


Strengthening Democratic Characters in Young Citizens

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Article history Received May 22, 2021 Revised Dec 15, 2021 Accepted Dec 19, 2021</p> <p>Keywords Strengthening Democratic Young citizens</p>	<p>This study aims to strengthen the democratic character of young citizens in an educational environment. In detail, this study's objectives are to (1) establish a democratic character for young citizens in schools, and (2) strengthen democratic character in young citizens in the classroom. This article is a descriptive study with a qualitative approach investigating the reinforcement of the democratic character of young citizens. The data were gathered using in-depth interview techniques. The validity tests consisted of three activities, namely: 1) data reduction, 2) data presentation, and 3) drawing conclusions or verification. The research results suggest that the strengthening of democratic character for young citizens has been provided through school and classroom activities. Schools play a role in strengthening students' democratic character through activities such as student council and extracurricular activities that facilitate students to develop their democratic character. Simultaneously, the teacher reinforces students' democratic character in class while teaching. The reinforcement of democratic character is carried out so that students know that they have equal rights as students in the classroom and school.</p> <p>This is an open access article under the CC-BY license.</p> 

I. Introduction

The massive acceleration of technology and science carries changes that force humans to adapt to existing situations. Changes that are increasingly occurring in citizens' lives have resulted in an eroded sense of humanity and life values that every citizen should have. Human social life problems are inseparable from their behavior. Any action that is not in accordance with life order will result in division. Consequently, citizens must know their rights and obligations so that equality will be created between individuals. This attitude is a democratic character that should be possessed by citizens. Character is a characteristic of a person that distinguishes them from other individuals. Bohlin (2005) states that character is that distinctive mark of the person or a combination of these distinguishing qualities that make us who we are. Character is more profound than appearance and reputation as it constitutes more than our personality or more profound. It emphasizes that everyone has different characters that are unlikely to be the same. Character education in Indonesia must be instilled, especially for young citizens.

Character is manifested through the form of behavior shown in the social environment. One's character is different from others' characters. Na'im

(2012) states that a person with character always tries to improve himself as an individual, as part of the social system, as a religious creature, and in interacting with nature. It is known that every individual must have mistakes and cannot be perfect. Samsuri (2021) states that Citizenship Education has a dimension that cannot be separated from character building and citizen morality. Character is the personality of an individual, that affects their way to behave, act, and position themselves in a social environment to become a useful and superior citizen.

The government also supports the implementation of character education as it is manifested in Law Number 20 the Year 2003 concerning the National Education System Article 3 stating that the National education function is to develop capabilities and shape the character and civilization of a nation with dignity in order to educate the life of the nation, aiming at developing the students' potential to become human beings who believe in and fear God Almighty, have a noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens. Therefore, character education must be implemented from an early age so that citizens become excellent individuals who live their lives by abiding by the rules. Also,

one of the goals of national education is to form young citizens with integrity and democracy.

The education unit in Indonesia has developed and implemented character-building values, which are now consisted of 18 values. Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan (2017) has formulated 18 values in the development of cultural education and national character. These characters include religious values, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democracy, curiosity, national spirit, love for the country, respect for achievement, friendly or communicative, love for peace, love to read, care for the environment, care for the social, and responsible. Among these 18-character values were developed, one of which was the democratic character value. The democratic character represents a way of thinking, behaving, and acting through assessing his and others' rights and obligations (Mustari, 2014). Strengthening the democratic character is one way to increase humanity's sense, especially for young citizens.

Democracy is essential in education because democracy recognizes the essence of glory to all people. Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, (2017) reveals that democratic character is a way of behaving and acting that values oneself and others' rights and obligations. Through a democratic character, individuals can equalize fellow citizens' rights and obligations with respect, without exception, and humiliation for one another. Strengthening the democratic character needs to be implemented in every environment, especially schools, communities, and families where young citizens live in society. Young citizens are expected to become the nation's next generation so that the democratic character will shape future generations to be even wiser.

Schools are one of the institutions that shape students' democratic character. Schools teach students to be democratic, by facilitating them to choose class leaders, express opinions, respect the opinions of friends when carrying out group assignments and learn to understand their rights and obligations as a student. Democratic character is an attitude that encourages someone to act by the values of democracy.

Recently, the democratic character is one of the characteristics needed for young citizens. Laksono (2017) states that fostering a democratic character is carried out through formal and non-formal education. The great potential of non-formal education in fostering a democratic character is seen from three points of view, namely the improvement and reinforcement of the individual's quality, where everyone has a democratic character and quality. Prasetyo & Marzuki (2016) reveal that fostering students' democratic attitudes is also manifested through the teacher's efforts by positioning students as subjects, not as

objects of learning. Besides, the students are also provided with group work that requires them to conduct deliberations to instill democratic character in schools. The teachers only act as a guide so that deliberation is given to the students completely.

This study investigates the strengthening of democratic character in the school and classroom environment. The purpose of this study is to (1) build a democratic character for young citizens in schools, and (2) strengthen democratic character among young citizens in class.

II. Method

This research used a descriptive qualitative approach. Descriptive qualitative research describes the state of the object under study. It aims to provide descriptive information or a description of a condition in clear detail (Neuman, 2013). The data were collected using structured interviews. The data from the interviews were used as primary data, while the data from the literature study was secondary data.

This research was conducted at MTsN 2 Palembang. The research subject's determination was carried out in a purposive manner, adjusted to the study's objectives (Sugiyono, 2014). Research subjects were determined based on the person who knows best about the information required in the study. Therefore, the subjects deemed appropriate were the Pancasila and Citizenship Education Subject Teachers with the initials NA. Since Pancasila, and Citizenship Education are closely related to strengthening character education so that the teachers in this course are considered to have the information needed in this article research. The the interview was used to collect the data. Moleong, (2004) states that interviews are conversations with a specific purpose. The conversation was carried out by two parties, namely the interviewer who asked the question and the interviewee who answered the question. The gathered data's validity was tested, through three stages of 1) data reduction, 2) data presentation, and 3) drawing conclusions or verification.

III. Results and Discussion

Schools become institutions that teach education and shape students to have good character (Mahmoudi et al., 2018). Schools teach students various things, from science to how to behave in the environment. School culture is a system of general norms that are applicable, meaningful, and valuable among school members, including students, teachers, and other staff. School culture's primary characteristics consist of internalizing existing values, habituating students to adhere to school rules, and establish-

ing the relationship between teacher, students, and all components in the school.

The interviews conducted with the participants of this study who are the Teachers of Pancasila and Citizenship Education at MTsN 2 Palembang indicate that the school implements character, knowledge, skills, and spiritual education in equal portions. The participant also said that the reinforcement of the democratic character of the MTsN 2 Palembang school is emphasized through activities that rise student's sense of democracy, such as the election of the student council president, as well as extracurricular activities that prioritize collaboration in groups, and deliberation in carrying out certain activities. Students are allowed to express their opinions through discussions on extracurricular work programs. Students deliberate and exchange opinions and convey ideas that match their activities. Besides, schools provide a forum for students to form democratic characters where they can express their opinions and exchange ideas. Students at MTsN 2 Palembang can also determine their rights and obligations as students by following the established regulations.

The participant explained that students' character reinforcement has also been carried out in class during the teaching process. According to the participant, strengthening the character of democracy is essential to realize equal rights and obligations between students. The right to learn and the right to get the attention of the teacher. The participant explained that cooperation with parents of students is substantially needed in strengthening the character of democracy because teachers and parents are the foundation in realizing students' character education. As a Pancasila and Citizenship Education Teacher at MTsN 2 Palembang, the participant always explains students' rights and obligations at the beginning of the lesson. Besides, the participant also helps strengthen the students' character of democracy in everyday life. The teachers support, facilitate, and supervise the democratic character reinforcement, by allowing students to deliberate in group discussion and asking students to express their opinions to other friends in front of the class so that they are confident to speak up and respect the opinions of other friends. The Pancasila and Citizenship Education teachers at MTsN 2 Palembang assess the students, to see if the students have been able to apply and see their rights and obligations without coercion from teachers or friends. Based on the information provided by the Pancasila and Citizenship Education teacher at MTsN 2 Palembang, the strengthening of the democratic character in young citizens in a classroom climate has been carried out, properly. Students, as young citizens, have attained the experience and knowledge of the importance of a democratic character. The Pancasila and Citizenship Education Subject

Teacher at MTsN 2 Palembang strengthen students' democratic character by providing opportunities for students to have the courage to speak up.

The Ministry of Education and Culture in 2016 formed the Movement for Strengthening Character Education (PPK), which is a continuation program of the National Character Education Movement in 2010. This program is also an integral part of 8 Nawacita (Indonesia elected president's vision and mission), including the National Character Revolution and the Mental Revolution Movement in education. It encourages all stakeholders to make a paradigm shift in managing the changing schools (Presidential Decree No. 87/2017). Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan (2017) reveals 18 values in the development of cultural education and national character. These characteristics include religious, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democracy, curiosity, national spirit, love for the country, respect for achievement, friendly or communicative, peace-loving, fondness of reading, care for the environment, caring social, and responsibility. Character is an action to achieve something from a person's attitude, including intellectual, social, and emotional aspects, to provide good character values in him so that the character is related to these aspects (Agboola & Tsai, 2012).

Based on 18 values of strengthening character education, one of the character values, namely democracy, is currently highly needed in a young citizen's life. Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan (2017) explains that character values are instilled and developed in schools in Indonesia, one of which is a democratic character. A democratic character is a character that has a way of thinking, behaving, and acting that values the rights and obligations of himself and others.

Based on research Zyngier (2012), the teacher said the need to educate students by instilling democratic values including empathy, honesty, respect, responsibility, tolerance, accepting differences, regardless of their degree. Therefore, the teacher must understand the concept of democracy and discuss it with students, properly. This is reinforced by (Lickona, 2013), explaining that respect and responsibility are part of democratic values that can build good character, are able to maintain relationships between individuals, foster democratic attitudes, and help the individual to behave reasonably. In shaping citizens who understand their rights and obligations, habituation should begin from an early age. Young citizens who have a democratic character are expected to have high integrity and understand that not only do they have rights and authority, but other people equally have the same rights and obligations, as well as act and behave like democratic citizens.

According to Murdiono (2018), young citizens can be referred to as the younger generation. The younger generation generally refers to the human who lives in a certain period, referring to the categorization according to human life development. Zhang (2015) mentions a term of republican citizenship, involving several aspects such as moral regulation, active self-discipline, individual freedom and expression, and personal interests as the political fundamentals of the republic's state in shaping its citizens. Furthermore, Banks (2017) defines participating citizens as individuals who actively participate in civic affairs and social life at the local, state, and national levels. Citizens have the right and obligation to participate in every activity that is held in social life.

According to Monks & Knoers (2014), young citizens, also referred to as adolescence that can be divided into three phases. The first phase is early adolescence (ages 12 to 15 years). Second, the middle adolescent phase (ages 15 years to 18 years). Third, the late adolescence phase (ages 15 to 18 years). In this study, students of MTsN 2 Palembang are classified as young citizens in the early adolescent phase, namely 12 years to 15 years of age. This phase is the proper period for strengthening democratic character education for young citizens. The democratic character will stick to them and help them become wise young citizens. Furthermore, Kennelly (2011) reveals that the ideal young citizen is a citizen involved in community activities to fulfill and improve one's abilities. Based on Kennelly's opinion, it can be concluded that ideally, young citizens are good citizens. Pancasila and Citizenship Education is one of the subjects that shape young citizens to become good citizens. Murdiono (2018) reveals that the fundamental purpose of Citizenship Education is to shape useful citizens who are capable and caring. Citizens who can act and are capable can be assumed to have a democratic character. Citizenship education is an instrument of character education and values education in shaping certain desired behaviors (B.-Y. Sim & Low, 2012).

Citizenship education seeks to create civic students with social duties in a democratic manner through corresponding values. Those values include respect for others' beliefs and opinions, the ability to cooperate with fellow citizens, be committed to the rights of others, and upheld a sense of justice. Second, democratic citizens must also can think critically and independently to form their own opinions. Third, democratic citizens must have factual knowledge about the political system, the constitution, and law, including rights and obligations, as well as working procedures in social life in general (Sundström & Fernández, 2013).

In the learning process, the teacher provides opportunities for students to carry out deliberations when learning with a group system. Teachers of Pancasila and Citizenship Education Subjects at MTsN 2 Palembang, allow students to have deliberation to strengthen their democratic character. Students are required to know their rights and obligations during deliberation. The Pancasila and Citizenship Education Subject Teacher at MTsN 2 Palembang explained that the process helps students to become more tolerant of their peers and respect each other. As it is emphasized by Davies & Chong (2016) that the current duty of Citizenship Education is to encourage young citizens to understand and develop their skills in organizing democracy. Patrick & Vontz (2001) reveal four components of Citizenship Education, namely: 1) knowledge of citizenship and governance in democracy (knowledge of citizenship); 2) democratic citizenship cognitive skills (cognitive citizenship skills); 3) democratic citizenship participation skills (participatory citizenship skills); 4) the virtues and disposition of democratic citizenship (disposition of citizenship) of his country. Based on the civic education component, the democratic character cannot be separated from life as a citizen. Citizenship as a practice emphasizes young people to learn to become citizens and interact through participation in social and cultural practices in everyday life. Therefore, through the school environment, young citizens can reflect on themselves (Bennett et al., 2009). A school environment is a place for young citizens to interact with their social environment.

One of the social environments that form young citizens who have democratic characters is the school and classroom. According to the research result, in the school environment, students are taught to be directly involved in democratic practices, such as the student council president's election. The school climate as a democratic learning environment is built through the contribution of a democratic ethos in schools. Meanwhile, classroom climate is a general concept that focuses on cooperation in teaching and learning activities, such as the fairness of assessment, and social support (Schulz et al., 2010). According to Hargreaves (2014) the dimensions of the social culture's importance are related to the teachers' ability to control student behavior. Changes influence these conditions for developing good relationship skills in student expectations at school. The relationship between teachers and students can be categorized as unsafe with no presence of mutual trust.

The formation of democratic character for young citizens and school culture is also strengthened through the classroom climate. The classroom climate is essentially the result of the applicable regulations in schools, which contain values, beliefs, norms, ideologies, and even traditions that are

formed in such a way as to achieve common goals (Tarmidi & Wulandari, 2005). The class forms a learning atmosphere that teaches students to be democratic, while the teacher provides facilities and a forum supporting students to be democratic. This becomes important, considering that the classroom climate is the most frequent environment for students to spend their time.

The strengthening of the democratic character of young citizens is formed through the social environment, such as the school and class environment. Teachers also play an essential role in strengthening the character of young citizens. Students will become more aware of the democratic attitude through the treatment and learning provided by the teacher in the classroom so that students will feel and experience equal opportunity, rights, and obligations between themselves and their friends”

IV. Conclusion

Based on the research results, the strengthening of democratic character for young citizens is provided through activities in school and the classroom. MTsN 2 Palembang schools apply character education, knowledge, skills, and spirituality and in the same portion. Schools also play a role in strengthening students' democratic character through activities such as student council and extracurricular activities where students can develop their democratic character. Also, teachers' role is very much needed in strengthening democratic character, especially the Teachers of Pancasila and Citizenship Education Subjects since they are the pioneers in strengthening democratic character for students. Teachers of Pancasila and Citizenship Education Subjects provide facilities for students to develop their democratic character. Students can recognize their rights and obligations through learning and the teacher's treatment. The teacher provides strengthening of democratic character to students in class while teaching, to help students recognize their equal rights and obligations. Therefore, schools and teachers' participation are inseparable in strengthening the democratic character of students or those categorized as young citizens.

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