



Analysis of the Influence of Character Education Implementation by Sunday school Teachers on Children's Spiritual Intelligence

Naomi Sirait^{1*}, Sanhu Fai Fai Yosua Hasibuan², Kristian Silaban³

Institut Agama Kristen Renatus Pematang Siantar.

***Corresponding Author**
Naomi Sirait

Email:
naomisirait@gmail.com.

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the impact of character education implementation by teachers in Sunday school on the aspect of spiritual intelligence in children at GPI Sidang Wismar Saragih church. The research problem formulation is how the influence of character education implementation by Sunday school teachers on the development of children's spiritual intelligence at GPI Sidang Wismar Saragih church. This study uses a quantitative method by analyzing the influence between the variables under investigation. The research population consists of 35 children participating in Sunday school activities at GPI Sidang Wismar Saragih church. For data collection, the researcher used a closed questionnaire with 27 questions for each research variable, using a Likert scale with 5 response options: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree. Thus, it can be concluded that the implementation of character education by Sunday school teachers (X) has a positive influence on behavior (Y) in the population under study. Furthermore, the influence of Christian Religious Education teachers (X) on the development of spiritual intelligence in children at GPI Sidang Wismar Saragih church (Y) can be explained through a linear equation model $Y = 50.3 + 0.518X$.

Keywords: Character Education, Sunday School, Teachers, Spiritual Intelligence.

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Introduction

Character education has become a primary concern within the education system, not only as a part of the moral development process for the younger generation but also as a foundational pillar in building Indonesia's future. Under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture, character education has been prioritized at all educational levels under its supervision. This emphasis extends to higher education, highlighting the importance of instilling character values in students.

Indonesia requires an adequate quantity and quality of human resources as the main foundation for development. Education plays a crucial role in meeting this need. Through education, individuals can mature, which in turn helps them become exemplary in their daily lives, interact positively within society, and contribute to the nation. The learning process in education is a critical phase. Success in the teaching and learning process is measured by the students' understanding and comprehension of the material taught by educators, as well as the results achieved by the students.

The primary goal of national education is to develop the potential of Sunday school children so that they become individuals who believe in and are devoted to God Almighty, possess good morals, are healthy, knowledgeable, skilled, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens. In the context of these

national education functions and objectives, it is essential to systematically implement education at every level to achieve these goals. This is closely related to shaping the character of Sunday school children so that they can compete, behave ethically, possess good morals, exhibit politeness, and interact positively with society. Therefore, improving the quality of character education for children is of utmost importance.

In the management of the educational process, learning activities are at the core of daily activities. The aim of character education is to produce individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also possess strong character. This aligns with the principles outlined in National Education System Law NO. 20, Article 3 of 2003, which states that the purpose of national education is to develop the potential of children to become individuals who are faithful and devoted to God Almighty, possess noble character, are knowledgeable, skilled, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens. According to the provisions in the Basic Education Law, the goal of national education is to help the younger generation grow into complete individuals, with broad knowledge, morality, faith, good character, social interaction skills, and other relevant attributes.

From an educational law perspective, character development in schools aims to assist the younger generation in holistic self-development, encompassing various aspects of humanity. Given

the awareness of weaknesses in educational outcomes, educators have begun to consider the importance of character education. This approach is integrated into the educational curriculum, implemented similarly to other subjects. Character education for Sunday school children aims to habituate good behavior so that it becomes a habit, making them uncomfortable when not practicing it. For example, the habit of bathing twice a day becomes internalized, causing children to feel uncomfortable if they bathe only once. Therefore, by building good habits into an instinct, children will automatically feel guilty if they do not follow these habits. Field observations reveal that Sunday school teachers tend to focus more on children's physical achievements, neglecting their character development. Consequently, there is often a lack of discipline in teaching, a lack of responsibility towards tasks, and shortcomings in honesty among these teachers. The implementation of character education in the Sunday school environment is expected to influence the spiritual growth of children, helping them build better personalities. Therefore, it is crucial to strengthen noble morals based on religious values, particularly concerning the development of children's spiritual intelligence.

In the context of spiritual intelligence, this approach extends beyond the previously mentioned aspects. Alan E. Nelson states that the essence of spiritual intelligence is understanding and applying the methods of Jesus Christ with His disciples, with the aim of becoming more like Him and achieving true maturity. Spiritual intelligence provides a crucial framework for developing plans and strengthening the faith of Sunday school children according to the approach taught by Jesus to His followers.

Religious and moral-spiritual education aims to shape individuals with good character and wisdom in facing various challenges and finding creative solutions within their surroundings. Therefore, achieving a balance between character and spiritual intelligence is essential, contributing positively to improving morals and guiding Sunday school children towards a good life. Through character education, children will be able to develop their emotional intelligence more effectively.

The implementation of character education has become increasingly important given the drastic decline in children's spiritual aspects today, reflected in their attitudes within the church environment. Many children are absent from worship, and when they are present, they tend to play and make noise, often without bringing a Bible. Based on this understanding, the researcher is interested in conducting a study on the Analysis of the Impact of Character Education Implementation by Sunday School Teachers on the Spiritual Intelligence of Children at the GPI Sidang Wismar Saragih Church. This study aims to examine and analyze the impact of character education implementation by Sunday school teachers on the development of children's spiritual intelligence in the GPI Sidang Wismar Saragih Church environment.

Method

This study employs a quantitative method by applying an influence test among relevant variables. The use of influence tests is one approach to addressing and analyzing identified issues or problems and plays a central role in the context of scientific research. The population in this study consists of all Sunday school children at the GPI Sidang Wismar Saragih Church, totaling 35 children. Given that the population is less than 100 children, this study uses

a population research approach, wherein no sample is used, and all members of the population become respondents. The data collection technique employed is a questionnaire, which has been tested for reliability beforehand.

Result and Discussion

The data analysis results regarding the impact of character education implementation by Sunday school teachers on the spiritual intelligence of Sunday school children at GPI Sidang Wismar Saragih can be presented as follows: Based on the analysis of the sample, it was found that the correlation between the implementation of character education by Sunday school teachers (X) and the spiritual intelligence of Sunday school children (Y) (represented by r_{yx} of 0.278) is positive and significant (see Table 4.5). The determination variance, indicating the strength of the relationship between the implementation of character education by Sunday school teachers (X) and the spiritual intelligence of Sunday school children (Y), is 0.57. This means that the contribution of the implementation of character education by Sunday school teachers (X) in shaping the spiritual intelligence of Sunday school children (Y) reaches 57.0%.

Furthermore, the t-test results on the population show a t-value of 3.795, indicating very high significance at a confidence level of $\alpha < 0.01$. Thus, the impact of character education implementation by Sunday school teachers on the spiritual intelligence of Sunday school children (Y) is also positive in the population. Additionally, the impact of character education implementation (X) on the spiritual intelligence of Sunday school children (Y) in the sample can be explained through the linear regression equation $\hat{Y} = 20.088 + 0.693X$.

The essence of the educational process is learning, which occurs when individuals give meaning to their experiences in daily life. Both pleasant and unpleasant experiences can become part of the learning process to strengthen an individual's character. An intelligent life without good character can lead to imbalance and deviant behavior. Character formation occurs through the development of human values that align with principles of truth, religion, norms, and the noble values of Pancasila. The educational process is closely related to the values and goals intended to be achieved through education. Education is a continuous process essential for the survival of individuals.

There are two different views on education in human life. First, education can be considered a process that occurs naturally, unintentionally, or is not regularly planned using agreed-upon methods within a community. In this view, education becomes an inseparable part of everyday life, learned and regulated by the rules agreed upon in society since the existence of humans. The educational process has a strong connection to the objectives that the education aims to achieve.

Understanding the educational process involves a series of activities aimed at empowering individuals in the following ways:

1. Empowerment Process: This is a process where individuals are empowered to overcome situations that may initially be weak, turning them into strengths by providing insights and skills that enable them to face challenges more effectively.
2. Enlightenment and Conscientization Process: This involves giving individuals a broader understanding, opening their horizons with new knowledge, moving from ignorance to

knowledge, and from unconsciousness to awareness of self-potential and the environment.

3. Behavior Change Process: Education aims to change behavior by introducing ideal values that are expected to regulate individual behavior. Thus, education is not only about imparting knowledge but also about empowering individuals, broadening their perspectives, and changing behavior towards desired values.

Education is a process that plays a role in character building, where poor character can be shaped into better character. The character of a nation is reflected through the character of its individuals. According to Article 3 of the National Education System Law, education plays a crucial role in developing capabilities and shaping the character and civilization of a dignified nation, aiming to intellectually advance the life of the nation comprehensively. Therefore, the goal of education is for Indonesia to progress in all aspects of life.

In the context of education, there are three main components that are dynamically integrated. First, the subject of educational activities aims to develop human life comprehensively. Second, the learning atmosphere and learning activities are important parts of the educational process. According to Thomas H. Groome, the essence of educational activities is a political process that involves the joint participation of educators and learners, intentionally addressing current realities, inheriting the past, and imagining future possibilities that will affect humans and society as a whole (Groome, 2011).

Education is a crucial component in human life that cannot be ignored or abandoned. Various types of education, such as formal, informal, and non-formal, are recognized and applied by society to enhance human knowledge, abilities, talents, and intelligence for the continuity of life in this world. The word "character," which originates from Greek and is used to distinguish one thing from another, as well as to express the unique quality in each individual that sets them apart from others. Character was described as a relatively stable personal trait that forms the basis for behavior that aligns with high-value and norm standards. The relative stability of character indicates that once formed, these characteristics tend to be difficult to change. This is a fundamental strength that has a significant and dominant influence on an individual's or group's behavior in various life domains. Value or norm standards refer to religious principles, scientific knowledge, law, customs, and habits, which are reflected in daily behavior through indicators such as faith and devotion, self-control, discipline, hard work, perseverance, responsibility, honesty, truthfulness, obedience, politeness, adherence to rules, loyalty, team spirit, deliberation, cooperation, tolerance, order, peace, non-violence, frugality, and consistency (Simatupang, Widiastuti, & Imeldawati, 2022).

Character is a dynamic system of an individual's psycho-physical nature that determines their characteristic patterns of behavior and thought. The concept of character does not only refer to personality but also encompasses aspects of personality that are deeply evaluated. Below are views from several experts and educational scholars on character education. Character is a set of values that form the basis for someone's thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors. If a person shows dishonest, cruel, or harsh behavior, it reflects a bad character (van der Merwe, 2015). Conversely, good and honest

behavior reflects a noble character. Experts provide several characteristics of character as follows:

1. Character is an identity and behavior seen by others.
2. Character is the result of values believed by someone.
3. Character is not the same as reputation or how others perceive someone.
4. Character cannot be measured by comparing it with others.
5. Character is absolute.

Character education is a system aimed at instilling character values in children. This system includes knowledge, individual awareness, determination, and the willingness and action to implement these values in their relationship with God Almighty, themselves, others, the environment, and the nation, thereby creating a whole person (McLendon, 2017).

Character can be interpreted as inherent traits, heart, soul, personality, conduct, behavior, personality, nature, disposition, temperament, and character. Meanwhile, having character means having a strong personality, good behavior, noble nature, commendable disposition, and good character. Character refers to a series of attitudes, behaviors, motivations, and skills. The word "character" comes from the Greek word meaning "to mark" and emphasizes the application of goodness values in the form of actions or behavior. Therefore, someone who shows dishonest, cruel, or greedy behavior is considered to have a bad character. Conversely, individuals who act according to moral principles are considered to have noble character (Schat, 2018).

Character education is a systematic effort to instill character values in all members of the school community, encompassing knowledge, awareness or will, and actions to apply these values. The concept of character education can be understood as "the deliberate use of all dimensions of school life to foster optimal character development." In the context of character education in schools, all stakeholders, including educational components such as curriculum, learning processes, assessment, subject management, school management, extracurricular activities, infrastructure, funding, and the work culture of all school members, must be actively involved (Potgieter & van der Walt, 2014).

Additionally, character education can be understood as an effort to ensure that all members of the school community display good character in carrying out their educational tasks. Furthermore, character education involves everything teachers do that has the potential to shape children's character. Teachers play a key role in shaping children's personalities. This includes setting examples in behavior, communication styles, attitudes of tolerance, and other related aspects. Since the beginning of educational history, character education or personality formation, as known in literature, has been considered a very important aspect.

It has become a convention in educational theory that one of the main goals of teaching and moral education in schools is character formation. In 1918, in the United States, a commission on secondary education reform issued an important statement regarding the goals of general education known as the "main principles of education." These goals include: first, health; second, mastery of fundamental processes; third, becoming a useful family

member; fourth, preparation for the world of work; fifth, citizenship; sixth, beneficial use of leisure time; and seventh, development of good character.

From the previous discussion, it can be concluded that character education is a series of efforts designed and implemented systematically to help children understand behavioral values related to their relationship with God Almighty, themselves, others, the environment, and the nation, reflected in their thoughts, attitudes, feelings, words, and actions, based on religious norms, laws, etiquette, culture, and customs. Good character involves proper actions in relation to oneself and others. Aristotle reminds us of things often forgotten in the present day: a moral life involves good autonomous actions such as self-control and moderation, as well as altruistic goodness such as generosity and compassion. These two types of goodness are interconnected and have a significant impact on human life.

Jesus paid great attention to small children, even encouraging people to pay attention to and emulate the attitudes of children as examples of the presence of the Kingdom of God. Jesus once said, "Be perfect as your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:48) (Boice, 2019).

In general, the term character is often associated with temperament, emphasizing the psychological elements related to education and the individual's environmental context since birth. The term character is often considered synonymous with personality. Personality refers to the unique traits or characteristics of a person influenced by their environment, for example. As previously mentioned, the teacher's role is crucial in improving the quality of character education. Therefore, Christian religious education teachers have an important role in the PAK learning process, especially in shaping the character of Sunday school children. Sunday school children must be educated to prepare themselves.

According to Homrighausen in his work, it is mentioned that a PAK teacher has spiritual qualities that surpass those of other teachers (Homrighausen dan Enklaar, 2019), including:

- a. **Spiritual Experience:** Carrying out the duties of a PAK teacher is not just a routine job or a means of earning a living. A teacher must experience conversion, accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, and have strong faith in God.
- b. **Knowledge and Truth of God's Word:** A PAK teacher must have a deep understanding of God's word as the main foundation of teaching. God's word is the center of teaching because it influences the inner and behavioral changes of Sunday school children.
- c. **Christ-like Character:** Character includes a complete personality and determines the value of a person's life. As a spiritual guide, a PAK teacher must exemplify the teachings they impart. The Christ-like character reflected in the daily life of a PAK teacher will help foster the faith of Sunday school children.

Based on the above explanation, it can be concluded that the implementation of character education by PAK teachers is a deliberate effort to help Sunday school children understand and follow God's Word and His purpose in building good character. This approach involves instilling character values in children, including understanding, awareness, determination, and the implementation of these values in relation to God, oneself, others, the environment, and the nation, with the aim of creating

individuals with integrity. Furthermore, it can be concluded that the implementation of character education is a system that instills character values in children, involving knowledge, individual awareness, determination, and actions to apply these values to various aspects of life. Every action and behavior of Sunday school children reflects the implementation of character education conducted by Sunday school teachers, as long as it is done with full awareness. Thus, every word, action, and positive behavior will contribute to the improvement of the character of Sunday school children (Purniasih, 2022).

Spiritual Intelligence

Spiritual intelligence is a very important aspect that must be taken seriously. With spiritual intelligence, Sunday school children can develop attitudes such as honesty, justice, tolerance, and compassion towards others. Someone who has a close relationship with God tends to have a stronger self-reflection. Their thoughts, feelings, words, and actions will become more steadfast, calm, clear, and pure. Therefore, it is important for individuals to build their spiritual intelligence by drawing closer to God. A strong personal relationship with God will help someone maintain the correct perspective of faith when facing life's challenges. Consequently, a person who has a close relationship with God will be more capable of overcoming stress and depression that may arise when facing life's challenges because they believe that God's strength always accompanies them.

Spiritual intelligence, also known as SQ (Spiritual Quotient) in English, is intelligence related to the soul dimension that enables a person to develop themselves comprehensively by applying positive values. SQ helps individuals face life's challenges and find peace in confronting them. The main characteristics of SQ are the ability to use life experiences as a means to apply values and seek meaning in life.

Well-developed spiritual intelligence is marked by an individual's ability to adapt flexibly to the environment, increased levels of awareness, resilience in facing difficulties, and the ability to learn from failure. They are also capable of realizing their life vision and mission, seeing the interconnectedness between various aspects of life, being independent, and ultimately understanding the meaning of their existence.

Spiritual intelligence is a moral capability that enables individuals to comprehensively understand the difference between right and wrong. Spiritual intelligence is the capacity to listen to inner intuition in relation to God Almighty and fellow humans, with the aim of contributing optimally and beneficially. Therefore, spiritual intelligence is the inner ability to give meaning to life, facilitating growth, development, and individual balance (Siburian, Sinaga, 2022).

Spiritual intelligence involves a person's ability to integrate beliefs gained from the Christian community, understanding the Bible, worship practices, and prayer into everyday life. Spiritual intelligence provides a framework for planning spiritual growth based on the teachings and example of Jesus, as well as disciplining His followers.

Spiritual intelligence begins with taking responsibility for the spiritual growth of Sunday school children, helping them take the next steps in their spiritual growth journey. Although children are responsible for their soul's growth, they need support from their

social circle, including peers and parents, to deepen their understanding of beliefs and spiritual practices. While praying, reading the Bible, listening to sermons, serving, and participating in religious activities are important, children's spiritual growth will reach a saturation point without support from a community that cares about their spiritual growth.

Essentially, spiritual intelligence refers to the ability to face and resolve issues of meaning and value, placing human behavior and life in a broader and more valuable context. Spiritual intelligence is rooted in the inner part of the self that connects with wisdom beyond the ego or individual consciousness. This makes a person intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually whole. Spiritual intelligence is a facility that has developed over millions of years, allowing the brain to find and use meaning in solving problems. When well-developed, spiritual intelligence enables a person to find "meaning" in their life, creating an existence that allows for joy, productive use of abilities, and integration with the world around them.

Spiritual intelligence is the ability of a person to draw wisdom from an event, understand God's will from occurring events, and learn lessons from experiences. This includes the ability to learn positive things from situations that may be negative.

True virtue depends on the sincerity of motivation, which genuinely comes from a good heart or spiritual intelligence. A child with strong spirituality can understand the meaning of their existence and how they can be a blessing to others while glorifying God. When designing learning, it is important to consider the individual needs of the child, including their age, social environment, and cultural background. This should be a primary concern for teachers before implementing classroom learning.

Conclusion

After analyzing the issues studied, particularly the influence of Sunday school teachers' character education on the spiritual intelligence of Sunday school children at GPI Sidang Wismar Saragih, we conclude the following:

1. Based on the analysis results, the correlation coefficient (r) is 0.278. Comparing this value with the critical value (r_{table}), it was found that the r_{table} value for a significance level of 0.05 is 0.77. From this result, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between the implementation of character education by Sunday school teachers and the spiritual intelligence of Sunday school children.
2. Based on the t-test coefficient value of 3.795, and comparing it with the t_{table} value for $N = 40$ and a significance level of 0.95% (2.048), the calculated t value is greater than the t_{table} value ($3.795 > 2.048$). Therefore, the alternative hypothesis (H_a) can be accepted.
3. Given the significant relationship between the two variables in this study, namely the implementation of character education by Sunday school teachers and the spiritual intelligence of Sunday school children, it can be concluded that the higher the implementation of character education by Sunday school

teachers (X), the higher the spiritual intelligence of Sunday school children (Y).

Based on the research results presented, although they show satisfactory outcomes, further action is needed in the future. Therefore, several practical and theoretical suggestions are proposed as follows: Prospective Sunday school teachers are advised to gain a deeper understanding of the implementation of character education through this research's findings, so it can be applied more effectively in educational environments. All Sunday school teachers are encouraged to continuously enhance their skills and creativity in the teaching process to improve the spiritual intelligence of the children.

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