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The Implementation of Character Education for the Environment Among the Students of SMK Negeri 1 Panai Hulu

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Abstract: Environmental awareness among students can be overcome by instilling character education. Moral action is an important thing to teach. If students already have knowledge about morality, students will have a consistent character between knowledge and action (moral action). This research was conducted at SMK Negeri 1 Panai Hulu, the subjects of this study were teachers and students, a total of 125 people. This is a qualitative research using a field study approach. The data collection technique is through interview and questionnaire. The results show that the moral action of the students to care for the environment is still not fully formed. The stage that can be done in the implementation of character education in students to reduce environmental pollution among students is moral action, so that students are able to distinguish virtues from vices, prohibitions and recommendations, good or bad behaviour, and can apply noble moral values in everyday life.

Keywords: Character education, Environment awareness, implementation

INTRODUCTION

The implementation of the '5s' (smile, greet, greet, politeness and courtesy) at SMK Negeri 1 Panai Hulu school in the Labuhanbatu district is a reflection of the implementation of character education in schools. Not only the BK (Guidance Counselling) teachers, who are required to teach character education, but also other teachers have to teach each other. It is not uncommon today for many students to ignore the 5S, at least a smile when passing the teacher, sometimes students do not carry it out except for interactions during face-to-face in class or when studying together with the teacher in class, after that no interaction occurs. At least the application of the 5s can create harmonious interactions between students and teachers, at least so that they know each other's faces and names, if they have a good enough memory (Maraat et al., 2023) (Lin & Li, 2024).

Lack of respect for the teacher who is teaching. When the teacher is teaching and facing the blackboard, there are often students who eat in class or many who open laptops but not learning resources but social media such as 'facebook'. Ironically, the teacher is unaware of this and continues to teach with a loud voice and high spirits, unaware that his students are harassing him (SUOHUA, 2014). Is this the character of the nation's children today, so different from the students of the past? Appreciation and respect are things that exist in character education. These students need to be specifically nurtured through approaches that they will understand when they become teachers but are trivialised in this way (Buana et al., 2023)

Environmental education needs to be provided to the community, especially children, in order to create awareness and environmental consciousness from an early age (Nagle, 2016). Programa Adwiyata is one of the programmes of the Ministry of Environment that aims to encourage the creation of knowledge and awareness of the school population in environmental conservation efforts (Wahyuningtyas, 2013). The integration of environmental education into the school programme is expected to be a habituation process, so that it is expected to develop behaviours and attitudes of students to appreciate, love and preserve the environment, which can become a daily habit (Surahkusuma, 2010).

Character values related to the environment need to be improved in order to instil environmental awareness from an early age. The value of caring for the environment is one of the character values resulting from the development of ten character values that reflect the formation of environmentally conscious characters. The value of caring for the environment can be seen as students' efforts to prevent damage to the natural environment around them and to develop efforts to repair natural damage that has occurred. The value of caring for the environment can begin by introducing students to the surrounding environment as a source of learning. Research by Martin (2007) When students are in direct contact with the environment, they can understand the problems of environmental degradation, which encourages them to learn about the history and future of the environment in relation to human life in the future, so that an attitude of necessity to care for the environment arises. Planting the character value of environmental care is expected to produce people who are aware of environmental management

The results of the research through observation and interviews show that the environmental awareness of the students of SMK Negeri 1 Panai Hulu has shown their concern for the school environment. This can be seen from the condition of the school, which is clean and tidy. Here, it is clear that the students' concern for the environment can affect the moral education of the students, especially the moral discipline and responsibility in maintaining and caring for the environment. In SMK Negeri 1 Panai Hulu District, Labuhanbatu Regency, the obstacles in the implementation of environmental care character education for students are the habits of students who are not yet aware of the importance of environmental protection and still need to be reminded by the teacher. This can be seen from the fact that there are still some students who do not care about the school environment.

METHODS

This research is a descriptive research and the subjects of this study were the students and teachers of SMK Negeri 1 Panai Hulu, a total of 125 students. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and questionnaires using purposive sampling as the sampling technique. The data were analysed using the Miles and Huberman model. The questionnaire in the study consisted of 25 moral knowing statements, 25 moral feeling statements and 25 moral action statements using a Likert scale to calculate the results of the questionnaire.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Aspects of Students' Moral Knowing towards the Value of Environmental Care Character

Moral knowing consists of six aspects, namely: (1) moral awareness; (2) knowing of moral values; (3) perspective taking; (4) moral reasoning; (5) decision making; and (6) self-knowledge. Moral awareness sebanyak 32%, knowing moral values (21%), perspective taking (12%), moral reasoning (9%), decision making (5%), dan self-knowledge (21%) (Figure 1).

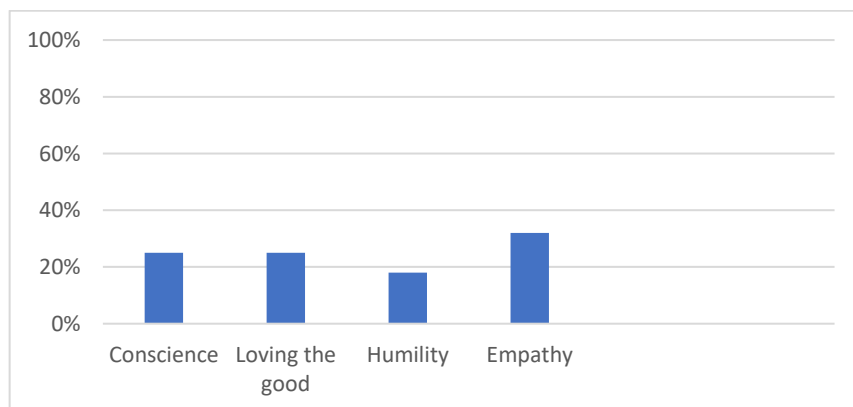


Figure 1. Moral Knowing siswa pada karakter peduli lingkungan

The results of the interview on the aspect of moral awareness show that the pupils do not yet have a moral

awareness of the character value of caring for the environment, as can be seen from the above diagram, the habits of pupils who are not yet aware of the importance of protecting the environment and who still need to be reminded by the teacher. Moral awareness is a moral awareness that has to be present in the character of the students in order to know whether the choices made by the students are the right choices or the wrong choices.

Students' moral awareness of environmental protection is still low. In terms of moral awareness, only 30% of students are aware of the importance of protecting the environment. This moral awareness can be formed if students are given an understanding of the importance of environmental awareness by teachers and parents. In the aspect of moral knowledge, the indicators of decision making (7%) and moral reasoning (9%) are relatively low. This indicates whether low student decision-making regarding environmental issues can lead to significant negative consequences for both individual behavior and broader societal impacts. When students lack engagement and awareness, they may contribute to environmental degradation through unsustainable practices. Consequences of low environment decision-making. Students with low pro-environmental attitudes often exhibit behaviors that exacerbate environmental issues, such as poor waste management and lack of recycling efforts (Roy, 2023). Research indicates that students struggle with making informed decisions about environmental issues, often relying on external structures (like recycling bins) rather than personal commitment. This reliance can hinder the development of critical thinking and responsible behavior (Utzschneider & Pruneau, 2010). Educational interventions have shown that enhancing decision-making skills can lead to better environmental choices (Freed, 2018). However, without such interventions, students may remain passive and uninformed. Conversely, fostering a strong environmental identity and decision-making skills through targeted educational programs can significantly enhance students' pro-environmental behaviors, suggesting that engagement and awareness are crucial for positive change.

If a student's moral reasons for caring about the environment are low, it can lead to a range of negative outcomes regarding their environmental behavior and attitudes. Research indicates that a lack of environmental ethics among students correlates with insufficient awareness and responsibility towards nature (Karpiak & Baril, 2008). Students with low moral reasoning often exhibit apathy towards environmental issues, resulting in minimal participation in eco-friendly activities (Avinç & Timur, 2023). Even when students express high awareness of environmental issues, their ethical perceptions may not translate into sustainable practices due to a lack of moral grounding. Schools must implement programs that enhance moral reasoning and environmental ethics to foster a culture of care and responsibility among students (Suohua, 2014). Conversely, while low moral reasoning can hinder environmental engagement, it is essential to recognize that educational interventions can significantly improve students' ethical perceptions and behaviors towards sustainability.

Aspects of the moral sense of students with regard to care for the environment

Moral Feeling consists of 4 indicators observed, namely conscience, love of the good, humility and empathy. The conscience indicator was answered by 25% of the students, the love of the good indicator by 25%, the humility indicator by 18% and the empathy indicator by 32%. (Figure 2). Based on these results, the students' moral sense is low in the humility aspect.



Figure 2. Aspects of students' Moral Feeling

Low humility among environmentalists can lead to a diminished commitment to pro environmental behaviors (Taylor et al., 2020). Research indicates that individuals with low humility, particularly those holding anthropocentric views, are less likely to engage in sustainable practices (Weinstein, 2012). This lack of humility can foster a sense of entitlement over nature, undermining stewardship ethics that emphasize care and responsibility towards the environment (Nagle, 2016). Individuals with low humility may prioritize personal or economic gain over ecological health, leading to environmental degradation. A lack of humility can result in ineffective environmental laws, as it may breed overconfidence in human ability to control nature, neglecting the complexity of ecological systems. Low humility reinforces anthropocentric views, which can hinder the development of a more eco centric perspective necessary for addressing environmental crises (Pianalto, 2013).

High empathy among students regarding environmental issues can significantly enhance their engagement and proactive behaviors towards sustainability. Empathy fosters a deeper understanding of the emotional and social implications of environmental degradation, leading to more responsible actions (Sunassee et al., 2021). Students with high empathy are more likely to engage in environmental education programs, which encourage critical thinking and independent decision-making about ecological issues (Lin & Li, 2024). Empathetic students demonstrate improved attitudes and behaviors towards sustainable development, indicating a strong correlation between empathy and environmental action. Utilizing tools like educational robotics can effectively cultivate empathy in students by presenting relatable narratives about climate change, thus motivating them to alter their behaviors (Ziouzios et al., 2021). Programs that integrate eco-art and place-based education have shown to enhance students' emotional connections to nature, further promoting environmental stewardship (Gopinath & Kumar, 2021). While fostering empathy is crucial, it is also essential to balance emotional engagement with practical skills and knowledge to ensure students can effectively contribute to environmental solutions.

Aspects of Moral Action in Students' Concern for the Environment

For the moral action aspect, the students are still very low, because the moral knowledge and moral feeling aspects are low, so they are not formed into habits in the students' daily lives. The results of the interviews with the students showed that teachers also often show behavior that is not environmentally friendly, such as littering and using plastic bags when buying food.

If teachers show no action to care about the environment, it can lead to a significant lack of environmental awareness and responsibility among students. This absence of proactive engagement from educators can foster a culture of indifference towards environmental issues. Without teacher involvement, students may not develop habits that promote environmental care, leading to littering and neglect of their surroundings (Buana et al., 2023). Research indicates that students with higher action competence are more likely to engage in environmentally responsible behaviors. A lack of teacher modeling can diminish this competence (Maraat et al., 2023). Teachers' inaction can perpetuate a belief among students that environmental issues are solely institutional responsibilities, rather than personal ones (Lackney, 2018).

Preservice teachers often express a sense of individual responsibility but may not translate this into collective action, reflecting a broader trend of disengagement from environmental initiatives (Carter & Martin, 2017).

To improve the character of caring for the environment in students, various educational strategies can be implemented. These strategies focus on integrating environmental education into the curriculum, utilizing creative methods, and fostering a culture of responsibility. Incorporating environmental topics into existing subjects helps students understand their impact on the environment (Azizah et al., 2023). Programs like Adiwiyata promote environmental awareness through structured activities, instilling a sense of responsibility from an early age (Fazira & Ramadan, 2023). Visual media, such as mural art, has been shown to enhance environmental care among elementary students, making learning engaging and impactful. Schools can utilize technology-based learning alongside traditional methods to reinforce environmental concepts (Sahabuddin et al., 2023). Collaboration with parents and local organizations can strengthen the environmental care character by creating a supportive community around these initiatives. While these strategies are effective, challenges remain in ensuring consistent implementation and engagement across diverse educational settings (Zulkarnain & Warmana, 2024). Addressing these challenges is crucial for fostering a lasting environmental ethic in students (Gumsi & Hendriani, 2024).

CONCLUSION

Moral action is a moral deed or action that is the result (outcome) of the other two components of character. To understand what makes a person act morally, we need to look at three other aspects of character, namely competence, will and habit. Awareness of the value of environmental stewardship character helps us to protect the environment and the earth. Moral action is one aspect of character education that can shape students' understanding of environmental stewardship

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