Implementation Of Character Education In Elementary Schools Through Educational Games

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ABSTRAK

Character education in elementary schools is a crucial aspect of shaping a high-quality young generation. One effective method for instilling character values is through educational games. These games are not only enjoyable but also serve as a medium for teaching moral and social values to children. Character education for children serves as a foundation for their future, functioning as the basis for self-discipline and as a tool for behavior control. The importance of character education has become a serious issue that needs immediate attention, as character education represents the strength of a nation. Education is an effort to humanize humans, which is the most important aspect of human life. This implies that every human being has the right to receive it and is expected to continuously develop within it. The type of research employed in this study is literature review. The literature review method involves a series of activities related to data collection from literature, reading and taking notes, as well as processing research materials. Literature review is a mandatory activity in research, especially academic research whose primary objective is to develop theoretical aspects or practical benefits. Character education in elementary schools is a crucial aspect of shaping a high-quality young generation. One effective method for instilling character values is through educational games. These games are not only enjoyable but also serve as a medium for teaching moral and social values to children. One method to create a fun and comfortable learning environment is through games. With an educational game approach, students can learn while having fun, aiming to develop their talents and shape positive character.

Keywords: Character education, educational games

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1. INTRODUCTION

Character education in elementary schools is a vital aspect of forming a high-quality young generation. One effective method to instill character values is through educational games. These games are not only enjoyable but also serve as a medium to teach moral and social values to children. Character education forms the foundation for a child's future, functioning as the basis for self-discipline and as a tool for guiding behavior. The importance of character education has become a serious issue that must be addressed promptly, as it represents the strength of a nation.

The concept of character education, which has long existed in the history of education in Indonesia, still faces various gaps and challenges in different educational institutions. However, the most common issue often lies in the implementation of character education. While the content and values of character education remain consistent, the learning methods have evolved over time. In the past, character education was mainly delivered through lectures or storytelling. However, with the advancement of technology, the methods have diversified, including internet-based technologies or applications. Additionally, one significant method in character education is through educational games, which are increasingly being adopted by various educational institutions. This article discusses the implementation of character education in elementary schools through educational games, especially at the elementary school level (Fadllurrohman and Firdaus, 2024).

2. DISCUSSION

Education is an effort to humanize humans and is the most essential aspect of human life. This means that every individual has the right to education and is expected to continuously develop through it. Education provides people with knowledge and experiences while helping to develop their potential. In line with this, according to Indonesian Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, national education functions to develop students' character. Explicitly, the goal of national education is to shape the character of the nation's children.

Character education is the process of guiding students to become holistic individuals with character in the dimensions of heart, mind, body, and soul. According to Thomas Lickona, character is a natural disposition of humans to morally respond to situations. Lickona defines character education as the formation of personality through moral education, with results reflected in practical actions such as good deeds, honesty, responsibility, respect for others' rights, and perseverance (Belinda and Halimah, 2023).

Character education is also understood as value education, moral education, and character education aimed at developing students' ability to make good decisions and to embody goodness wholeheartedly in their daily lives. Meanwhile, Mumpuni (2018:15) defines character education as a process designed to instill positive values in students and guide them to become complete individuals with character in terms of heart, mind, body, feelings, and desires. Therefore, it can be concluded that character education is a teaching process designed to help individuals develop ethical values (Sofiana Haul, 2021).

According to Wulan et al. (2019), educational games are games specifically designed for the learning process. Syamsuardi (2012) argues that educational games are a form of teaching instrument designed to enhance educational and learning experiences for children. These instruments include traditional and modern games that provide educational and instructional content. Furthermore, Uliyah & Isnawati (2019) highlight that games can be used to add variety, enthusiasm, and interest to the learning process (Sari et al., 2021).

Mentally, children have a strong attraction to various types of games. Therefore, if games are appropriately modified or adapted, they can significantly contribute to achieving specific educational objectives. Many researchers have utilized educational games to improve language skills, digital literacy, and other abilities (Rohim, 2024).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The type of research used is a literature study. The literature study method involves a series of activities related to collecting library data, reading and taking notes, as well as managing research materials. A literature review is a mandatory activity in research, particularly academic research, which primarily aims to develop theoretical aspects and practical benefits.

A literature study is conducted by every researcher with the main purpose of finding a foundation to build a theoretical framework, conceptual framework, and formulate hypotheses. This allows researchers to categorize, allocate, organize, and utilize a variety of literature within their field. Through literature studies, researchers gain a broader and deeper understanding of the issues they intend to investigate.

The literature review process is carried out after determining the research topic and formulating the problem statement, but before engaging in fieldwork to collect the required data (Kartiningrum, 2020).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Government of the Republic of Indonesia, through Presidential Regulation Number 87 of 2017, issued a new policy on character education, namely Strengthening Character Education, which outlines five core character values to be implemented in educational institutions in Indonesia. These five core values are religiousness, independence, cooperation (gotong royong), integrity, and nationalism.

1. Religious Character

   This is the foremost among the five core character values. According to the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, this value reflects faith in God Almighty, manifested in actions of practicing one's religion and belief, respecting differences in religion, supporting tolerance in performing religious practices, and living harmoniously and peacefully with followers of other religions. Implementing religious values can be seen in peaceful behavior, tolerance, respect for religious and belief differences, perseverance, self-confidence, cooperation among believers, rejection of bullying and violence, friendship, sincerity, environmental care, and protection of the weak and marginalized.

2. Nationalist Character

The nationalist value is the attitude, behavior, and action that demonstrate loyalty, care, and high respect for the nation's language, physical environment, social and cultural conditions, economy, and politics, prioritizing the interests of the nation and state above personal or group interests.

3. Integrity Character

Integrity is the foundation of behavior that makes an individual reliable in speech, actions, and work, showing commitment and loyalty to human and ethical values. It includes responsibility as a community member, active participation in social life, and consistency in actions and words based on truth. Individuals with integrity respect everyone's dignity, particularly those with disabilities, and serve as positive role models.

4. Independent Character

The value of independence reflects attitudes and actions that do not rely on others, using all energy, thoughts, and time to achieve hopes, dreams, and goals. Independent students exhibit a strong work ethic, resilience, fighting spirit, professionalism, creativity, courage, and a lifelong learning attitude.

5. Cooperative Character

6. The value of cooperation involves appreciating the spirit of collaboration and mutual assistance in solving problems together, fostering communication and friendships, and providing support to those in need. Students are expected to demonstrate mutual respect, collaboration, openness, commitment to joint decisions, deliberation for consensus, helpfulness, empathy, and solidarity while rejecting discrimination and violence and showing a willingness to volunteer (Rohim, 2024).

7. Character education is implemented at all education levels because it encompasses not only knowledge transfer but also the teaching of morals to shape students' character positively for their future lives. Currently, character education has been integrated into elementary schools. Almost all schools have implemented routines to enhance students' intelligence. This education occurs not only through routines but also through classroom activities during the teaching and learning process. Teachers can integrate moral values into their teaching materials, instilling students with an understanding of values aligned with Indonesian identity. Ethical values, such as honesty and compassion, are part of religious teachings (Febriyani *et al.*, 2022). Without consistent guidance in character education, it would be challenging to develop students' desired character traits. This requires understanding and support from various stakeholders, both within and outside the school environment (Muklas dan Imron, 2021).

One method to create a comfortable and enjoyable learning environment is through games. When students feel happy and comfortable during learning, they are less burdened by the material, making it easier for them to understand and absorb the lessons. Educational games are one of the most effective methods for character development. By playing educational games, students can learn while having fun, which aims to develop their potential and build character. The availability of educational game tools supports effective and enjoyable learning for children, enabling them to optimally develop their potential. Educational game tools are resources children can use for play, learning, and exploration appropriate to their age. These tools must have educational value, develop children's potential, and accommodate all levels of their developmental achievements.

One way to create an enjoyable and safe learning atmosphere is through the use of games. If students feel joy and comfort during the learning process, they will not be burdened by the material being taught, making it easier for them to understand and digest the lessons. One of the most efficient methods to develop character is by implementing educational games. With an educational game approach, students can learn while having fun, aiming to develop their talents and shape positive character traits (Fatmawati, 2020). Playing offers numerous benefits for a child's growth throughout their life. In fact, the purpose of educational games is to enhance self-awareness, stimulate imagination, improve communication, develop physical and motor skills, enhance social interactions, strengthen emotions or character, advance thinking abilities, refine sensory sensitivity, and develop skills in sports and dance (Suryawan, 2020). The following are seven benefits of applying educational games in the classroom:

1. Enhance creativity and critical thinking.
2. Train focus and improve learning concentration.
3. Create a fun learning atmosphere.
4. Improve social and interaction skills.
5. Develop verbal communication skills.
6. Boost students' self-confidence.
7. Enrich students' knowledge and understanding.

A common issue for pre-service teachers is their lack of creativity in utilizing available media. Programs aim to introduce educational games that pre-service teachers can use in teaching (Kiptiyah *et al.*, 2021). According to Al. Tridhonanto et al. (2011), there are several advantages and disadvantages of using educational games in learning, as follows:

1. Advantages of Educational Games
   a. Enhancing Intelligence

      Research conducted by Dr. Jo Bryce from Manchester University has proven that games make people smarter. The study revealed that gamers who play games for 18 hours a week have better hand-eye coordination, comparable to that of athletes. The study also highlighted that gamers possess a high level of concentration, enabling them to complete multiple tasks effectively.

   b. Improving Visual Acuity

      A study by the University of Rochester found that children who frequently play war-themed games have quicker eye reactions compared to those unfamiliar with game controllers. Additionally, motor skill growth and cognitive development are positively impacted. Active gaming stimulates motor system development in tandem with the movements involved.

   c. Enhancing Reading Skills

      There is a claim that video games are not intended to replace reading. However, a psychologist from Finland University disputes this claim, explaining that the content of video games significantly benefits children in improving their reading skills. Role-playing games (RPGs) like Final Fantasy and Phantasy Star, which feature extensive dialogues, are particularly helpful. These games stimulate children's brains to understand stories, positively influence language development, and expose them to new vocabulary in both local and foreign languages.

   d. Familiarizing with New Technology

      Video game players are aware that games are updated to reflect current trends. For instance, during the World Cup, soccer-themed games featuring World Cup teams are released. These games often include realistic elements, and some even require additional gaming consoles, such as guitar controllers for Guitar Hero or dance mats for Dance Revolution. Spending money on these accessories feels worthwhile as they combine entertainment with skill and agility development.

   e. Increasing Typing Speed

      Gaming on a computer using a keyboard benefits users by improving typing speed, particularly in online games where players interact with others via typed messages. In such situations, players must type quickly while controlling the game, simultaneously enhancing their cognitive abilities.

   f. Relaxation

      A study conducted at Indiana University found that playing video games can relieve nervous tension. Gaming serves as an outlet for expressing emotions and releasing frustrations. For individuals prone to anger, war-themed games can serve as a safe way to channel aggression. This allows players to feel a sense of relief and calm after playing.

2. Disadvantages of Educational Games
   a. Addiction and Dependency

      As previously mentioned, excessive gaming can lead to issues such as addiction and dependency. Affected individuals may devote significant time and energy to gaming. High-focus games provoke deep curiosity, leading players to neglect other activities like bathing, eating, or studying to achieve in-game success.

   b. Health Problems

      Long-term gaming can indirectly cause health problems. Prolonged screen time while gaming often results in neglected meals, reducing immunity. A health journal published in the UK reported that gamers spending an average of seven hours a day using vibrating controllers may experience finger vibration syndrome. This highlights the potential negative health impacts of gaming.

   c. Deviant Behavior

      Deviant behavior can arise from dissatisfaction with unmet expectations. Obsession with gaming at high intensity can lead to psychological effects, such as illusions, making it difficult for individuals to distinguish between acceptable behavior in real life and virtual settings influenced by in-game characters.

    d.   Social Isolation

Children often become very comfortable while gaming, making them difficult to interact with and leading to withdrawal from their surroundings. This can negatively affect their mental health, relationships with peers, and interactions with others. Since many games are solitary and can be played alone, they often foster isolation, especially in online gaming environments (Najuah, Ricu Sidiq, 2022).

5.   CONCLUSION

Character education in elementary schools is a crucial aspect of shaping a quality young generation. One effective method of instilling character values is through educational games. These games are not only enjoyable but also serve as a medium to teach moral and social values to children. Character education acts as a foundation for children's future, functioning as a basis for self-discipline and a tool for self-regulation in behavior. The importance of character education is a pressing issue that must be addressed, as it represents the strength of a nation. Character education is also interpreted as value education, ethics education, moral education, and character education, aimed at developing students' ability to make good decisions and wholeheartedly implement those decisions in daily life.

Character education is applied at all levels of education because education is not solely about transferring knowledge but also involves teaching morals that can shape students' character, bringing positive effects to their future lives. Currently, character education is being implemented in elementary schools. Almost all schools have introduced various practices to enhance students' intelligence. Character education is conducted not only through habitual practices but also through activities within the classroom during the teaching and learning process. One method to create a pleasant and comfortable learning environment is through games. If students feel happy and comfortable while learning, they will not feel burdened by the material being taught, making it easier for them to understand and absorb lessons. One of the most effective and appropriate ways to build character is by incorporating educational games.

However, some issues often overlooked by pre-service teachers include their lack of creativity in utilizing available media effectively.

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