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Strengthening Islamic literacy as an effort to build the character of the children of Umeak Baco Rejang Lebong

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ABSTRACT

Islamic literacy plays a role in the formation of Islamic character in the young generation. By reading a lot and learning Islam, children will understand the purpose of their creation in the world. Thus, children will apprehend more on how to behave on God's earth. But nowadays many ignore Islamic literacy, so the Islamic basis has become very superficial and encourages inappropriate deeds. The purpose of this community service is to build the character of Islam in children through various literacy activities and help children with financial limitations to get additional quality learning at no cost so as to build them into a smart young generation of Islam. The learning program conducted using the methods of lecture, direct methods, Q&A, random letters word game, random words, card games, and singing. In addition, the activities given were reading books, learning Islam and Arabic. Furthermore, the material provided were Islamic morality and Arabic vocabulary. It is observed that from week to week children's ability to recite and memorize Arabic was gradually increasing. Also, the children's morals were considered better than before. Changes in children's behavior are seen to change from loving the environment, appreciating friends, and respecting older people.

Penguatan literasi Islam sebagai upaya pembentukan karakter anak Umeak Baco Rejang Lebong.

Literasi Islam sangat berperan dalam pembentukan karakter Islami pada generasi muda. Dengan banyak membaca dan belajar mengenai Islam, maka ia akan semakin paham tujuan ia diciptakan di dunia dan mengetahui bagaimana seharusnya berperilaku di bumi Allah. Namun saat ini banyak yang mengabaikan literasi Islam, sehingga dasar keislaman yang dimiliki menjadi sangat dangkal dan mendorong pada perbuatan yang tidak sepatutnya. Tujuan pengabdian ini adalah untuk membangun karakter Islam pada anak melalui berbagai kegiatan literasi dan membantu anak dengan keterbatasan finansial untuk mendapatkan belajar tambahan yang berkualitas tanpa pungutan biaya sedikitpun sehingga dapat membangun mereka menjadi generasi muda Islam yang cerdas. Pembelajaran berlangsung dengan metode ceramah, metode langsung, tanya jawab, permainan acak huruf, acak kata, permainan kartu, bernyanyi. Bentuk kegiatan adalah membaca buku, belajar dan Bahasa Arab. Materi yang diberikan berupa akhlak Islam dan kosa kata bahasa Arab. Secara bertahap dari minggu ke minggu kemampuan anak-anak dalam melafalkan dan menghafal bahasa Arab semakin meningkat. Begitu juga dengan akhlak anak-anak yang membaik dari sebelumnya. Perubahan perilaku anak-anak terlihat perubahan mulai dari cara mencintai lingkungan, menghargai teman, dan menghormati orang yang lebih tua.

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INTRODUCTION

Literacy is the ability to critically access, understand, interact, and use print, electronic, oral, and written media (Burgoyne & Chuppa-Cornell, 2020). Literacy is the ability to read and write (Dobinson, 2019). A person mastering the skill of reading and writing of a language is defined as literate (Rosyid, 2019). Comprehensively, literacy is believed as the ability to read and write which is the gateway for anyone to be an educated person. The output of this literacy is to grow science and civilization (Maya & Syafri, 2020). In general, literacy activity has proven effectively in improving students' understanding of an issue. Today, equipping students with literacy skill is a must, as language skill is not only limited to what is expressed orally but also what is written (Clark, 2019). Literacy gives benefit in growing the mindset that reading activities are fun and not boring (Dharma, 2016). Information literacy is a major asset for twenty-first century students (Leung et al., 2019). General principles in literacy teaching is that it is best taught by starting with a voice-based writing system which is close to children's spoken language that they are familiar with (Saiegh-Haddad, 2014).

In regards to the idea of Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs), Bappenas (2021) asserts that "The improvement of education for Indonesian will spur the achievement of other goals and targets in the 17 SDGs points, especially to increase Indonesia's human development index. Goal 4 at 4.6, it is emphasized that in 2030, the country ensures all adolescents and some proportions of adult groups, both male and female, will have the ability of literacy and numeracy".

In Islam, literacy activities itself have long been echoed. Through the verses of the Qur'an that Allah first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him) in surah Al-'Alaq verses 1-5 ordered the Prophet Muhammad to read. Thus, reading is a key word to literacy that is easy to hear nowadays. Surah Al-'Alaq verses 1-5 has become the embryo of the birth of literacy tradition (reading and writing) among Muslims (Mujib, 2016). Islamic literacy is the ability to understand information through reading and writing activities as well as understanding ideas conveyed that contain Islamic values. Islamic literacy plays a significant role in providing Islamic character education to the young generation. Islamic literacy is an application of Islamic values through strengthening Islamic knowledges as an effort to build spiritual (*ruhiyah-ilahiyah*) qualities. The process of Islamic literacy is structured, not only limited to the aspects of knowledge and understanding, but it also covers its application and actualization in everyday life (Miharja, 2016).

The success of Islamic literacy is not only seen from the depth of Islamic knowledge possessed, but also the Islamic character that is applied as the practice of that knowledge. The practice in day to day life in the form of Islamic character as part of character education is one thing that must be realized. Character education is an effort to direct one's heart and mind to act and behave following religious values, culture, state philosophy, and national education goals (Aflisia & Hasanah, 2020). Character education can be built through various Islamic literacy activities (Habibah & Wahyuni, 2020). By reading a lot and learning Islam, someone will be more familiar with the purpose of his/her creation in this world. Thus, he/she knows how he/she would act and behave in the Allah's earth. Supposedly, the more knowledgeable someone is, the better he/she will be as he/she knows how to be good in his/her life (Suratun, 2018). However, nowadays many people ignore Islamic literacy that leads to shallow Islamic basis that someone has and this also encourages someone to do to bad deeds.

There have been many incidents related to bad deeds, such as the tragedy of a teacher named Budi in Sampang Madura occurred on 1 February 2018, where he got stroke in his right temple. This violence was done by his student as he was asked to do an assignment. That stroke has caused Budi to death, he was diagnosed with brain stem death (Taufiqurrahman, 2018). Previously, on 17 June 2017 in Kubu Raya Regency, a student was reported to beat his teacher's forehead and the back of his head as he failed the class. As a result, the teacher suffered a lump on the forehead on the right side of the eye and felt dizzy and had deep trauma (Aceng, 2017). Another case, Nuzul Kuriawati, a teacher in East Pontianak, was also beaten using a chair by her student only because she was reminded when she was playing with her cellphone during class hours (Syahroni, 2018).

Those aforementioned incidents are the portrayal of character crisis that occur among Indonesian children. Thus, finding solutions to eradicate and resolve this tension is our collective responsibility. This is can be done through various activities as a prevention stage to this character crisis. By the growth of Islamic literacy, it is aimed that character crisis can be reduced its number. Students' knowledge about Islam and their practice of its teaching will demand them in building Islamic character in various aspects of their lives.

The phenomena of children's violence that occur in many areas in Indonesia have moved the heart of the project team to do community service that instill Islamic values in children. Thus, Islamic character can be formed as early as possible and children can infuse good deeds (*akhlakul karimah*) within themselves. This project is realized through designing activities for children at Umeak Baco Pat Petulai Sumber Bening Village Selupu Rejang District Rejang Lebong Regency.

At Umeak Baco Pat Petulai, children learn with minimum infrastructure. Learning is only on a mat without a study table. The size of the classroom is small, thus, if all students attend the session, the room is narrow and uncomfortable. Likewise, the teaching staff is also limited. Currently, at Umeak Baco Pat Petulai there is no teacher that particularly

teach Islam, even though Islam is currently the most urgent lesson in building the character of young generation since an early age. Not only intellectually excellent, children are supposed to be projected to be spiritually excellent. With all limits of the classroom and teaching staff, children's enthusiasm to learning is extraordinary. Voluntarily, before 09.00 a.m, they have gathered at Umeak Baco Pat Petulai to read and learn. They enthusiastically participate in the activities at Umeak Baco. Considering on the condition and children's needs of Islamic literature has finally encouraged the project team to spend time doing community service activities. Thus, the team can take a role and contribute in Islamic character building for children in Sumber Bening Village through Islamic literacy enforcement.

This community service aims at building Islamic character in children through various forms of literacy activities such as providing Islamic material, telling stories, and reading Islamic books, as well as fostering a love for Arabic as the language of the Quran through learning and writing Arabic, thus, this skill can be taken seriously and continuously that eventually children are able to understand the Quran and Hadith as the two main sources of Islamic law (Aflisia & Harahap, 2019). In addition, this project is to help children with financial issue to get additional quality learning with free of charge, thus, it is hoped that this activity can help them to be smart young Islamic generations. Also, this project is to assist children in giving a good quality and memorable learning experience at Umeak Baco Pat Petulai through a support of facilities and infrastructure for the learning process such as providing Islamic books, Arabic literature, and study tables.

With all these, this project can provide benefits to realize of of the mission of IAIN Curup, it is to do community service as a process of strengthening and utilizing scientific development, implementing one of the Tridharma of Higher Education, i.e conducting community service, helping government of Rejang Lebong Regency in building Islamic character to children, and improving the quality of Islamic education. Through this community service, government's task in building youth's character who are smart, independent, and dignified can be realized.

METHOD

This community service was scheduled on May to December 2019. This activity took place twice a month (fortnightly), thus, in 8 months there were 16 meetings. This community service was located at Umeak Baco Pat Petulai in the house of a resident of Sumber Bening Village Rejang Lebong, which had been used as a house for reading activities by children in the neighborhood (Figure 1). The target of this community service project is the children of Umeak Baco Pat Petulai Sumber Bening Village Selupu Rejang District Rejang Lebong Regency Bengkulu Province in total of 30 children.



Figure 1. Umeak baco

The learning activity was done through reading, lecturing, direct method, question and answer, random letters word game, word scramble, card game, and singing. The implementation of the activities was done in three stages, they were:

Activity Preparation

Preparation for the implementation of this community service was done through initial observation on the location where the project would be carried out. The project team coordinated and asked for permission from the staff at

Umeak Baco Pat Petulai about the use of the location and number of children resided in Umeak Baco Pat Petulai. The staff of Umeak Baco welcomed the planned community service.

Activity Implementation

Prior to the implementation of the activity, the project team distributed stationary needed during the learning process to all children who took part in the activity. The activities include reading books, studying Islam, and learning Arabic.

Activity Evaluation

The evaluation of the activity was carried out to determine the extent of the success and usefulness of this program for the children of Umeak Baco Rejang Lebong. The point of success of this community service is not only measured by the mastery of the material, both Islamic and Arabic material taught, but it is a good change and a better character instilled on the children who participated in the program, not only when the project is run but also in the future wherever they are.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The project team consists of 3 (three) leacturers in the Faculty of Islamic Education (Tarbiyah) and two students in the same faculty. Students' involvement in the project will benefit in strengthening the knowledge they acquired during their study, giving the them experience, and preparing their readiness to face the realities in society. The implementation of the activities includes several activites, such as reading books, studying Islam, and learning Arabic.

First, Reading Books. Book reading activities were carried out before studying Islam or learning Arabic. The activity of reading books about prophets and apostles, stories of sahaba (prophet's companions), and stories of pious people and so forth were done by inviting children to read books (Islamic or Arabic with pictures) for 30 minutes. After reading time, children were given an opportunity to present their after-reading lesson before the class. In addition, the children were also given a chance to ask questions if there was something they did not understand from the book they read.

Second, Studying Islam. Islamic learning activities were given after the book reading session. The form of this activity was done by provisioning children with Islamic material about noble character in Islam such as etiquette to parents, teachers, neighbors and so on. This material was delivered in various methods, both lecture and direct method as well as telling stories using pictures. Story telling was carried out aiming at training children to compose words, practice writing, reading, also to encourage children to have courage in expressing opinions, communicate, and work collaboratively with their peers.

Third, Learning Arabic. The Arabic learning activity was also carried out after book reading session lasted. To motivate the children, the project team provided ice breaking activity to stimulate and prepare them in receiving the material. Arabic material was delivered in various methods such as direct method, using picture as media, random letters word game, word scramble, card game, and singing.

For 16 weeks, this project was done by providing materials such as Islamic manner (akhlak) and varied Arabic vocabularies. In detail, the material is shown in Table 1. Meanwhile, for the documentation of the activities is presented in Figure 2, Figure 3, and Figure 4.

Table 1. Material

Meeting	Material	
	Islam	Arabic
1	Introduction	التعارف
2	Don't Be Angry and Arrogant	الحيوان
3	The Six Pillars of Iman	الرياضة
4	The Five Pillars of Islam	المدرسة
5	Salah	السوق
6	Manner to Environment	أسماء الأيام
7	Surrender (Tawakkal)	أسماء الشهور
8	Honoring Guest	الألوان
9	Fasting in Ramadhan	الرحلة
10	Confession of Faith (Shahadah)	الفواكة
11	The Truth of Patience	عدد

Meeting	Material	
	Islam	Arabic
12	Spreading Salam	الأشكال
13	Manner to Parents	جسم الإنسان
14	Courtesy of Eating and Drinking	الأميرة
15	Learning from the Prophet	البيت
16	The Danger of Spoken Word	المطبخ



Figure 2. Learning Activities



Figure 3. Learning through play

The children were in a great enthusiasm to participate in this community service, starting from welcoming the project team and responding well to the learning. Eventhough, initially not all children understand the Islamic material and Arabic. However, after several meetings, they gradually get used to write hijaiyah letters and remember some Arabic vocabularies taught. In addition, stories of the Prophets and His companions (shahaba) were also slowly understood, thus, the lesson they learnt can be practiced in their everyday life.



Figure 4. Donation of Arabic books, Islamic reading texts, and folding study table

It is observed that for children who is new to hijaiyah letters pronunciation, special repetition is needed. Also, an improvement is evident from one meeting to another that children are improved in term of confidence to come before the class and recite Arabic vocabulary, read the shahada correctly, as well as pronouncing Arabic vocabulary.

To expedite literacy activities and to create more attracting activities for children, the project team provides facilities for Islamic reading books which are colourful and full of pictures such as story of the prophets, sahaba, animals in the Quran, pearl of hadith, manner in Islam, illustrated Arabic vocabulary books, folding study tables, and so forth.

CONCLUSION

This community service has been done very well. The implementation of this project provides excellent benefits in building Islamic character in children through reading books, studying Islam, and learning Arabic. The learning process is conducted with fun methods such as lectures, reading, singing, direct method, question and answer, random letters word games, word scrambles, and card games. Free session that might be spent with useless activity is addressed by presenting this community service. Children's behaviour is observed to have changed indicated by the way they love the environment, respect their friends and the elderly.

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