

Enhancing Character Education in the New Normal Era through Academic Guidance and Outdoor Learning Methods in Malangaten Village

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Volume

4

Issue

2

Edition

November

Page

297-302

Year

2023

Article History

Submission: 22-02-2022

Review: 18-06-2022

Accepted: 30-08-2023

Keyword

Character education;
Academic guidance;
Outdoor learning;

How to cite

Azizah, A. N., Febiyani, P., Mardiana, T., Amalia, T. (2023). Enhancing Character Education in the New Normal Era through Academic Guidance and Outdoor Learning Methods in Malangaten Village. *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 4(2), 297-302. <https://doi.org/10.32815/jpm.v4i2.988>

Abstract

Purpose: This research addresses the educational implications of the Covid-19 pandemic, specifically the shift to remote learning. The study focuses on a community initiative providing home-based academic support to elementary students in Malangaten Village. The significance of this research lies in understanding the challenges parents face in facilitating remote education.

Method: Employing mixed methods, the research utilises surveys and interviews to explore students' and parents' challenges. Thematic coding and statistical analysis are applied for data interpretation.

Practical Applications: The study offers educators, parents, and policymakers' valuable insights into remote education. It suggests effective strategies for home-based learning and enhancing parental involvement, thereby improving students' academic performance.

Conclusion: This research underscores the importance of community-driven initiatives, like home-based academic support, in addressing the challenges of remote education. It emphasises collaborative approaches among schools, parents, and communities for sustained and effective learning. This study contributes practical strategies for navigating educational challenges under unprecedented circumstances.



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Introduction

The New Normal has induced substantial shocks across all facets of life, notably in education. Indonesia, designated as a COVID-19-affected country, experienced profound changes in teaching and Learning Activities (TLA). Conventional in-school instruction transitioned to remote learning from home. Learners embarked on remote learning journeys, guided indirectly by their teachers. Educators, unaccustomed to home-based instruction, hastily adapted. The unfamiliarity of crafting syllabi, lesson plans, and assessments for home-based learning prompted educators to utilise digital learning platforms like Classroom, Edmodo, Zoom, Google Forms, Quizizz, Office 365, and others. These avenues were leveraged to surmount the challenges of remote learning. However, the transition to remote learning was challenging. Learners and parents encountered various issues, including boredom with online learning, stress from accumulating assignments, limited internet connectivity, and the urban-rural gap in preparedness for digital-based education (Manguilimotan et al., 2022).

In Indonesia's educational landscape, a pivotal component cannot be overlooked: character education. This responsibility is enshrined in the 2003 National Education System Law (Huda et al., 2022) (Veronika & Dafit, 2022). Character education underscores that education extends beyond merely transmitting knowledge from educators to learners. According to Ki Hadjar Dewantara, education must impart ethical values. Education constitutes a purposeful endeavour aimed at holistic individual development. In Islamic education, this notion is inextricable from understanding "full individual development." This concept necessitates comparing human concepts and the developments of the manifold concepts emerging in modern society to apprehend its essence (Saaduddin, 2018).

The mainstreaming of character education remains integral to education, particularly at the elementary level. Elementary school learners require character education for their developmental needs (Yusnan, 2022). A year has elapsed since learners engaged in face-to-face interaction with educators. Throughout this period, parents assumed the role of facilitators in remote learning. How has the pandemic impacted learners' character development? Has it improved or regressed? Even before the pandemic, learners' characters exhibited shortcomings, evident in conflicts, defiance towards educators, and similar behaviours (Rismawati & Wardana, 2023). If character education during the pandemic is perfunctory and neglected, the risk of "Character loss" looms over the learners (Daga, 2021; Charissi et al., 2020).

Character education ideally commences within the family or optimally flourishes within the home environment (Latifah, 2023). Parents often cite their professional commitments as reasons for limited interaction time with their children. Work obligations become a compelling rationale for the absence of character education at home. Parents must recognise the significance of nurturing their children's character. Regardless of a child's proficiency and skills, their utility is only complete with a robust foundation of character education (Muntamah, 2020).

Consequently, our group proposes academic support through outdoor learning in the Malanggaten village, benefiting from its proximity to the river, fields, springs, and sports grounds. This endeavour aims to harness the local surroundings effectively. We also intend to deliver enlightenment or socialisation to parents concerning the paramount importance of character development, particularly during the early years of elementary schooling, primarily within the family milieu. Additionally, we aim to familiarise parents with the learning challenges confronted by children during the pandemic. Our choice of Malanggaten village as the venue for this activity is based on received information suggesting that the character development of elementary school children needs to be improved. Furthermore, the parental role in the new normal era, particularly in character education, remains suboptimal due to occupational constraints, resulting in diminished attention to their children's growth.

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Method

This study employed a qualitative-descriptive approach. Data collection was conducted through observation and documentation. The steps involved in analysing data in qualitative educational research encompassed data reduction, data display, and conclusion. The researcher gathered all relevant sources pertinent to the study, both primary and secondary. The subjects of this study were elementary school children in Malanggaten Village. The study's objects were character cultivation and academic guidance. Data sources comprised informants, locations or events, and documents. Data collection techniques employed included (1) observation, involving the observation of children's activities; (2) observation of Integrated Community Service Programme (ICSP) activities; and (3) documentation or archival recording to reinforce the outcomes of observations.

1. Preparation Phase

The preparation phase commenced with obtaining permission from the Village Chief and receiving an official assignment letter to execute community engagement activities. During the preparation phase, coordination among the team members related to the engagement activities was established.

2. Implementation Phase

The subsequent phase was the implementation in December 2021 at Mrs. Turiyah's residence. Academic guidance was provided for a total of 70 hours. The execution of academic guidance involved the delivery of instructional content and learning support. The academic guidance was executed using direct, expository, and outdoor learning methods.

3. Training and Academic Guidance Phase

Several training and academic guidance activities were conducted, including:

- a. Training and guidance in making tie-dye batik
- b. Training and joint learning guidance with a focus on the theme of family.
- c. Training and guidance in preparing food from readily available ingredients at home
- d. Training and joint viewing of educational films
- e. Training and guidance in outdoor learning activities within the vicinity
- f. Training, joint learning, and discussion guidance

4. Evaluation Phase

The subsequent phase was evaluation. Evaluation activities were undertaken to gauge the extent to which the activities were beneficial to the community, particularly elementary school students in Malanggaten Village. The academic guidance sessions identified and discussed the difficulties that students encountered when participating in remote learning from home.

Result

The PPMT (Integrated Community Service Programme) activities were conducted among 21 elementary school-aged children in Malanggaten Village, RT 05 RW 10, Rejowinangun Utara, Central Magelang, and Magelang City. The core programme focused on outdoor learning-based academic guidance to enhance children's character, concentrating on elementary school-aged children. The PPMT activities were detailed as follows:

1. Activity 1

On December 27, 2021, Activity 1 commenced with a training and guidance session for creating "Batik Jumputan." Following a pre-test to determine the kids' level of character understanding, there were instructions and direction on making batiks. This activity aimed to teach the values of cooperation, self-reliance, and responsibility.

2. Activity 2

On December 29, 2021, Activity 2 encompassed academic guidance. Learners were provided with lessons on the roles and responsibilities of family members. During this

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academic guidance, their parents gave the children a table, which they filled while assisting their parents. This guidance instilled the significance of mutual support, empathy, cooperation, and responsibility.

3. Activity 3

On December 30, 2021, Activity 3 featured a colouring competition and outdoor learning. The colouring contest aimed to foster competitiveness while encouraging mutual respect. The outdoor learning session focused on various types of waste, enabling children to clean the environment and identify different types of waste in their surroundings.

4. Activity 4

On January 4, 2022, Activity 4 comprised a training and guidance session for preparing meals. Children were divided into groups and tasked with creating pre-designated dishes. The resulting food preparations were distributed among the congregants of the Friday Prayer at Malanggaten Village. The objectives here were to instill values of collaboration, responsibility, compassion, and humility.

5. Activity 5

On January 4, 2022, Activity 5 involved watching an educational film and understanding narrative elements. Following the screening of the movie "Sepatu Dahlan," the kids had a task to complete identify the narrative elements in the movie. The session concluded with reflection on the lessons learned, aiming to foster responsibility and independence.

6. Activity 6

On January 8, 2022, Activity 6 involved engaging in various educational games to cultivate discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and empathy.

7. Activity 7

On January 9, 2022, Activity 7 involved a visit to the Taman Kiai Langgeng in Magelang.

8. Activity 8

On January 13, 2022, Activity 8 was initiated with guidance on the significance of character education and proceeded with a pre-test.

Discussion

The introduction highlights the New Normal's significant impact, especially on Indonesia's education sector. With the shift from in-school learning to remote learning, educators faced the challenge of adapting to new methods of instruction using digital platforms (Morgan, 2022). However, this transition came with various obstacles, such as learner and parent dissatisfaction with online learning, increased stress due to assignments, limited internet access, and the digital divide between urban and rural areas (Claudia, 2022) (Mahbub et al., 2022).

The discussion then transitions to the proposed solution, which is academic support through outdoor learning in Malanggaten village. This approach addresses the challenges of character education in the New Normal while utilising the village's natural surroundings. Additionally, the study aims to enlighten parents about the importance of character development, especially within the family context, and to raise awareness of the learning challenges faced by children during the pandemic (Intan Cahyani et al., 2018).

The method section outlines the qualitative-descriptive approach employed in the study. Data collection through observation and documentation is explained, as are the steps of data analysis, including reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. The subjects of the study, data sources, and data collection techniques are clearly described, providing a comprehensive understanding of the research process.

The study's implementation phases are described, starting with the preparation phase, which involves obtaining permission and coordinating team efforts. The subsequent

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implementation phase covers academic guidance provided at Mrs. Turiyah's residence, using both direct and expository methods and outdoor learning methods. The training and guidance phase involves various activities focused on character cultivation, including batik-making, family-oriented learning, food preparation, film viewing, outdoor learning, and discussions (Widya & Hariyanto, 2022).

The evaluation phase is discussed as the subsequent step, aimed at assessing the effectiveness of the activities, particularly their impact on elementary school students in Malanggaten Village. The challenges students face during remote learning are also addressed during the academic guidance sessions.

Overall, the study outlines a comprehensive plan for addressing character education challenges in the New Normal through practical and engaging activities in the local context. The discussion provides a clear roadmap for readers to understand the study's research methodology, implementation steps, and intended outcomes.

Conclusion

The programme formulated for the implementation of the IV Integrated Community Service Programme (PPMT) in Malanggaten Village, themed "Enhancing Character Education in the New Normal Era through Academic Guidance and Outdoor Learning," invites elementary school-aged children to step away from the Internet and engage in collective play and learning. The programme was successfully executed as planned. The implementation of the programme achieved its predefined objectives. This accomplishment can be attributed to supportive factors, such as the open and cooperative attitude of the RW Chairman, who readily coordinated with the community, the ease of access to equipment and supplies, and the availability of facilities and technology that facilitated the program's execution.

Acknowledgments

We want to express our heartfelt gratitude to all individuals and institutions who contributed to completing this research and community engagement initiative. This endeavour would not have been possible without their support, dedication, and collaboration. First and foremost, we sincerely thank the residents of Malanggaten Village for their warm welcome and active participation in our activities. Your enthusiasm and cooperation have been invaluable in making this project a reality.

We extend our gratitude to the educators and parents who wholeheartedly supported our efforts. Your commitment to the education and character development of the children in your care is commendable. We also acknowledge the invaluable insights and expertise our mentors and advisors provide. Your guidance and feedback were crucial in shaping the direction and methodology of this study. Our appreciation extends to the academic community for their valuable contributions to the body of knowledge in character education and community engagement. Your research and insights have informed our approach and understanding. Lastly, we thank our fellow team members for their dedication, hard work, and collaboration throughout the project. Your diverse skills and perspectives enriched our discussions and outcomes.

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