Differences on Elementary Student Character: Does Religious Based Curriculum Matter?

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze differences in the superior character between students of Islamic schools and of public schools. Those characters are emotional intelligence, empathy and discipline at school. In this study we measured procrastination as one indicator of lack in discipline. This study uses quantitative research methods. Participants of this research are students of integrated Islamic schools and public schools. The number of respondents used in this study is 205 elementary students, obtained by using purposive sampling technique. Data collections techniques used empathy scale (Caruso & Mayer,1998), the scale of academic procrastination (McCloskey, 2012) and emotional intelligence scale (Schutte, et.al., 1998). The results show that there are significant differences between integrated Islamic schools and public school's students in all characteristics. Islamic based school's students have higher point of empathy and emotional intelligence than public school students, and Islamic based school students has a lower point than public school students on procrastinations.

Keywords: academic procrastination, emotional intelligence, empathy

Introduction

Education plays a big role in children's development. The way they are educated and guided will affect their personality and behavior in the future. There are number of cases these days in Indonesia that showed school- age children being rebellious and behaving in negative manners. One example of the lack of manners can be found in the case of a fight between a couple of students which results in the loss off people's lives and other casualties (Garmabrata, 2018). Other than emotional problems, some cases were related to school teenagers who showed no respect and low empathy to teachers. As reported on the news, an elementary student hit his teacher because he didn't like being reprimanded for using his cellphone during the class (Akbar, 2018). Another case showed that students threw paper balls and accidentally hit their teacher during the class (Makki, 2018). Many similar cases happen to a point where teachers become the victim of student's aggression (Akbar, 2018). One of the aims of learning process in school is to control and help the students manage their emotion for a better social interaction. School should be one of the helping tools for children to develop their character so they can achieve their best self. Such cases show that for some students the purpose of building character excellence through education is not achieved.

Elementary school is the beginning of education for children old enough to go through an education process according to the school curriculum. Formal early education in Indonesia offers different alternatives. Some schools follow the public school's guidelines, many other develop religious based curriculum by accommodating the national curriculum required by the government. Schools in

general fall into two different categories, namely public school and private school. Public elementary school is managed by the government whereas private elementary school is owned by some private party. Integrated Islamic School, usually called in Indonesian as Sekolah Islam Terpadu (SIT), is currently one of the educational institutions which integrate religious and national curriculum, organized as non-government institution and has received wide acceptance from the Indonesian Muslim community. There is an increasing numbers and enthusiasm of parents who enrolled their children into integrated Islamic school, start from the lowest level of kindergarten, elementary school, junior high school, and even senior high school. Until now, there are over four thousands of Integrated Islamic schools assembled under Jaringan Sekolah Islam Terpadu (JSIT- The Integrated Islamic School Network). This number exclude private Islamic schools outside JSIT (Jamil, 2017).

Integrated Islamic elementary school (SDIT) has different curriculum from public elementary school (SDN), especially on the quantity and quality of religious (Islamic) subjects. Integrated Islamic elementary school pay special attention and add more hours to religious subjects. It gives not only theoretical lessons on religious classes, but also practical lessons and behavioral objectives that need to be achieved. This is one of the excellence qualities of integrated Islamic elementary school when compared to elementary public school. But of course, with superior quality of education comes a great quantity of price. Still, Integrated Islamic School is a breath of fresh air for parents who have the view that religious-based education is a necessity. Considering the current pattern of adolescent relations with their social environment, parents are willing to spend higher costs in order to get the best education for their children.

Under the public elementary school's curriculum there are also some characters to be developed in every student. Religious education, moral values, and ethics in society are taught in school through religious subjects, civic education, and social sciences. In Indonesian Curriculum of 2013, which has themes (thematic) forms of teaching modules, those values are included in each sub-chapter. This religious matters and ethics in society are important to be taught in schools to give the students important lessons to help them dealing with life challenges in appropriate ways. A research conducted by Nickerson (2018) has shown that a conducive learning conditions can be formed by schools to teach self-control, responsibility, to solve problems and to learn to understand others. Thus it becomes interesting to see if such characters do grow within the students. At the same time, it triggers our curiosity whether schools with two different systems shows different effects on some elements of character excellence, namely emotional intelligence, empathy and discipline relevant to elementary school students.

Emotional Intelligence

Goleman (1996) defined emotional intelligence as someone's ability to motivate themselves, withstand frustration, control impulses, and to not exaggerate their feelings of pleasure. It's basically the ability to control mood and burden in order to maintain low level of stress. Patton (1997) stated that emotional intelligence is simply the ability to use emotions effectively to reach goals, build productive relationship, and achieve success. Among students, high emotional intelligence is proven to be able to improve learning achievement (Nasution, 2018).

Furthermore, emotional intelligence can also be defined as one's capability to think effectively and use their emotion to help understand other people actions (Mayer and Salovey, 2008). Kant (2018) explained, when someone possessed a good amount of emotional intelligence, that person will show more skills on various aspects of life. Those skills will be quite useful to help control their excessive impulse and support their social life.

Furthermore, Shapiro (2001) said that emotional intelligence is a compilation of mental function which involved the ability to monitor emotional or feeling's intensity, both on yourself or others. Individual who has high emotional intelligence believes on their self, shows enthusiasm, also clever in sorting and using information which leads to great decision-making process. This has been proven by Lopes, Kadis, Grewal, Gall and Salovey (2006) study which showed that someone with high emotional intelligence will exhibit better career achievements and in general. It has also been strengthened by Kim, Yoo, Lee, & Kim (2012) research, emotional intelligence can help increase one's performance and motivate their leadership skills.

Academic Procrastination

Etymologically, the term 'procrastination' comes from Latin procrastination with pro as the prefix word means 'moving forward' and the word crastinus means 'tomorrow' (Ferarri, Johnson, & McCown, 1995) which makes the literal translation of procrastination as an act of delaying things until tomorrow or another day (DeSimone, on Ferarri, Johnson & McCown, 1995). It is a form of mechanism to overcome anxiety on how one's going to start or finish a task and make decision (Fiore, 1989). Burka and Yuen (2008) has different opinion as they said that procrastination is an act of delaying things which becomes a habit or behavioral pattern that will always show up when someone has to deal with task and it all based on irrational beliefs of tasks.

Furthermore, Ferarri, Johnson, and McCown (1995) defined academic procrastination as an act of delaying formal task related to academic field, such as coursework or school homework. On the other hand, non- academic procrastination is an act of delaying non-formal task or some daily tasks like household duties, social duty, office work, etc. In a study conducted by Handayani and Suharman (2012), procrastination is known to increase stressed level that leads to work ineffectiveness and causing nervous feelings and depression.

Emphaty

Einfuhlung is the original term for empathy which came from German. Titchener (2014) defined empathy as a person tendency to place him/herself on someone else's situation or what we called 'put our self on other's shoes'. In the present, empathy is known as the ability to understand other people perspective, and show some affection or feel what others feel as if we are in that person's situation. Sometimes even understand the communication process that happened around them. (Davis 2018). Earlier research found that every child has different empathy and altruism capacity, depends on their parents. It's because empathy also passed on through the parents or the caretaker. Therefore, it can be said that teenager with high sense of empathy will exhibit rapid development on their cognitive, emotion, and behavioral aspects which shows in how they respond to others in empathic and altruist manner since early age (Miller & de Haar, 1997)

Futhermore research shows that in social understanding there is an influence of empathy and its related characteristics (Schonert-reichl, 1999; Schultz, Selman, &Larusso, 2003), those influence serves basics on positive social relationships (Schonert-reichl, 1993) and also on academic achievement (Caprara, Barbanelli, pastorelli, Bandura, & Zimbardo, 2000; Wentzel, 1993). Thus, we could say that empathy is an important aspect of human development for social functions.

School

Schools, based on the entitlement and the management, can be divided into two categories, public schools and private schools.

a. Public school is held and managed by the government, starting from pre-school, elementary school, junior high school, and senior high school.
b. Private school is owned and run by non-government or private party in the form of educational institution or foundation. Integrated Islamic school is the type of private school that mainly focus on academic and on religiousness or religious-based education.

Hypotheses

There are significant differences of emotional intelligence, empathy and academic procrastination of elementary students based on school categories.

Method

The population of this study are elementary students in Bekasi Timur district. Purposive sampling was used in this study. The researchers choose 3 schools that have similarity in location and popularity around the selected region, namely SDIT (Integrated Islamic Elementary School) and SDN (Public Elementary School), all have level A accreditation rate with middle to upper social economic status. Final total participants are 205 students (5th and 6th grade), including 95 students of SDIT (Integrated Islamic Elementary School) and 110 SDN (Public Elementary School) students. All instruments used in this study are translated into Bahasa Indonesia from its original language.

Measures
Empathy

The six negatively worded items were first reverse-scored and then a total empathy scale was computed by adding all 30 items, followed and computing the mean (in order to compare responses across various sub-scales). Internal consistency for all scores was computed using coefficient alpha and resulting 7 items has a low discrimination point (<0,3). The alpha reliability for the total 23-item scale has high internal consistency, the alpha score was 0,917. It is a six-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

Emotional Intelligence

33-item scale of empathy (Schutte, et.al, 1998) was examined and only 30-items which has a high internal consistency (alpha coefficient higher than 0,3) can included in the study. It is a six-point

Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The Cronbach alpha for this self-ratings scale was 0,957 which indicates high internal consistency.

Academic Procrastination

Scale of academic procrastination (McCloskey, 2012) consisting of 25-items, each of which followed by 6-point response scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 6 (Strongly agree). Internal

consistency for all scores was computed using coefficient alpha and resulting 6 items has a low discrimination point (<0,3). The alpha reliability for total 19 item scale was 0,868 which indicates high internal consistency.

Discussion

The test of homogeneity showed on homogenous variances on emotional intelligence (p<0,01) and empathy (p<0,01) data, while academic procrastination showed homogenous variance (p>0,05). This matter is considered and deemed not to be disputed as long as the total samples on each group are equivalent, because ANOVA has robustness to heterogeneity of data (Salkind, 2010 & Blanca, 2018). Result from test of homogeneity can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Test of Homogeneity of Variances

	Levene Statistic	**df1**	**df2**	**Sig.**
Empathy	18.322	1	203	.000
Emotio Intl	31.325	1	203	.000
Procrastinate	.039	1	203	.844

The result from the analysis of one way Anova on Table 2 shows that there are significant differences on all characteristic of students between Islamic elementary integrated school student and public school student. There is significant differences on emotional intelligence (F=12,667 (p<0,01)), on empathy (F=21,36 (p<0,01)) and also significant differences on academic procrastinations (F=9,275 (p<0,01)). It means that hypothesis 1 is accepted.

Table 2. Hypotheses Test Results

IV	DV	SS	Df	F	Sig.
School Type	Emotio Intl.	4441,671	1	12,667	0,000**
	Empathy	14635,229	1	21,36	0,000**
	Academic Procrast	2010,911	1	9,275	0,000**

** Strongly significant

Data shows that students of the Integrated Islamic School (SDIT) show higher mean of empathy with mean =106,44 than students of Public Schools (SDN) with mean = 97.12 Also, the mean of the emotional intelligenc of SDIT students (M=143,61) was higher than SDN students (M=126,18).

Academic procrastination on students of SDIT it was lower (M=57,31) than SDN students (M=63,59). Information about this data, are shown on table 3.

Based on the data analysis, it shows that there are highly significant differences between students of SDIT and SDN on three important indicator of characters, namely emotional intelligence, empathy and discipline. SDIT students show higher empathy and emotional intelligence. Also, with discipline, they show lower procrastination which imply more eagerness to learn and readiness to finish tasks on the right time.

Table 3. Differences of The Integrated Elementary Islamic School Students and Public-School Elementary Students

Independent Variable	SDIT (N=97)		SDN (N=108)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Empathy	106,44	12,13	97,12	23,09
Emotional Intelligence	143,61	15,41	126,18	33
Academic Procrastination	57,31	14,79	63,59	14,65

The study results indicate that religious education taught during school-age could bring positive effects on the students' character development. They also give proofs that children character can be developed. Academic curriculum on public elementary school and integrated Islamic elementary school basically has similarity because it follows standards set by the government. However, Integrated Islamic Elementary School seems to have tighter curriculum, since it gives more religious education on both theoretical and practical level (JSIT, 2016). This is in line with the findings of Ismail and Rahman study (2012) that found that children spirituality and the role of religion and faith are the predictors of adolescents' behavior.

Chart 1. Chart of the Differences From the Students
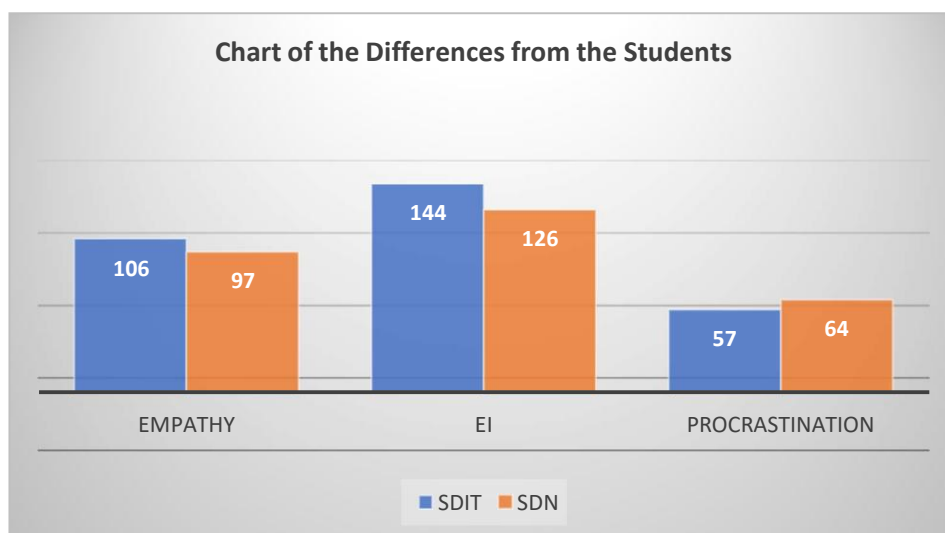
SDIT provide many more activities for their elementary students, when compared with SDN (public schools). It allowed teachers to, intensely and closely, help build student's character through formal and non-formal activities, such as through soft-skill curricula. More (in amount) and richer activities also mean longer school hours than public school. Within such arrangements, teachers can become the role models for the students. The intensity of teacher and student interaction (in terms of time and variety of activities) in school allows for learning processes that are more than just theories, but also learning about real conducts through the teachers' behavior in school.

In the discussion on whether to provide religious education early in formal institutions, religious schools becomes a benchmark for educating good characters among the students. Although it is not yet clear regarding the processes in schools that give the effect on the good characters, surrounding students with moral excellence is a positive addition to academic learning. Religion plays a big role towards shaping individual behavioral patterns, and can be seen from their responses to internal or external stimulus. The stimulus from the environment are not always beneficial for their growth as children, according to social learning theory. Later on this theory added the behavioral and cognitive elements of the learning processes. Behavioral learning, as Bandura explained, suggests that the environment can cause someone to show some particular behaviors. Cognitive learning, in addition, means psychological factors also have a role in affecting someone's behavior. Humans can imitate behavior, but he/she also has the ability to choose and sort which behavior he/she wants to learn. This ability to choose and sort is called cognitive element of learning (Bandura 1963). "High-empathy" children may exhibit cognitive, emotional, and behavioral precocity in empathic and altruistic responding, and begin expressing these capacities early in life (Miller & de Haar, 1997). Empathy and its related characteristics play a key role in social understanding (Schonert-reichl, 1999; Schultz, Selman, & Larusso, (2003).

Conclusion

This study has shown the differences of three character indicators between SDIT and SDN students. The differences were strongly significant on empathy, emotional intelligence and also on academic procrastination. SDIT students show higher empathy and emotional intelligence, and lower academic procrastination. The study results proved that attending religious schools is something that Muslim families should see in more positive lenses. Contrary to the negative opinions about attending Islamic schools which might breed narrow mindedness and thus radicalization in religion, the religious emphasis and character education at SDIT might have strengthened the positive character of the students. Nonetheless, it is not yet clear which processes and how the characters strengthening take place. This should invite further studies, using different approaches, from qualitative tradition in one hand, to explore the experiences of attending and teaching in integrated religious schools. On the other hand, an experimentation need to be done to confirm some approaches that the schools use which might be effective for characters strengthening. Yet one plus point from the current study can be noted, that it is commendable to build religious curriculum, however more hours might be needed when such education must cover both the conceptual and practical elements of the religion of Islam.

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