to pray in congregation at the mosque so that she could learn to pray early by observing the prayer movements of people around her. Initially, Dek Fia had to be invited to the mosque to join prayers or just see, over time now Dek Fia almost always comes to the mosque to imitate the movement of prayer of her own volition. In fact, she often carries complete prayer equipment such as prayer mats and *mukena* and performs congregational prayers like adults. Dek Fia can even fold *mukena* independently, this is inseparable from Ning Fatmah's education who always teaches tidiness from an early age.

Another example is when student activities such as Qur'an *deresan*, *salawat*, to *lalaran* are held regularly at boarding schools. The influence that these various activities have on the development of Dek Fia's character is fantastic. Initially, Dek Fia just listened or played at the location of the activity as it was customary to observe people praying in the mosque. The more intensity Dek Fia heard these things, Dek Fia began to memorize several verses of the Qur'an, chanting *salawat*, to *nadhom lalaran* which was quite difficult for other early childhood.

In addition to a supportive environment, the existence of a family that is pro in the development of moral values and children's religion is also very influential. At the boarding school, Ning Fatmah and other family members always reminded about the importance of doing good in life, honesty, help, and other Islamic values. In addition to oral use, Ning Fatmah also always provides examples that can be emulated by Dek Fia. This is supported by the activities of the students who indirectly also set an example for Dek Fia so that over time Dek Fia imitated what she saw.

#### 1.2 Children's Quality Time with Parents

As it is known that the time spent by children with parents there is a period that will not be repeated and cannot be replaced. Therefore, parents must be smart in creating moments with the baby including in this case taking time to play together, recreation together, eat together, or any activity done together. Such activities are often called quality time. Especially for parents who are busy working, then this is a mandatory thing to do. There is also about the intensity and time span

adjusted to the busyness of each parent. When parents only have time to meet children before going to bed, then that is the best quality time for parents and children.

The most important thing to do is quality time that is done regularly and continuously, not about the length of duration. In fact, the longer the duration of togetherness of parents with children, usually children tend to get bored considering the low attention span of the children. Therefore, a short duration does not prevent parents from accompanying children. Precisely during that short quality time, parents can chat with each other and focus on telling stories fully with the child (Diananda, 2020). Similarly, the use of gadgets can be minimized and the relationship between parents and children becomes harmonious and open. The family harmony created is the key to organizing family education or good parenting for children.

In the case that occurred at Ath-Thohiriyyah boarding school, Ning Fatmah is a single parent mother who is now raising Dek Fia without a father figure present. After the death of her husband a few years ago, it is undeniable that Ning Fatmah was faced with various obstacles in educating children. Luckily, she has a family and students who support in the formation of Dek Fia's character. Ning Fatmah always takes her time for children on the sidelines of her busy teaching students, mujahadah with mothers, and visiting out of town activities that are very likely to occur at any time. Every morning, the three are not out of town, Ning Fatmah tries to take care of her child to prepare for school such as bathing and dressing in any busy situation. Usually, boarding school family members tend to delegate the authority to a *khodam* or student appointed to help with family affairs. But Ning Fatmah actually used the short time to create a warm moment with her child.

In addition to the moment of going to school, there was also a moment when the child was read a story book by Ning Fatmah. In fact, Ning Fatmah collects a lot of children's books that almost fill every corner of her house and room. When there was still her husband, Ning Fatmah routinely accompanied Dek Fia to listen to books read by her husband every morning, one of which was entitled I Love My Qur'an. When children are read books, communication will be established from both. Children will usually question the contents of the book to the person who reads while pointing to the pictures listed in the book. This also hones language skills and critical thinking in children. Moments like that will definitely be missed by children when they grow up. However, after the death of her husband Ning Fatmah began to have difficulty doing the routine of reading the book because of the various activities that existed so often the students helped in reading books on the Fia Deck. Currently, instead of reading books on Dek Fia, Ning Fatmah prefers to read books including the Qur'an to herself, she tries to show the preoccupation of reading books so that Dek Fia has her own awareness to read books.

### 1.3 Parental Regulation and Monitoring

In addition to the implementation of faith-based parenting and quality time for children, parents also need to enforce some kind of regulation or rule to control children's behavior. Especially regulations on the use and access to technology such as gadgets and other sophisticated devices. Especially for early childhood who are very vulnerable to the influence of the outside world in today's digital age. In the example of the case at Ath-Thohiriyyah boarding school, Dek Fia was given a rule to hold gadgets only on Sundays. That also only applies when Dek Fia has completed some agreed tasks. The following is Ning Fatmah's explanation of the regulatory process for the use of gadgets applied:

*"Sejauh ini yang saya lakukan adalah meminimalisir penggunaan gadget pada anak-anak, baik membatasi penggunaannya maupun membatasi aksesnya. Saya set up YouTube Kids untuk mereka agar hanya channel-channel yang saya pilih yang bisa mereka tonton. Awalnya kami memberikan akses bermain gadget setiap hari untuk anak, namun dibatasi waktunya. Setelah kami evaluasi ternyata sebagai orang tua agak capek ketika harus mengingatkan setiap hari terkait gadget. Akhirnya setelah kami obrolkan dengan anak-anak, kami sepakat hanya bermain gadget di hari Ahad. Itu pun boleh dilakukan setelah mereka sudah menyelesaikan kewajibannya, yaitu tadarrus dan membaca beberapa buku. Alhamdulillah hal tersebut sudah berjalan lumayan lama."*

The existence of regulations or rules designed in such a way by Ning Fatmah is effective in controlling Dek Fia on the use of gadgets. In addition to Sundays, Dek Fia will be more often presented with story books that will usually distract him from gadgets. Ning Fatmah is also always diligent in updating the collection of books in her personal library so that Dek Fia is not saturated. As a result, Dek Fia is actually happier when faced with books than gadgets. The process of

formulating regulations imposed by Ning Fatmah must involve children, as well as the democratic parenting model he applied. She discussed first with Dek Fia about several things that eventually gave birth to mutual agreement.

In addition to regulations on the use of gadgets, Ning Fatmah also supports by providing other supporting facilities so that Dek Fia is not glued to gadgets. The media is called smart hafidz, which is a kind of sophisticated educational media specifically for children and designed in such a way that it contains a lot of Islamic educational content that is interesting for children. This tool provides audio and visual access for children so that it is more interesting. Another plus is that this tool does not require an internet connection so it is more friendly for children and parents do not worry about children accessing content in cyberspace of unclear origin. The use of this tool also did not escape Ning Fatmah's monitoring so that Dek Fia did not disturb others while using it.

After describing some regulations and monitoring implemented by Ning Fatmah, in general, there are several stages of regulation that parents can do in an effort to prevent and overcome the negative impacts of technology. These regulations include scheduling the use of technology, making mutual agreements with children about the consequences if they commit violations, selecting the content that children will access, Provide adequate supporting facilities, provide alternative interesting media other than technology for children (such as story books or other educational toys), keep children busy with various positive activities at home, and diligently monitor or monitor children's activities during the use of technology at home.

### **Discussion**

After the author describes the various activity habits carried out by Ning Fatmah and Dek Fia who are domiciled at Boarding school Ath-Thohoriyyah, the author analyzes that there are three early childhood characters developed by the presence of the family and boarding school environment, namely (1) independent character, (2) responsibility character, and (3) religious character.

#### **2.1 Independent Character**

The first research finding is to train children's independence. This is actually still related to the example set by families and students in the boarding school environment. Dek Fia is always faced with the fact that there are so many people around her who indirectly teach independence from an early age by just looking at the activities they do. This activity, for example, when Dek Fia sees students folding their own *mukena*, she will follow this without asking for help from others. Another example is when she needs something like books or other items even though there are many people in that place, Dek Fia prefers to find or take the items she needs by herself rather than asking for help from the people around her which she can actually do at any time.

#### **2.2 Responsibility Character**

The second finding is to train children's sense of responsibility. Responsibility is a value that is usually found in adults. However, Ning Fatmah and the boarding school environment taught Dek Fia to practice a sense of responsibility from an early age. A sense of responsibility can come from even the smallest things. As explained earlier, Ning Fatmah enforces strict regulations on the use of gadgets for Dek Fia. The formulation of the regulation involves Dek Fia so that she knows and understands the rights and obligations of the agreed regulation. So far, Dek Fia understands her duties and responsibilities before she accesses the gadget, namely having to *tadarus* the Qur'an and read books first. During the use of the gadget was only limited to half a day so that when the time came, Dek Fia automatically returned the gadget to its original place. The influence of these regulations helps shape the character of Dek Fia who is responsible and committed to mutually agreed rules.

#### **2.3 Religious Character**

The third finding is to develop the religious character of children. It is undeniable that the togetherness of Dek Fia with the students is able to develop its religious character. As mentioned earlier, Dek Fia has a habit of asking vocabulary or things that she doesn't know either to her mother or the students around her. When Dek Fia asks questions, he will gain new knowledge and new understanding in his life. The existence of this new understanding is what makes Dek Fia grow into a critical person for his age. For example, when Dek Fia sees a female student who does not pray for worshippers, usually she will assume that the student is unable (menstruation) so she does not pray. For a five-year-old child, knowledge and understanding of religious knowledge is obviously very rare if it is not supported by parents and a representative environment.



The existence of the above religious character is closely related to the spiritual intelligence of children. Spiritual intelligence is something that must be developed in early childhood as a provision for children when they grow up. Various activities carried out by the family and the boarding school environment have a great influence on Dek Fia to grow and develop into a spiritual person. Customs such as pilgrim prayers and tadarus have been practiced by Dek Fia. Islamic behavior is also often practiced by Dek Fia such as helping in kindness, being honest in all conditions, and respecting elders. These Islamic values led Dek Fia to become a person with good spiritual qualities. The hope is that he will always make these values the basis of his behavior in future life.

## CONCLUSION

The family and boarding school environment contribute significantly to the character development of early childhood. Therefore, it is necessary to maximize efforts and collaboration between the family and the boarding school environment to support the development of early childhood character as a whole. Some of the contributions made by families and boarding school environments are based on case studies conducted by the author at Boarding school Ath-Thohiriyyah, namely (1) religious-based parenting, (2) quality time for children with parents, and (3) regulation and parental monitoring. Furthermore, there are three characters developed with the presence of the family and boarding school environment, namely (1) independent character, (2) responsibility character, and (3) religious character.

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