



Character Development Model for Early Childhood Learners at Islamic Kindergarten

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Abstract

The development of character education has been extensively studied, but research on instilling character values in early childhood learners at RA (Islamic Kindergarten) institutions remains limited. This study, therefore, aims to analyze the model of instilling character values in early childhood at Islamic Kindergartens during the online learning process. This descriptive qualitative research adopts a phenomenological approach. Data were collected through structured interviews, observation, and documents from principals, teachers, and parents of early childhood at several Islamic Kindergartens (*Raudatul Athfal*) Watampone, south Sulawesi. Data was qualitatively analyzed using three steps: data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusion. A thematic analysis using Atlas.ti was employed. The results reveal that the optimal development of character values in early childhood at RA Watampone during the covid-19 pandemic is achieved through diverse models in the learning process, including value inculcation, exemplification, facilitation, and the development of intellectual and social skills, habituation, play, storytelling, and advisory approaches. School culture-based character value implementation at RA Watampone involves routine and spontaneous habituation, exemplifying behavior, and conditioning. Additionally, community-based character value implementation is achieved through partnership and synergistic-collaborative models.

Keywords: Character values, Character development, Early childhood, Islamic kindergarten

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INTRODUCTION

All educational activities should aim to foster the development of character (Halimah et al., 2020; Manullang, 2013), and the implementation of character education ought to commence during early childhood (Rohendi, 2016; Umar et al., 2021). Instilling character values as early as possible forms the basis of a child's personality as they grow into adults. During the early years, it is crucial to lay the foundation for sensory abilities, critical thinking, and the adoption of moral and religious values, which are essential for shaping a child's self-identity. This period represents a golden opportunity to instill and mold a child's character since they are highly receptive to information and tend to emulate behaviors from their immediate surroundings (Hidaya & Aisna, 2020; Silahuddin, 2017). Moreover, during early childhood, children have not yet been significantly exposed to negative external influences, making it easier for parents and educators to guide and impart essential character education values (Cahyaningrum et al., 2017). The attitudes, habits, and behaviors cultivated during these formative years play a pivotal role in determining a child's ability to adapt successfully to adulthood (Ersiyoma & Suryana, 2022).

To develop character values and implement character education effectively in schools, teachers and school authorities must carefully devise various well-designed programs and activities that can help students develop strong character. There are three bases for character education design that schools can adopt: classroom-based character education, school culture-based character education, and community-based character education (Muslich, 2022). When these three designs of character education are properly implemented in schools, they can effectively nurture students with positive character traits. Therefore, a strong commitment and collaboration from all stakeholders, including parents, school members, the community, and the government, are essential to actively participate in instilling character values in children.

The development of character values and character education has become increasingly vital and urgent in today's Indonesian society due to various incidents and situations. These include the rise in drug abuse, the growing prevalence of hedonism, increased violence, and promiscuity. Additionally, the impact of globalization, while offering advantages like progress and independence, has also brought about negative consequences, emphasizing the significance of faith and piety. On the other hand, social sensitivity is declining, and individualism and selfishness are rapidly on the rise (Kholidah, 2015). Moreover, the availability of positive role models, such as responsible parents, teachers, and government officials, who can set good examples, particularly in environmental issues like "endangered species," is diminishing (Samani & Hariyanto, 2011).

Considering these phenomena, schools as formal educational institutions must be sensitive in preventing and addressing unwanted occurrences, as mentioned earlier. *Raudhatul Athfal* (RA – Islamic Kindergarten), as the first formal educational institution, serves as the primary foundation for instilling character values in students. Especially during the current and post-Covid-19 pandemic situation, when the learning process is conducted online or in a remote manner, it becomes challenging to instill character values in children. Hence, it requires collaboration from all parties, including the school, parents, and the young children themselves, to address this issue effectively.

Several previous studies have examined the development of character values among students in schools, such as research on the implementation of character education in elementary schools (Annisa, 2019; Esmael & Nafiah, 2018; Hidayah, 2015), the inculcation of religious character values (Bali & Susilowati, 2019; Hariandi & Irawan, 2016; Huda et al., 2021; Luthfiyah & Zafi, 2021), and the development of other character traits like honesty, discipline,

and responsibility (Annisa, 2019; Huda et al., 2021; Nugroho, 2020; Rosita et al., 2022; Sugiana & Sofyan, 2019; Sulthonurohmah, 2017; Uge et al., 2022). Therefore, this study aims to examine the model of instilling character values in early childhood during the online learning process at RA Watampone, with a particular focus on school culture and community-based character education during the Covid-19 pandemic.

METHOD

Research Design

This is a qualitative study with phenomenology approach. Phenomenology is a branch of philosophy dedicated to the description and analysis of phenomena, that is, the way things, in the broadest sense of the word (Emiliussen et al., 2021). It is a qualitative research approach focused on understanding the subjective lived experiences of individuals or groups and exploring the meanings they attach to those experiences. It aims to uncover the essence and structures of phenomena as perceived and described by the individuals who have experienced them (Neubauer et al., 2019). This research will uncover the model of instilling character values in early childhood during the online learning process at Islamic Kindergarten (as known as *Raudhatul Athfal*/ RA) Watampone, with a specific emphasis on school culture and community-based character education during the covid-19 pandemic, based on information from experiences shared by informants such as teachers and parents of students.

Participants

This research was conducted at *Raudhatul Athfal* (RA) Watampone, specifically at RA Rabbani Yayasan Ibnu Qayyim, RA Al-Mujahidin, RA Al-Mahmudiyah, and RA Mahad Hadist Al-Junaidiyah Biru Watampone. The data sources for this study included school principals, teachers, and parents of young children at RA Watampone. The selection of data sources was done purposively, based on specific considerations and objectives.

Data Collection

In this research, the data collection process was carefully designed to ensure a comprehensive and thorough examination of the topic. To achieve this, the researchers employed multiple research instruments, including interview guidelines, which allowed them to conduct structured and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders such as school principals, teachers, and parents. Through these interviews, valuable insights and perspectives were gathered, shedding light on the instilling of character values in early childhood during the online learning process at RA Watampone.

Additionally, the researchers utilized observation guidelines to systematically observe the interactions and behaviors of the children, teachers, and other members of the school community. This direct observation provided a valuable opportunity to capture real-time experiences and behaviors related to character development in the online learning setting. Furthermore, document analysis was employed to examine relevant materials such as educational plans, curriculum documents, and any existing character education programs at the *Raudhatul Athfal* institutions. This analysis helped to contextualize the findings and provided a deeper understanding of the underlying educational framework and initiatives related to character education. One of students' mothers as informant, Nurhayati, stated that the combination of these data collection techniques contributed to a holistic and well-rounded investigation of the model of instilling character values in early childhood during online learning at RA Watampone. The researchers were able to triangulate the data, ensuring its

credibility and enhancing the overall rigor of the study. By using multiple sources of data, this research aimed to present a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of character education practices in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on early childhood education at RA institutions.

Data Analysis

A thematic analysis was utilized for data analysis, employing an inductive approach. The emphasis of this qualitative research was on deriving meaning from the results rather than aiming for generalization. (Dewantara et al., 2023). Data analysis involved three steps: data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusion (Huberman & Miles, 2019). The initial step in data analysis involved transcribing the interviews into written transcripts to facilitate content analysis. The researchers carefully reviewed all the transcripts multiple times. Next, in the data reduction stage, the researchers reduced the information collected from the first phase by sorting and selecting relevant and significant data. They also identified emerging themes and patterns while removing irrelevant data. The identified essential information was then grouped into central themes. The reduced data was presented in the form of descriptions and tables. Subsequently, data interpretation was conducted based on the reduced and presented information. In the final stage, the researchers verified the accuracy of the analysis results. The findings from the analysis were then used to draw conclusions and provide insights based on the processed data. Through this data analysis, it is expected to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the character education model at RA Raudhatul Athfal and provide useful insights for the development of character education in the RA environment.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The model of instilling character values in early childhood at Raudhatul Athfal Watampone has been maximally implemented according to Masnur Muslich's theory, based on three bases of character education design: classroom-based character education, school culture-based character education, and community-based character education (Muslich, 2022). These three bases have been effectively and consistently applied, resulting in successful character development at Raudhatul Athfal Watampone and producing exemplary and well-characterized young children.

During the pandemic, the development of character values at RA Watampone was achieved through collaboration among teachers, parents, and young children. This challenging period prompted teachers at RA Watampone to adapt to online learning using various digital platforms such as WhatsApp, video calls, Google Meet, Google Classroom, and Zoom meetings. Additionally, Nurhaedah as one of informant teachers stated that teacher also conducted in-person learning by visiting students' homes in rotation or having young children visit their homes in turn.

Online learning began in 2019 and continued until August 2021. In September 2021, face-to-face learning resumed, despite the ongoing pandemic, with strict adherence to health protocols as per government guidelines. During the pandemic, character values were instilled in young children at RA Watampone through activities conducted by parents and teachers at home. When learning was facilitated by parents, they followed the guidance and instructions provided by RA Watampone's teachers to teach and reinforce positive habits, such as praying before studying, performing Dhuha prayer, memorizing short surahs from the Quran, reading the Quran, and other positive habits. Parents documented these activities through photos and videos and shared them in the RA Watampone parent and teacher WhatsApp group. RA

Watampone teachers actively supervised and provided feedback on various activities aimed at cultivating and developing character education in young children.

In addition, the development of character values in young children is also carried out by teachers at RA Watampone during home visits or when young children visit their teachers' homes. RA Watampone teachers instill character values by fostering positive habits, serving as role models for the children, establishing mutually agreed-upon rules, providing motivation and reinforcement, and developing both intellectual and social skills in the children, among other approaches. Napisah, a school principal as one of informants, claimed that through this collaborative effort between teachers, parents, and young children, the desired goals of character education are achieved.

Regarding the models of instilling character values given to young children at RA Watampone, they align with the three character education designs mentioned above. Below, Figure 1 illustrates models character development implemented by teachers at RA Watampone through a network graph using Atlas.ti.

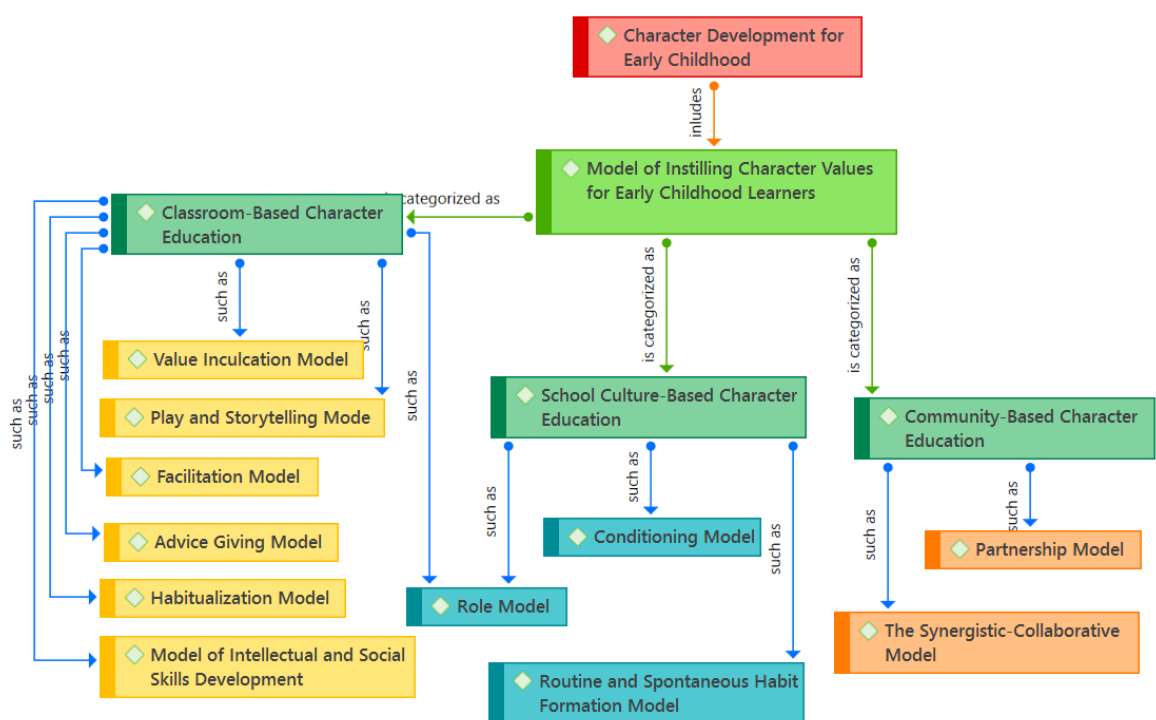


Figure 1. Character model development for early childhood learners

Next, the detailed explanations of the three models of instilling character values in young children are provided below.

Classroom-Based Character Education Development

The model of instilling character values in young children based on the classroom is known as a character development approach through the learning process. In the era of globalization, character education requires innovative models that educators can use to instill character values in children. The emergence of various information and communication technologies, including the internet with applications like YouTube, games, social media, and other platforms, along with increasingly advanced mobile phones, and democratic family

upbringing patterns, becomes important considerations for teachers in instilling character values in young children. Character education should be well-designed through the learning process in the classroom. Several classroom-based models of character values instilled by teachers at RA Watampone are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Classroom-based character education model development

Model of Instilling Character Values in Early Childhood	Implementation of Classroom-Based Character Education Model Development
Value Inculcation Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The value inculcation model used by teachers at RA Watampone is an integrated character values instillation model, which is incorporated into thematic learning with various focuses, including religious and moral values, social-emotional development, language, cognitive, physical-motor, and arts. • The value inculcation model at RA Watampone is implemented by treating young children fairly, respecting their differing opinions, being a contextual idol (a figure who provides inspiration, emotional support, and reinforcement to young children in real life), setting rules, providing educative rewards or punishments, and creating social and emotional experiences related to desired values.
Role Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers at RA Watampone play a crucial role as positive role models for young children. They serve as exemplary figures and the best examples for the young learners. • Teachers at RA Watampone also teach young children to emulate renowned individuals with noble character, such as Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and other companions. They show how to handle problems fairly, be attentive listeners to the children, respect their opinions, and offer constructive criticism in a polite manner. These natural behaviors serve as exemplary models for the children to follow.
Facilitation Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers at RA Watampone provide the great opportunities for young students to express their opinions, ask questions, recall information previously shared, and clarify any uncertainties or doubts they may have. • Teachers at RA Watampone act as companions and supervisors for young children to ensure they consistently practice what they have learned at school. • Teachers at RA Watampone also request parents' involvement in supporting and supervising their children to reinforce positive habits at home.
Model of Intellectual and Social Skills Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The intellectual skills developed at RA Watampone include the ability to think symbolically, focusing on three activities commonly done by young children, namely fantasy play, drawing, and language. • Teachers at RA Watampone use a model for developing children's social skills by introducing, providing understanding, and fostering empathy. They also nurture social skills in young children by promoting mutual respect, cultivating a culture of queuing, treating all children equally, and encouraging responsibility for their actions. Once young children are taught to recognize something, the next step is to encourage them to make decisions and take action based on their choices.
Habitualization Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers at RA Watampone consistently implement positive habit formation, ensuring that young children grow and develop well. • Some habit formation models applied by teachers at RA Watampone include morning supplications (dzikir in the

	morning), memorizing Juz 30 of the Quran or selected verses, memorizing Hadiths, reciting prayers before and after studying, memorizing daily prayers, practicing worship, and engaging in singing religious songs (nasheed).
Play and Storytelling Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers at RA Watampone provide various play materials, maintain the play area, and engage in simple play activities. Children can play with legos, puzzles, blocks, boards, and other games, encouraging their imagination and enhancing creativity.• Teachers at RA Watampone encourage parents to share Islamic stories directly or indirectly. Indirectly, teachers at RA Watampone share recorded Islamic stories through videos or films during lessons. These stories revolve around exemplary figures such as Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the Khulafaur Rasyidin (Rightly Guided Caliphs), and other prominent Islamic personalities, as well as Islamic cartoons and other films that offer valuable lessons.
Advice Giving Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers at RA Watampone consistently offer guidance and advice to young children in a fun, gentle, and impactful manner, leaving a lasting impression on their young minds.• Teachers at RA Watampone also regularly remind the children of the good deeds they should perform and caution them against engaging in negative behaviors both at school and in their homes and communities.

Source: Results of interviews with teachers and documents from RA Watampone

The classroom-based character education model development for early childhood learners can be implemented through various effective models, each aiming to instill essential character values in young children. Based on Table 1, there are seven models could be implemented to support the character development for young learners. The first model is value inculcation. This model involves directly teaching young children specific character values, such as honesty, kindness, empathy, and responsibility. Teachers use age-appropriate methods to introduce and reinforce these values, helping children understand their importance and how to practice them in their daily interactions. The second is role model. Teachers intentionally introduce positive role models from various fields and backgrounds, showcasing individuals who exemplify the character values being taught. By learning about these role models' experiences and accomplishments, children are motivated to aspire to similar values and behaviors.

The next model is facilitation. In this model, teachers act as facilitators, guiding children in group discussions and activities that encourage character development. They create a supportive environment where children feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and emotions, helping them build social and emotional skills. The fourth model is intellectual and social skills development. Emphasizing the importance of both academic and social development, this model nurtures children's cognitive and social skills. Teachers encourage collaborative learning, effective communication, and critical thinking, helping children develop the necessary tools for positive social interactions and lifelong learning. The fifth is habitualization. This model focuses on creating consistent routines and rituals within the classroom to reinforce positive behavior. By repeating and celebrating good deeds, children develop habits aligned with character values, making these virtues a natural part of their daily lives. This finding supports the previous study that habituation is repetition. It is highly effective when used to cultivate good habits for young learners (Siradjuddin, 2021). For example, teachers should habituate students to perform positive routines during learning, such as

praying before studying, greeting when entering the class, expressing gratitude to helpful friends, and apologizing for mistakes.

The next model is play and storytelling. Utilizing the power of play and storytelling, teachers engage young learners in interactive and imaginative activities that portray characters or situations demonstrating positive character traits. Through role-playing and listening to stories, children learn about moral concepts and are encouraged to emulate positive behavior. The previous study also showed the relevant finding that practical learning approaches, including introducing themes and character stories using storytelling and discussing character education within the stories, were effective in instilling moral values and receiving positive responses from children (Halimah et al., 2020). Storytelling can create additional opportunities for verbal interaction, which in turn fosters the psychosocial development of students in schools. This encourages and actively promotes the cultivation of such practices (Hibbin, 2016).

The last model is advice giving. Teachers take on a mentoring role, providing gentle guidance and practical advice to children when they encounter challenges or conflicts. By offering constructive feedback and positive reinforcement, teachers help children develop a strong sense of self-awareness and problem-solving abilities. This model also claimed by previous studies that character education encompasses various strategies, and two common methods involve offering guidance or giving advice to instill positive values in individuals (Haniyyah, 2021; Hidayat et al., 2021). Additionally, using a system of rewards and punishments can also be employed to reinforce desired behaviors and discourage negative ones. By integrating these models into the classroom-based character education, educators create a well-rounded approach to character development for early childhood learners. These strategies foster a positive and inclusive learning environment, helping children cultivate strong character traits that will serve as a foundation for their future growth and success in society.

School Culture-Based Character Education Development

The teachers at Raudhatul Athfal Watampone have implemented school culture as one of the forms of character education design. School culture encompasses policies, customs, norms, and rules established by the school that all members of the school community must adhere to. School culture has a significant influence on character formation and behavior in children, as it shapes the identity, behavioral boundaries, and overall conduct of all school members. A positive and consistent school culture plays a crucial role in shaping a child's character by having agreed-upon school rules and implementing a set of values, making the school known for its strong character. The following are several models of instilling character values in early childhood at RA Watampone through the creation of a character-based school culture.

Table 2. School culture-based character education model development

Model of Instilling Character Values in Early Childhood	Implementation of School Culture-Based Character Education Development
Routine and Spontaneous Habit Formation Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The routine habit formation model is implemented in a programmed or scheduled manner. • During the Covid-19 pandemic, teachers at RA Watampone have entrusted parents to consistently carry out these routine activities at home. • These activities can be conducted on a daily, weekly, monthly, and semester basis.

- The routine habit formation includes habits such as reading, memorizing, and reviewing short surahs and selected verses from the Quran, selected hadiths, reciting and memorizing daily prayers, practicing ablution, performing the Dhuha prayer, performing Dhuhr prayer in congregation, giving charity, trimming nails, conducting a Friday cleaning session, reciting the Asmaul Husna (the 99 Names of Allah), and sending blessings upon the Prophet (peace be upon him) at the end of the learning session.
 - In the routine habit formation model, early childhood learners are repeatedly shown examples and given specific stimuli, which include both rewards and punishments.
 - The spontaneous activity model conducted by teachers at RA Watampone is impromptu and takes place at the moment when certain situations occur. For instance, contacting a sick child to provide encouragement and motivation to rejoin the learning process.
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Role Model

- Teachers at RA Watampone pray together with early childhood learners before and after the learning process through Zoom meetings or Google Classroom.
 - Teachers at RA Watampone ask or remind parents or early childhood learners to perform the Dhuha and Dhuhr prayers in congregation at home according to the specified schedule, which is sent through videos or photos to the WA group.
 - Teachers at RA Watampone set a good example when praying. They demonstrate how to pray properly and in a way that is easily understood by early childhood learners.
 - Teachers at RA Watampone teach with gentleness and love.
 - After the early childhood learners complete their assignments, teachers always express gratitude to them.
 - Teachers at RA Watampone teach children to apologize if they make mistakes.
 - Teachers at RA Watampone value the opinions of others and listen to early childhood learners when they express their thoughts.
 - Teachers at RA Watampone ask children to help their parents clean the yard, room, or kitchen at home.
 - Teachers at RA Watampone ask children to pick up and dispose of litter when they see it.
 - Teachers at RA Watampone call parents or early childhood learners who are sick and unable to participate in learning.
 - Teachers at RA Watampone ask early childhood learners to regularly give charity.
 - Teachers at RA Watampone provide objective assessments for early childhood learners.
 - Teachers at RA Watampone keep their promises to early childhood learners when they make commitments.
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Conditioning Model

- The conditioning model is carried out by parents at home and teachers at RA Watampone when they visit the homes of early childhood learners or when the learners visit the teacher's home.
 - Teachers at RA Watampone ask parents to set up the learning space for early childhood learners or the yard and terrace of the house in a way that makes them comfortable and not bored during learning.
 - The conditioning model is implemented by teachers at RA Watampone in several ways, such as conducting marching
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activities before entering the classroom, asking children to sing Asmaul Husna and engaging in other activities that support the character development of early childhood learners, reciting Salawat before learning sessions, and displaying posters or images that serve as role models for early childhood learners.

Source: Results of interviews with teachers and documents from RA Watampone

The classroom-based character education model development for early childhood learners can be implemented through various effective models, each aiming to instill essential character values in young children. Based on Table 1, there are seven models could be implemented to support the character development for young learners. The first model is The other character model development for early childhood learners is school culture-based character education. It can be implemented through various effective models, each aiming to instill essential character values in young children. Based on Table 2, there are three models could be implemented to support the character development for young learners. The first model is the routine and spontaneous habit formation. This is a comprehensive approach to instilling positive habits in early childhood learners. The routine habit formation involves scheduled activities conducted on a daily, weekly, monthly, and semester basis, such as reading, memorizing, and reciting religious texts, practicing daily prayers, giving charity, and more. Early childhood learners are repeatedly shown examples and given specific stimuli, while the spontaneous activity model addresses immediate needs, such as providing encouragement to sick children to rejoin the learning process. This model creates a structured and caring learning environment, both in school and at home during the covid-19 pandemic.

Next, the second is role model. This model play a crucial effect in the development of early childhood learners. Teachers serve as role models by praying together with the children, demonstrating proper prayer techniques, and teaching with kindness and love. They promote gratitude, responsibility, and empathy by expressing appreciation for completed assignments, teaching children to apologize for mistakes, and valuing their opinions. Additionally, teachers encourage helpfulness and cleanliness by asking children to assist their parents at home and dispose of litter. They also show care and support by reaching out to sick learners and promoting charitable acts. Furthermore, teachers uphold objectivity in assessments and demonstrate integrity by fulfilling their promises to the children. These positive role models create a nurturing and character-building environment for the early childhood learners. This finding support the result of previous studies that role model is an effective way to develop students' character education (Akhwani et al., 2021; Rifki et al., 2023), making the teacher's role model a fundamental aspect of student character education in the era of Society 5.0 (Yaqin et al., 2022).

The last is conditioning model. The conditioning model for character development is carried out both by parents at home and teachers at RA Watampone. Teachers visit the homes of early childhood learners or vice versa to create a supportive learning environment. Teachers instruct parents to set up a comfortable and engaging learning space at home. In addition to parents, teachers should also be able to create a conducive learning environment where students feel comfortable and receptive to the lessons taught. This can be achieved by providing enjoyable learning activities that incorporate positive character values (Kholifah, 2020). The conditioning model is implemented through various activities, including marching before entering the classroom, singing Asmaul Husna, and displaying inspirational posters to foster character development in early childhood learners. Reciting Salawat before learning sessions further enhances the model's impact on character building.

Community -Based Character Education Development

There are several models of instilling character values in early childhood that are implemented through community-based education at RA Watampone, as provided in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Community culture-based character education model development

Model of Instilling Character Values in Early Childhood	Implementation of Community-Based Character Education Development
Partnership Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RA Watampone teachers have established and built partnerships with parents and the community to develop the potential, intelligence, and character of early childhood. • Teachers at RA Watampone communicate and coordinate with the community or professional organizations, fostering partnerships through open attitudes and a willingness to learn. • Parents support all school-developed programs, especially those related to instilling character values in early childhood. • Parents teach and accompany their children, particularly in nurturing the character development of early childhood at home. All the positive characters and habits that were implemented at school before the pandemic are encouraged by parents to be instilled in their children at home.
The Synergistic-Collaborative Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school, parents, and community at RA Watampone synergize and harness their respective strengths for the development of early childhood character, creating a collective force that is stronger together. • The school, parents, and community at RA Watampone reinforce each other and set aside egoistic attitudes, harmful competition, and instead collaborate with creativity, innovation, and a focus on mutual trust, leading to a harmonious synergy among them. • The synergistic-collaborative model involves the exchange of constructive ideas, suggestions, or inputs from parents and the community surrounding the school, contributing to the school's development and the nurturing of early childhood character. These contributions can be both non-material and material, aimed at improving the school's quality. • In implementing the synergistic-collaborative Model for instilling character in early childhood at RA Watampone, open discussions or sharing sessions are conducted with parents to address any difficulties related to the child's intellectual, behavioral, and psychomotor development. This approach helps anticipate unexpected issues that may affect the physiological and psychological development of early childhood.

Source: Results of interviews with teachers and documents from RA Watampone

The community-based character education model development for early childhood learners can be implemented through two kind models: partnership and synergistic-collaborative models (see Table 3), each aiming to instill essential character values in early children. The first model is partnership. It involves teachers establishing strong partnerships with parents and the community to nurture the potential, intelligence, and character of early

childhood learners. Teachers foster open communication and coordination with the community and professional organizations, emphasizing collaboration and a willingness to learn together. Parents actively support the school's character development programs for early childhood learners and play an essential role in reinforcing positive values and habits at home that align with the school's teachings. The model emphasizes the collective effort of the school, parents, and community in shaping the character development of young children.

The second model is the synergistic-collaborative. This model involves the school, parents, and community working together and utilizing their strengths to foster the character development of early childhood. They support and complement each other, abandoning egoistic behaviors and fostering a collaborative atmosphere based on creativity, innovation, and trust. Through open discussions, the model encourages the exchange of ideas and inputs from parents and the community, contributing to the school's growth and the holistic development of early childhood. This collaborative approach ensures a harmonious synergy among all stakeholders and addresses challenges that may arise during the child's developmental journey.

Generally, the findings indicate that RA Watampone has implemented character education by creating a school environment with strong values, and also demands that parents create a character-based home environment during the covid-19 pandemic through modeling, supportive school and home environments, integrated with the curriculum, instructional methods, leadership systems, and traditions aligned with the established vision, mission, goals, and programs. Parenting plays a pivotal role in a child's development, as children benefit significantly from witnessing positive behaviors demonstrated by their parents during their early years (Rachmad et al., 2023). These positive examples serve as a form of discipline from an early age. Conversely, neglecting this responsibility may result in mental depression, psychological pressure, stress, and emotional suffering, which can affect both parents and children (Panji et al., 2023).

With the synergistic-collaborative model between RA Watampone teachers and parents, a school and home with strong character have been established and created through exemplary atmosphere and providing examples. The relationship among all character educators is built on care, consensus, and empathetic communication. It involves fostering positive habits and giving opportunities for young children to practice these positive behaviors at home, school, and in the community through various activities.

CONCLUSION

The development of character values in early childhood during the COVID-19 pandemic at RA Watampone has been carried out optimally through various models in the learning process. These models include value inculcation, exemplifying values, facilitation, and the development of intellectual and social skills, habituation, play, storytelling, and advisory approaches. The implementation of character value planting models based on the school culture in RA Watampone is done through habituation of routine and spontaneous activities, exemplifying behavior, and conditioning. Meanwhile, the implementation of character value planting models based on the community in RA Watampone is accomplished through partnership and synergistic-collaborative models. The instillation of character values in early childhood is essential and requires the support of the school community, parents, and the surrounding environment. The covid-19 pandemic has posed challenges for schools and parents in instilling character values in young children. Hence, various methods and models have been employed to ensure the development of their character. This includes character-

based learning facilitated by teachers and parental guidance, the integration of religious culture at school and home, and community-based character education through partnership and collaboration models. In this way, effective cooperation is essential to cultivate positive character traits in young children.

This study still has limitations, such as limited participants and research scope. Additionally, further in-depth examination is required regarding the weaknesses and challenges faced by teachers, parents, and students in each character value planting model mentioned in this article. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct studies with more participants, broader research areas, and detailed analyses related to the implementation challenges of character value planting models for young children.

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