THE EFFECTIVENESS OF REWARDS IN SHAPING THE MORALITY OF STUDENTS AT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AL AULAD AL JANNAH: AN EDUCATIONAL AND DA'WAH APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effectiveness of rewards in shaping the morality of students at Elementary School Al Aulad Al Jannah in Wajo Regency through an educational and da'wah approach. These goals are (1) to list the learning activities that happen at the institution, (2) to look into the ways that students' morals are improved, and (3) to see how well rewards help with moral growth. This qualitative research employs educational, sociological, psychological, and da'wah perspectives. Data collection involved primary sources, including interviews with institutional leaders, teachers, parents, and students, as well as secondary data such as documentation and institutional records. Observation, interviews, and documentation were utilized as instruments, with analysis focusing on data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal diverse learning activities, including communal prayer, Qur'anic recitation, memorization using movement and murottal techniques, congregational Asr prayers, and lessons on hadith, daily prayers, and Arabic. Lectures, demonstrations, practice, exemplary behavior, and habituation facilitate students' moral development. The implementation of rewards has proven effective, as evidenced by increased worship engagement, improved discipline in many students, and significant self-development, contributing positively to their moral character formation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Moral and ethical concerns have been central to Islamic teachings since their inception (Sachedina, 2022). The revelation of Qur'anic verses in Madinah, which centered on societal, political, and ethical matters for over nine years, serves as evidence of this. Ethics plays a crucial role in human life, as it determines the rise and fall of societies (AlJahsh, 2024; Shamsudheen et al., 2024). When ethics deteriorate, both the inner and outer aspects of humanity suffer, affecting individual obligations toward oneself, God, and others.

In Islamic thought, ethics are considered intrinsic qualities that spontaneously manifest in behavior (El Maghrebi et al., 2023). Therefore, akhlak can be described as the internal essence, while actions represent its external form. Ethical behavior is classified into two categories: praiseworthy ethics, which signify the perfection of faith and align with Qur'anic and Prophetic teachings, and blameworthy ethics, which harm one's faith and dignity (Sachedina, 2022; Ghaly, 2024).

Ethics in Islam are deeply tied to faith. Al-Ghazali emphasizes that strong faith fosters virtuous ethics, whereas weak faith leads to negative behavior (Vasalou, 2021; Qadir & Arshad, 2024). Faith comprises three essential elements: verbal affirmation, heartfelt conviction, and practical application. These elements underline the interconnectedness of belief and ethical conduct, highlighting the need for education to instill these values comprehensively (Zhao et al., 2023; Abulibdeh et al., 2024).

Education serves as a transformative tool for ethical and moral development (Halimah et al., 2024). Ideally, it should encompass four simultaneous transformations: spiritual, moral, intellectual, and practical. However, many educational institutions emphasize intellectual growth while neglecting moral and spiritual aspects (Mulang & Putra, 2023). This imbalance contributes to the decline of moral standards, exacerbated by limited instructional time for religious education in schools. This issue contradicts Indonesia's National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, which mandates education to develop faith, moral character, and a noble civilization (Amin & Suraida, 2024).

Imam al-Ghazali asserts that moral development requires continuous effort from an early age, involving practices such as habituation, exemplary conduct, and, when necessary, gentle enforcement (Nurhikmah, 2024). This perspective aligns with Qur'anic teachings, such as the guidance in Surah Al-Ahzab (33:21), which highlights the Prophet Muhammad as a model of exemplary character. Furthermore, instilling moral values involves nurturing spirituality through religious teachings that guide human behavior in relation to God and society (Huda & Salem, 2022).

Despite these frameworks, the current state of education in Indonesia faces challenges in addressing ethical development (Taja et al., 2021). Educational practices often prioritize cognitive outcomes over holistic personal growth (Gamage et al., 2021; Madhakomala et al., 2022). Additionally, societal trends toward "instant" solutions undermine the sustained efforts required for moral education. This calls for innovative strategies to enhance moral education, particularly in institutions such as elementary schools, where the moral foundation of young children can be cultivated.

Moral education is one of the primary objectives of Islamic education, aimed at shaping the noble character of students (Abbas et al., 2021; Hakim, 2023; Pamuji & Mulyadi, 2024). One of the formal educational institutions that plays a significant role in fostering students character is the elementary school. Elementary School Al Aulad Al Jannah, Wajo Regency, is one such school committed to instilling moral values through Quran-based learning approaches.

This study aims to identify the types of learning activities conducted at Elementary School Al Aulad Al Jannah, Wajo Regency. The study also aims to scrutinize the strategies employed at Elementary School Al Aulad Al Jannah to cultivate students'

character and to ascertain the efficacy of rewards in this process. Through this study, it is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of elementary school in fostering students' moral character and to identify effective strategies to achieve these objectives.

2. METHOD

This study utilized a qualitative descriptive approach, which aims to systematically and accurately describe facts and characteristics of a specific population. The data collected was not numerical but derived from interview transcripts, field notes, personal documents, memos, and official records. This method focuses on understanding and interpreting natural and objective conditions. According to Hennink et al. (2020), qualitative research emphasizes social reality as a holistic, dynamic, and interactive phenomenon, involving data in the form of words, images, or diagrams. Therefore, the qualitative approach in this study aligns empirical realities with relevant theories using a descriptive method.

The research was conducted at Al Aulad Al Jannah Elementary School, Wajo Regency. This institution serves as a non-formal Islamic education center. Data sources included both primary and secondary data. We directly collected primary data from informants through interviews and observations, concentrating on the institution's teaching and character development processes. Secondary data consists of documents, literature, and other archival materials related to the institution's practices and policies.

Data collection techniques employed in this study included observation, interviews, and documentation. We regularly conduct observations to capture the educational processes at the institution, using unstructured, non-participant techniques to allow flexibility in gathering relevant information. Interviews were conducted with key informants, including the head, board members, teachers, parents, and students, to gain a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of rewards in shaping students' character. Documentation involves analyzing written records, including official documents and literature, to support the primary data.

The data analysis process followed a qualitative approach, adopting an interactive model consisting of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, as outlined by Creswell & Creswell (2017). Data reduction involved summarizing and focusing on key themes to clarify essential information. Data presentations were organized into coherent narratives, tables, or diagrams to facilitate understanding. Finally, we inductively drew conclusions, verifying the findings and grounding them in the collected data.

To ensure data validity, credibility checks were performed through persistent observation, persuasive engagement with participants, and triangulation of sources. This approach allowed for a comprehensive and trustworthy understanding of the phenomenon under study, ensuring that findings accurately reflected the realities at Al Aulad Al Jannah Elementary School.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Learning Activities at Elementary School Al Aulad Al Jannah

In the implementation of Teaching at Elementary School Al Aulad Al Jannah, various pedagogical activities were observed that support the religious education of the students. We centered the approach on memorization of the Quran and hadith, combining it with structured religious practices to develop both cognitive and moral competencies. Key activities included

a. Group Worship Practices: Students participated in obligatory prayers and Dhikr as group activities, fostering a sense of discipline and community within the Elementary School Al Aulad Al Jannah.

b. Quran Recitation and Memorization: Each student engaged in daily recitation and memorization of Quranic verses, with designated periods for individual and collective review. This routine was critical in reinforcing the students' linguistic and spiritual development.

c. Religious Lessons: The curriculum included various topics such as Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), Aqidah (beliefs), and Akhlaq (morality), which were delivered through both oral discussions and written assignments.

d. Teacher-Student Interaction: The teachers employed a mix of traditional and contemporary methods to ensure effective learning. This included direct verbal interaction and written feedback on students' progress.

The practices observed highlighted a structured yet flexible approach to religious education, emphasizing both personal spiritual growth and communal religious practices.

Methods Used in Shaping the Morality of Students

The methods applied are fundamentally in line with Q.S. al-Nahl/16:125.

a. Lecture Method, This method is applied when explaining various concepts to students, particularly when discussing hadith—the obligation of performing the five daily prayers with proper movements, proper conduct toward teachers and parents, and etiquette toward friends, among others.

b. Demonstration Method, This method demonstrates movements or processes using correct procedures and provides accompanying explanations. Students observe carefully and participate attentively. It is applied during the memorization of surahs using gestures, such as in Surah al-Kahfi and Surah al-Mulk, and when learning Arabic through songs with actions and correct prayer movements.

c. Question and Answer Method: This method involves delivering teaching messages by asking questions, with students providing answers, or vice versa, where students ask inquiries and the teacher responds. If used correctly, this method can increase student engagement in active learning. People use it not only for studying hadith and prayers, but also for filling in time during games, improving Quranic recitation, and ensuring correct Arabic writing.

d. Drill Method, This method helps students master certain knowledge and skills completely. It is applied when students review and memorize surahs in Juz 30, as well as during graduation tests where teachers ask direct questions for learners to answer quickly, such as connecting memorized verses, Quranic recitation tests, and naming specific hadith or prayer recitations.

e. Role Model Method: Another effective method in shaping character is through role modeling, as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad in his life. The role model method leaves a strong impression because it involves both external senses (physical) and internal ones (emotional and mental). Good character cannot be formed only by lessons, instructions, and prohibitions; the soul's natural disposition to accept virtue requires more than the teacher saying "do this and don't do that." Instilling good manners requires long-term education, supported by practical examples. This method is used by teachers to set a positive example for students, such as wearing socks, speaking politely, throwing trash in the right place, being punctual, and reading supplications together.

f. Habit Formation Method Habits deeply embed themselves in the soul, making it crucial to instill positive traits in children and steer them away from negative ones. Practical and applicable training, considering the child's abilities and potential, is crucial, even if it initially feels difficult. Both training and habit formation are essential for fostering worship and moral integrity.

This method is also applied at elementary school to help students get used to sitting while eating and drinking, being brave enough to lead prayers as an imam and adhan, calling for iqamah, and performing the five obligatory prayers. Students are encouraged to listen to and follow short surahs and prayer recitations and to be serious in their supplications by raising their hands in front of their chest.

The effectiveness of rewards in shaping the character of students

The effectiveness of rewards in shaping the character of students at Elementary School Al Aulad Al Jannah is evident through various approaches. Rewards, both in the form of praise and tangible prizes, motivate students to improve their behavior and academic performance. Rewards such as gifts and snacks are given monthly to students based on their achievements, including discipline, memorization of the Koran, punctuality, and behavior. This system creates a competitive spirit, encouraging students to excel.

The reward system also positively impacts students' religious practices, such as prayer. The use of a prayer card system, where parents sign off on their child's attendance, encourages regular participation in prayers. Interviews with parents and teachers show that children are becoming more disciplined in performing their prayers independently. The reward system fosters a habit of discipline, as students strive to earn stars for punctuality and attendance.

Furthermore, the rewards contribute to personal development, as students grow in confidence and leadership, with some even leading prayers. In conclusion, the reward

system at Elementary School Al Aulad Al Jannah is an effective tool for cultivating positive character, discipline, and personal growth among students.

Additionally, the reward system at Elementary School Al Aulad Al Jannah also strengthens the relationship between teachers, students, and parents. By involving parents in the process, such as signing off on the prayer cards, there is a collaborative effort in nurturing the students' religious and moral development. This involvement fosters a more holistic approach to education by supporting the students' progress both at school and at home.

Moreover, the reward system helps students internalize the values being taught. The regular acknowledgment of achievements, whether through small prizes or public recognition, instills a sense of accomplishment and motivates students to maintain exemplary behavior and discipline. Over time, this creates a positive reinforcement loop, where students associate excellent conduct with rewards, further enhancing their commitment to learning and self-improvement.

Overall, the structured reward system not only encourages academic and behavioral growth but also instills values that are crucial for the moral and spiritual development of young learners. Through this system, Al Aulad Al Jannah Elementary School successfully shapes well-rounded students who excel in their studies, religious practices, and personal character.

The reward system at Elementary School Al Aulad Al Jannah has also proven effective in shaping the moral character of students, focusing on three main areas: worship, discipline, and self-development.

a. Impact on Worship: The reward system encourages students to establish regular prayer habits and memorize short surahs by providing incentives. Parents and teachers collaborate, with the use of prayer control cards signed by parents to ensure accountability. This system has helped students, even those who were initially uninterested, to perform their prayers consistently, contributing to the development of positive religious habits.

b. Impact on Discipline: Students have shown increased discipline, attending class on time and following the rules. The points system, which rewards punctuality and appropriate conduct, motivates students to adhere to these standards. The fear of losing points for lateness or absence has fostered a sense of responsibility and commitment to their studies.

c. Impact on Self-Development: The reward system also supports students' personal growth. Many have gained confidence, such as volunteering to lead prayers or performing the call to prayer (adhan). Students who once felt shy now actively participate and even help teach their peers, indicating a boost in their self-esteem and leadership skills.

Overall, the rewards have a positive effect on students' worship practices, discipline, and self-development, creating a well-rounded approach to moral formation at Elementary School Al Aulad Al Jannah.

Discussion

The study aims to investigate the impact of the reward system implemented at Elementary School Al Aulad Al Jannah on motivating students and enhancing their learning experience. As mentioned earlier, learning activities at Elementary School Al Aulad Al Jannah involve a combination of religious education, including Quran memorization, prayer practices, Arabic language lessons, and daily religious activities. Additionally, the students engage in practical exercises such as learning the movements and recitations for prayer, which are incorporated into their everyday lives to strengthen their spiritual connection (Kartikasari et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023).

Students who excel in lessons and religious practices are rewarded with points or stars to motivate and engage them (Gamarra et al., 2022; Iqbal et al., 2024). This method serves as an extrinsic motivator, encouraging students to perform better by earning rewards for their efforts (Sarah et al., 2022). However, it is not just academic performance that is measured but also the adab (moral conduct) of the students, ensuring that behavior aligns with Islamic teachings. For instance, if a student exhibits inappropriate behavior, the system subtracts points as a form of corrective action. This method also involves active participation from parents, with the "salat control cards" enabling them to monitor their children's prayer practices and sign off on their achievements.

While the reward system has been effective in some cases by motivating students to engage more actively with their lessons, its effectiveness is not universal. The research findings revealed that some students did not respond to the rewards as expected, and this was often due to their lack of understanding of the value of adab in achieving their goals (Biantoro, 2019). As one teacher, pointed out, when rewards did not produce the intended results, a change in the system might be necessary to foster a deeper awareness among students. Some students continued to make the same mistakes, possibly because they expected to receive rewards regardless of their performance. This indicates that while the reward system is a useful tool for motivation, it may not be fully effective in instilling long-term behavioral change or fostering genuine internal motivation (Xu et al., 2021; Sigalingging et al., 2023).

Additionally, the study shows that the integration of both extrinsic motivation (rewards) and intrinsic motivation (internalizing the values of ikhlas or sincerity) is critical for achieving the desired results in religious education. While rewards serve as a motivator, it is important to emphasize the spiritual and moral growth of students, ensuring that they are not only motivated by material incentives but also by the desire to please Allah and grow as individuals (El-Moslimany, 2018).

In conclusion, the reward system implemented at Elementary School Al Aulad Al Jannah is effective to some extent, but there is a need for refinement. To enhance the effectiveness of the learning activities, adjustments in the reward system should be considered, perhaps by linking the rewards more closely with specific behavioral or academic achievements (Kang & Lee, 2021; Kim & Castelli, 2021), ensuring that students understand the value of their efforts and the role of adab in their learning journey (Muhammad, 2020).

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research and discussion conducted regarding the effectiveness of rewards in shaping the character of students at Elementary School Al Aulad Al Jannah, the following conclusions can be drawn:

First, Elementary School Al Aulad Al Jannah conducts learning activities four times a week. The curriculum goes beyond Quranic reading and incorporates various other activities, such as dhikr and group prayers, Quran memorization, writing and memorizing Quranic verses, performing the Ashar prayer together, as well as learning daily prayers, hadiths, and Arabic. This diverse set of activities helps foster a holistic approach to religious and moral development. Another way that Elementary School Al Aulad Al Jannah shapes the character of its students is through (1) lectures that teach hadiths, how to correctly perform the five daily prayers, and how to behave with teachers, parents, and peers. (2) Demonstrations, such as performing movements for Quranic memorization, especially with surahs like al-Kahfi and al-Mulk, as well as incorporating songs with movement during Arabic lessons. (3) Question and answer, particularly during hadith and prayer memorization and for games during break times. (4) Drill/Practice, used for reviewing and adding memorized surahs and conducting tests on Quranic recitations, hadiths, and daily prayers. (5) Role Modeling, where teachers serve as positive examples by displaying proper behavior, such as wearing socks, speaking politely, and being punctual. (6) Habit Formation, where students are trained to perform acts like sitting while eating, being confident in leading prayers, and taking prayer seriously.

Finally, the effectiveness of the reward system in shaping the character of the students at Elementary School Al Aulad Al Jannah is apparent in three key areas: (1) Worship: The habit of worship is successfully instilled in students through consistent practices, making religious activities feel natural and easy, especially when supported by reward mechanisms like the prayer control cards. (2) Discipline: Most students have developed a sense of discipline, demonstrated by their enthusiasm to attend regularly and adhere to the rules. (3) Self-development: Students have shown significant personal growth, as evidenced by their willingness to engage in activities such as teaching their peers how to read the Quran. This indicates that the reward system plays a crucial role in motivating students and facilitating both their spiritual and personal development.

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