



An independent character of students in learning during the pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Background: Online learning is carried out as the right step to prevent the transmission of the Covid-19 virus, so that students will not miss lessons as planned in the curriculum for one academic year. When students learn at home following online learning provided by the teachers, parents are not always present to accompany and monitor the learning process of students, so inevitably independent learning is needed so that students can participate in learning activities and be responsible for complete the task of learning each subject. Teachers and parents must work together to supervise and encourage students to be able to learn independently.

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which elementary school students' independent character during distance learning as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Design and methods: This type of research is descriptive qualitative research. The subjects of this study were homeroom teachers and teachers of sports subjects. The data validation technique of this research is the source triangulation validation technique.

Results: The existence of good examples and cooperation between teachers and parents will help students to be able to imitate and do so, so that awareness and habits will be formed in students to become humans who are full of responsibility with their duties. From the online learning process that is currently being carried out, it is hoped that the teacher is not satisfied with providing material through one learning application that is commonly used, especially in elementary schools, which is only through the WhatsApp application, the teacher can provide learning materials by making learning videos that are easy for students to understand. By considering the number / portion given, so as to minimize the stress level of students, especially by giving assignments that are always given every day.

Keywords: Character, Independent, Online Learning

Introduction

End of 2019 is the beginning when the world is threatened by the Covid-19 virus pandemic. The existence of this pandemic has a major impact on various aspects of life, be it economic, social, cultural, and even educational aspects. Almost all education levels have been transferred to online learning at home to prevent and break the eyes of the Covid-19 virus. With this, the government will temporarily close face-to-face learning with an online learning system. Kuntarto, E describes the online learning model or *Online Learning Models* (OLM), stems are used to illustrate learning system that utilizes computer-based Internet technology (Computer-Based Learning / CBL) (Kusumadewi, Yustiana, & Nasihah, 2020). During its development, computer functions have been replaced by cell phones or devices. Online learning is carried out as the right step to prevent the transmission of the Covid-19 virus, so that students will not miss lessons as planned in the curriculum for one academic

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year. Even though the government has issued the policy *New Normal* to revive the economic sector that was paralyzed by the impact of Covid-19, the education sector, especially learning in schools, has not been fully opened by the government. This is because school-aged children tend to still enjoy hanging out with their friends. So that it allows the spread of the virus quickly. So that learning carried out online or distance learning is certainly a challenge for teachers in order to achieve children's learning outcomes, especially in the development of children's character education. (National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003).

Furthermore, regarding the functions and objectives of national education contained in the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003 explains that, National Education functions to develop capabilities and shape the character and civilization of a nation with dignity in order to educate the nation's life, aiming at developing the potential of students to become human beings who believe and fear the Almighty God, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens (Yusutria & Febriana, 2019). One of the functions and goals of national education above is an effort to form independent individual children, primarily to build student independence in learning. Independent learning has become one aspect of attitude in character education. Regarding the attitude of independent learning, the government in Ministerial Regulation Number 41 of 2007 explains that the attitude of independent learning is an attitude that individuals have to learn on their own initiative in an effort to internalize knowledge without depending or receiving direct guidance from others. Listyani describes that there are six indicators of independent attitudes learning, namely: 1) Independence from others; 2) Having self-confidence; 3) be disciplined; 4) Have a sense of responsibility; 5) Behave based on one's own initiative; and 6) Exercise self-control (Nasution, 2018).

The diversity of conditions and individual abilities affects the different levels of independence of students. In other words, there are students whose learning independence is classified as high, medium and low. Not all of the students have high learning independence. Independent students do not experience difficulties in learning, because they are able to organize and direct themselves without depending on others.

Students like this will show readiness to learn, be able to complete assignments independently, and be confident in expressing opinions. On the other hand, students with low learning independence tend to be passive, not confident in learning and not ready to learn independently in various situations, including during the Covid-19 pandemic. The emergency situation during the Covid-19 pandemic led to the Indonesian government's policy of learning from home through online learning patterns. In this kind of situation, independent learning becomes an important variable in the online learning process during the Covid-19 pandemic. When students learn at home following online learning provided by the teachers while parents are not always present to accompany and monitor the learning process of students, inevitably independent learning is needed so that students can participate in learning activities and be responsible for complete the task of learning each subject.

Character education is the creation of a school environment that helps students develop ethics or behavior, responsibility through models, and teaches good character through universal values (Santika, 2020). With learning that is carried out outside the school environment, in this case using online learning that is remote, providing extra tasks and responsibilities and new challenges for teachers to be able to create a learning environment in an effort to develop ethics, responsibility and character of students.

Suyanto (in Wibowo, 2012) states that character is a way of thinking and behaving that characterizes every individual to live and work together, both within the family, community, nation and state. The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which elementary

school students' independent character during distance learning as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methods

Type of research is descriptive qualitative research with data collection techniques in the form of literature studies from various references relevant to the observed symptoms, namely independent character education in online learning during the pandemic for elementary school children.

A research is a scientific activity that is systematic, directed and purposeful. The procedures or steps taken in this study are broadly carried out in several stages. The subjects in this study were homeroom teachers in class 1 and teachers in the field of sports studies at SDN Manunggal Bhakti in the odd semester 2020/2021. This data collection technique is taken by direct interview technique.

The stages of this research are as follows: 1) Determination of the place / school to be researched. At this stage, before conducting the research the researcher looks for and determines the place / school where the research will be carried out to determine the problem or research focus, then makes permits and prepares research equipment; 2) Compilation of a list of questions. At this stage, the researcher compiled a list of questions focused on problems in the field. Researchers collect data related to the problem in order to support the interview process which will be conducted at a later stage; 3) Interview stage, is the stage where the researcher directly collects data by asking the informants. The pandemic epidemic that is still developing, continues to close schools for face-to-face learning. Therefore, researchers conducted direct interviews with the help of communication tools in order to follow the applicable health protocols.

Related to this data collection, the researcher prepared the things needed, namely the interview sheet and the supporting tools for the interview process. Researchers conducted direct interviews with informants or subjects in this study, namely teachers/homeroom teachers and teachers in sports studies. After the required data has been collected by the researcher, the next step is to process the research data, as we know that data analysis in qualitative research is carried out during and after the field. The activity carried out is compiling the data and information collected and then adjusted to this research study, namely describing the learning process.

Furthermore, the data that has been collected from the field are studied in depth using theories and from several educational experts who put forward the theoretical study to be concluded and given recommendations to the parties concerned so that they can be used as input in carrying out their organizational activities for more productive, effective, and efficient; and 5) Data Analysis Phase. This stage discusses the main principles in data analysis, these principles include the basics, finding themes and formulating problems. The data collected from the interviews were processed and interpreted based on other sources that had the same problem focus. Then the researcher draws conclusions from the interview data from different subjects / sources.

Techniques this research data validation technique is the source triangulation validation technique. Namely, to test the credibility of the data, it is done by checking the data previously obtained with several sources. For example, in testing the credibility of data about students, data collection and testing can be done to teachers, friends and parents. Of the three sources, it cannot be generalized as in quantitative research. But it is described and categorized, which views are the same, which are different, and which are specific from the three data sources. The data has been analyzed by the researcher so as to produce a conclusion which is then asked by the member to check with the three data sources.

In this study, data collection sources were obtained from homeroom teachers and teachers of sports subjects who said that the independent character of students in learning during this pandemic was still relatively low. The implementation of character education that has been implemented in schools is still constrained by existing factors, such as the lack of parental knowledge about how to develop children's independent character when learning at home. So that the cooperation of teachers and parents in increasing the motivation of students to be able to independently carry out learning is still not optimal, especially for students who are in low class.

Findings & Discussion

Independent Character

Education has the meaning of the process of changing and the behavior of a person or group of people in an effort to mature humans through teaching and training efforts, expansion processes, and ways of educating. Ki Hajar Dewantara defines education as an effort to advance the character, mind and body of children, in order to advance the perfection of life and bring children to life in harmony with nature and society (Rohimin, 2014).

Character is character or morals obtained from internalizing oneself with the environment. A person's character will be good based on moral and ethical values that apply in society. In particular, character is a person's values that can have a good impact on the environment and are manifested in one's behavior.

Character education is something that must be implemented because basically all educators have the same goal to shape the character of the nation. Not only is it the responsibility of moral or character education and Pancasila education, but it is the responsibility of all fields of study. Therefore, the implementation of the 2013 curriculum is a balance between the cognitive, affective and psychomotor learning domains to become *output* an absolute as part of the nation's character education.

The relationship between character education and education is that character education can be interpreted as value education, character education, moral education, character education, which aims to develop students' abilities to make good and bad decisions, maintain goodness, realize and spread goodness in daily life wholeheartedly.

The Ministry of National Education explains that the strategy for implementing character education in education units includes the following steps, one of which is integration in subjects (Santika, 2020). Each subject contains a load of character values that need to be developed, made explicit, linked to the context of everyday life. Thus, learning character values is not only at the cognitive level, but also touches on internalization and real practice in the lives of students in society.

Independence comes from the adjective independent. Steven R. Covey in Paulus (2007) states that there are three integrative human growths, namely *dependence* (dependent), *independence* (independent) and *interdependence* (interdependence) (Ariah, 2015). Based on the 18 character values of the Indonesian nation, independence is an attitude and behavior that is not easily dependent on other people to complete tasks. Another understanding states that independence is a basic ability for someone to think and act freely. Steinberg in Desmita (2010) divides independence into three aspects, namely: (a) emotional independence; (b) independent behavior; and (c) independence of values.

Independent learning is the process of building a desire, strength or impulse from within to move his potential to learn learning objects without any pressure or influence outside of himself. Independence in learning is self-awareness, driven by oneself, the ability to learn to achieve its goals (Brookfield 2000: 130-133).

Susilawati (2009: 7) describes independent learning as follows: 1) Students try to increase responsibility in making decisions; 2) Independence is seen as a trait that already exists in every person and learning situation; 3) Independence does not mean separating oneself from others; 4) Independent learning can transfer learning outcomes in the form of knowledge and skills in various situations; 5) Students who learn independently can involve various sources and activities such as reading alone, study groups, exercises and correspondence activities; 6) The effective role of teachers in independent learning is still possible, such as dialogue with students, looking for resources, evaluating results and developing critical thinking; 7) Some educational institutions find ways to develop independent learning through open learning programs.

Online Learning in Schools

Outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government has decided that school learning is transferred to an online learning system or distance learning. Of course, this online system requires students to learn with the help of technology. The use of device (smartphone/laptop) for elementary school age children who are not yet qualified as users and students who do not have it are not evenly distributed, is one of the factors hampering the learning process.

The learning process that does not only transfer knowledge but also other values that must be developed is of course a little hampered. Character planting which is very important in schools is constrained by the existence of distance learning.

There are 18 characters required, namely religious; honest; tolerance; discipline; hard work; creative; independent; democratic; curiosity; spirit of nationality; love the motherland; rewarding achievements; friendly; love peace; like to read; environmental care; Social care; and responsibility (Nurcahyati, 2017). Among these characters, the independent character is one of the five main characters originating from Pancasila. "Independent learning is a process that helps students organize their thoughts, behavior and feelings in order to make them successful in navigating their learning experiences." (Kusumadewi, Yustiana, & Nasihah, 2020).

The application of online learning has certainly been evenly implemented in all schools in Indonesia. Likewise, with the location of the research conducted by researchers, namely SD Negeri Manunggal Bhakti Kota Sukabumi. The research, which was conducted by conducting interviews with teachers/homeroom teachers and class I sports teachers, said that SD Negeri Manunggal Bhakti has implemented a character education system that applies the national cultural values.

The definition of character education conveyed is that character education is a process of providing guidance or guidance to students to become good humans in terms of their hearts, mindsets, bodies and other positive things that make them good humans, as has been applied in one of the school's missions. Character Education is a form of human activity in which there is an educational action intended for the next generation.

The purpose of character education is to shape individual improvement continuously and train one's abilities in order to lead a better life. In this case, of course the research subject said that the learning process carried out really had to be extra in providing direction and guidance to students, especially this is guidance for students in lower classes.

Online learning that is carried out using the application *WhatsApp*, has not provided maximum results in the learning process as well as the inculcation of character values to students. Giving assignments, exercises and giving learning instructions are all carried out in forums for *chat* group teachers and parents of each student. This is because elementary students, especially low-grade children, are still not old enough to use *gadget*. Ages who still think a lot about playing, of course, become an obstacle for children in fostering an

independent attitude in learning. When given assignments in the forum *chat* even learning, delays still occur in submitting assignments.

The teacher really understands the meaning of independent character that must be instilled in students, that independent character is education or one of the efforts made consciously with the aim of forming the morals, character or character of an individual so that his life does not continue to depend on the help of others in completing anything as long as he is able to solve it by himself. In the delivery of learning that is inserted into the self-learning process for children, of course the teacher realizes that there are factors that can hinder the process. The teacher said that the obstacles in the formation of independent character in children were: 1) Lack of parental understanding of "What is character education?"; 2) Parents still weak understanding that a child is a mandate that must be guarded, especially from a moral perspective because the Prophet was sent to the face of this earth, one of which is to improve morals; and 3) There are still parents who think that learning at school is sufficient so there is no need for supervision or learning at home and others.

In addition to inhibiting factors, of course this has supporting factors that encourage and assist teachers in optimizing children's independent character, namely: 1) Parents, their support and motivation are able to provide positive things so that the child's character will be good. With the intensity of parents' attention to their children in their daily independence, teachers provide a learning process both online and offline and services can guide students' character carefully and continuously and sustainably; and 2) Playmates / community environment, one of the factors that can support children's character, namely their playmates or their surroundings.

From the factors found, of course the subject must have a way of how the subject is able to provide independent character teaching in this pandemic. The subject explained that in learning during this pandemic there were several things that could be applied in independent character learning in children, namely: 1) By providing independent long-distance teaching and learning activities through online or offline mechanisms, by providing thematic material with the appropriate level corridors. with the theme's basic competency indicators by providing didactic methodical forms both through examples of attitudes and movements, products, portfolios and deafening social attitudes, spirituality and skills, even though the distance learning system. Didactic methodically, systematically, analysis and objectively in an educational manner; 2) Habituation, this habituation is of course the most important thing to emerge and must be initiated by parents and of course with the direction given by the teacher or educator. Because a habit that gets used to it will become a habit; 3) For example, before the pandemic, children were accustomed to praying *Dhuha*, reading the *Qur'an* together, *Jumsih* (clean Friday), and other activities. And in this case, of course, an educator must set an example so that the child is able to do everything, because what we have seen that children always imitate what the educator is doing compared to what the teacher talks about but there is no example of its realization. Likewise, when children study at home, parents must set a good example for their children, and in this case, of course, educators have to communicate a lot between their parents; and 4) Supervision, in addition to supervision from schools during this pandemic, the supervision of student learning focuses on parents.

This is in line with the factors that influence independence according to Hurlock (1990): 1) Parenting patterns. Parents with democratic parenting stimulate the child's independence, where the parents are the child's first madrasah and the father is the principal of the children's first madrasah. For this reason, parents have a role as guides who pay attention to every activity and needs of children, especially those related to studies and their interactions both in the family and school environment. Diana Baumrit (in Desmaita 2008, pp: 144-145)

recommends 3 parenting that are associated with different aspects of children's social behavior. Namely: a) Authoritative parenting is a parenting style that shows extra strict supervision of children's behavior, but they are also responsive, respect and respect thoughts, feelings, and include children in decision making. School children who are of the authoritative tend to be more confident in themselves, self-monitoring and able to get along well with their peers. Authoritative parenting is also associated with high self-esteem, having moral standards, psychosocial maturity, independence, success in learning, and being socially responsible. b) Authoritarian parenting (Authoritarian parenting) is a parenting style that limits and requires children to follow parental orders. Authoritarian parents set strict boundaries and do not provide great opportunities for children to express opinions. Authoritarian parents also tend to be arbitrary and undemocratic in making decisions, impose roles or views on children on the basis of their own abilities and power and do not respect their thoughts and feelings. Children of authoritarian parents tend to be suspicious of others and feel unhappy with themselves, feel awkward making friends with their peers, are awkward in adjusting to early school entry and have lower learning achievement than other children. c) Permissive parenting can be divided into two forms, namely: First, *Permissive-indulgent*, a parenting style in which parents are very involved in the child's life, but set little limits or control over them. Parenting *Permissive-indulgent* associated with a lack of ability to control the child, because parents are *permissive-indulgent*, tend to let the kids do whatever they want, and consequently the children never learn to control their own behavior and always expect that all of his will obeyed. Second, *Permissive-indifferent*, which is a parenting style in which parents are not very involved in the child's life. Children raised by parents *Permissive-indifferent* tend to lack self-confidence, poor self-control and low self-esteem; 2) Gender. Children who develop masculine behavior are more independent than children who develop feministic behavior patterns. Because of this, boys are more aggressive than girls, who are gentle and passive; and 3) the sequence of children's positions. The first child is expected to be an example and keep his younger siblings more likely to be independent compared to the youngest child who gets excessive attention from their parents and their siblings have little chance of being independent.

Benjamin Spok (in Nayla 2007, page: 17) says that there are several factors that affect children's independence, including: 1) Children's self-confidence, children's self-confidence is formed when children are given the confidence to do something they are able to do on their own. Self-confidence can be formed since a child is a baby; 2) Habits. One of the roles of parents in everyday life is forming habits. If a child is too accustomed to indulgence and always served, the child will always depend on his parents and cannot be independent; 3) Discipline. Independence is closely related to discipline, before a child can discipline himself, he must first be disciplined by his parents. From the description of the discussion about independence above, the writer can conclude that independence as a thing or a state can stand alone without depending on others.

The online learning process at the elementary school level, especially in low-grade classes, is still considered ineffective. This is because the level of student learning independence still requires extra direction, guidance and attention from the surrounding environment, because the character of children whose minds are still easily distracted. When students study at home, the teacher must be able to work together with all the subjects closest to the child to foster children's independent character in learning.

Rogers conveyed the principles of the learning approach as follows. (1) Humans have a natural potential for learning. This principle describes the basic potential of humans as learners and able to learn independently; (2) Significant learning occurs when the subject matter is considered by students to have relevance for its own purposes. Principles describe

how important it is to help students understand learning goals and self-goals or interests. Students who understand the relationship between learning goals and their own goals and interests will make the learning process more effective and achieve significant results; (3) Learning that will bring about changes in the self-organization of students, including changing perceptions of oneself will be interpreted as threatening and likely to be rejected by students; (4) Self-threatening learning is easier to understand and assimilate when external threats are minimal; (5) When the threat to self is low, experiences can be felt in different ways and learning can be continued; (6) Much significant learning is gained through doing the importance of practice and learning through application; (7) Learning will occur well when students participate responsibly in the learning process; (8) Learning that starts from self-motivation which involves all of the learner's personality, both feelings and cognition or thoughts, will produce long-lasting learning outcomes; (9) The development of independence and creativity of students will be formed when students always reflect and self-critique as well as basic self-evaluation and also make evaluations from others as material for learning; and (10) The most socially beneficial learning in the modern world is a continuous learning process to gain experience, and learners continue to be involved in the process of change (Sulastrini & Muslihati).

Forming efforts that can be done at home is by giving direction to children about the importance of practicing independence. Parents always give directions to children to always be independent, because with independent activities the child will know that every activity carried out is independent of others. So parents in providing direction about the importance of independence through activities, not just words given to children. Of course this must be followed by repeated habituation to the child. In providing activities to children gradually and repeatedly, of course the child cannot be directly given a task or activity independently, at certain stages parents and teachers must accompany and provide direction, after providing direction, in carrying out activities, the child will understand how to complete these activities, after the child already knows how to complete these activities. So that children can get used to and do not depend on others. Exemplary or giving good examples to children will have a good impact on children's lives in the future. After the child knows the role models in everyday life, the child will also be able to set an example to his friends both at home and in the community.

The subject conveyed that the diverse student learning responses in learning during this pandemic, required teachers to provide protection and guidance and education information to parents / guardians of students with polite and educational communication for a better change process, so that the conditions with low grades became increases and the characteristics are getting better according to what is expected, both social and spiritual attitudes so that they become polite, knowledgeable and polite with skills. The accuracy and speed in carrying out the assigned task is one way for teachers to evaluate the level of student independence in learning.

In online learning, teachers do not necessarily give parents the responsibility for the success of children in learning, but they still hold that responsibility by monitoring the learning process at home / evaluating online learning activities. Online learning evaluation is carried out to determine the level of effectiveness of the implementation of online learning or in other words to find out how far the learning objectives have been achieved. Rohmawati said that learning effectiveness is seen from 3 aspects, namely, student activity during learning; student responses to learning; and students' mastery of concepts after learning (Kusumaningrum, Kuncoro, Arigiyati, & Trisniawati, 2020).

In order for the learning process to run as it should, there needs to be two-way communication between the school and the parents of students. Building communication is

important so that parents understand the learning objectives expected by the teacher and vice versa, the teacher also understands the wishes of parents in accompanying children to study at home. The subject said that the way schools build communication with parents is through the existence of a liaison book between parents and teachers, from which the teacher can communicate with parents and teachers about the development of their children during learning at home. Although this is a little less effective in determining children's learning independence, at least teachers can still monitor student learning with the help of parents. With complaints from some parents and children who are already bored with online learning plus complaints about quotas to support learning smoothness, teachers are still seeking guidance and supervision with parents to continue to provide positive support to their children. Parents' expectations for online learning include, the material presented can be understood by children well; instructions for doing assignments must be clear; the tasks given are not burdensome to the child; in explaining the material not too fast so that students can better understand the material; get internet quota assistance because internet quota is one of the things that burdens students' parents; online learning can be even more effective; communication between students and teachers is more intense if there are obstacles; the material presented is easy to understand; material integrated with student life; fun learning for students; and acquire skills and character education.

Conclusion

Independent character is education or conscious effort with the aim of shaping the morals, character or character of an individual so that his life does not continue to depend on the help of others in solving anything as long as he is able to solve it himself. In Carl Rogers' concept, independence is called self by Brammer and Shostrom (1982) because independence cannot be separated from the word self itself because self is the essence of independence. Independent character in students is based on a deep awareness in themselves to become a human who is full of responsibility supported by habits that are embedded in themselves. Of course, there must be a form of encouragement provided by the environment around the child. Building two-way communication between the school and parents is important so that both parties understand each other's expectations. The existence of examples and good cooperation between teachers and parents will help students be able to imitate and do it with habits so that it will form the character itself which is positively embedded in oneself.

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