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Academia Open



By Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo

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Parenting Strategies for Building Responsible Character in Orphans

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Abstract

General Background: Character education is crucial in shaping children's personalities, with responsibility being a core value for social and personal development. This is particularly significant for orphans, who often face emotional vulnerabilities due to parental loss and require structured guidance in institutional care settings. **Specific Background:** The Annur Orphanage in Medan implements various parenting strategies aimed at fostering responsibility among its residents. However, previous studies on orphanage-based character formation have been limited, often lacking focus on specific traits like responsibility. **Knowledge Gap:** Few studies examine in detail the systematic parenting strategies within orphanages, especially in Annur Orphanage, and their role in cultivating responsibility in children. **Aims:** This study aims to explore and analyze the parenting strategies employed at Annur Orphanage to instill a sense of responsibility in orphans. **Results:** Using a descriptive qualitative approach, findings reveal that caregivers apply habituation, exemplary modeling, and task assignments—integrated with religious and moral values—supported by structured routines and compassionate engagement. These methods have proven effective in building independence, discipline, and social responsibility, despite challenges like limited resources and varied child backgrounds. **Novelty:** This research provides a focused, in-depth analysis of responsibility-oriented parenting strategies in an orphanage context, offering practical implications for similar institutions. **Implications:** The results can inform policy and practice in child welfare organizations, highlighting the importance of consistent, value-based, and humanistic approaches to developing responsible character in vulnerable children.

Highlights:

- Effective use of habituation, example, and task assignment.
- Integration of religious and moral values in daily routines.
- Humanistic approach despite resource limitations.

Keywords: Parenting Strategies, Responsible Character, Orphans, Annur Orphanage, Character Education

Academia Open

Vol 10 No 2 (2025): December

DOI: 10.21070/acopen.10.2025.11967 . Article type: (Education)

Published date: 2025-08-14 00:00:00

Introduction

Character education is an important foundation in the formation of children's personalities. One of the characters that is needed in social life is responsibility.[1] This character reflects the individual's ability to understand and carry out his duties and obligations with awareness and sincerity.[2] Children who have a responsible character tend to be more independent, trustworthy, and able to adapt to various life situations. For children living in an orphanage, character building is a challenge in itself. They generally experience the loss of a parent and grow up in a different setting than children in general. Therefore, the role of caregivers in orphanages becomes crucial in shaping their personality and character, including the character of responsibility. Orphans living in orphanages are a group with special needs, not only in terms of meeting physical needs, but also in psychological aspects and character formation. One of the important characters that needs to be formed early is responsibility.[3] The character of responsibility is the basis for children to face social life and carry out the role of an independent and trustworthy individual. However, in reality, the formation of this character is often not the main focus in nurturing in many orphanages, including the Annur Orphanage in Medan. Many caregivers in orphanages place more emphasis on meeting the child's basic needs such as meals, shelter, and formal education, while aspects of character building are often overlooked or done in an unstructured manner.[4]

Furthermore, there are very few studies that specifically explore the parenting strategies applied by caregivers in orphanages, especially in the Annur Orphanage in Medan, in instilling the character of responsibility to their foster children. In fact, each orphanage has different approaches, challenges, and cultures in the parenting process. Therefore, this research is important to be conducted to provide a deeper understanding and make a practical contribution to the development of orphan care patterns in orphanages.[5] The Annur Medan Orphanage is one of the social institutions that accommodates and fosters orphans. In carrying out its duties, this orphanage develops various parenting strategies to support the overall growth and development of children. One of their main focuses is to instill the value of responsibility in children from an early age through daily activities and social interactions. On the other hand, orphans have a vulnerable emotional background due to the loss of a parent, so they need a more appropriate and attentive parenting approach in order to develop optimally, especially in forming an attitude of responsibility towards themselves and the surrounding environment.[6] Therefore, the main problem in the character of responsibility for orphans is the low awareness and understanding of children towards personal, social, and moral responsibility, which is exacerbated by the limitations of parenting styles and the conditions of the orphanage environment that have not fully supported optimal character formation.[7] The parenting strategies implemented in orphanages must be able to respond to the emotional, social, and spiritual needs of children. The approach used is not enough to provide supervision and fulfillment of physical needs, but must also include the cultivation of moral values and character development in an ongoing manner. Caregivers act as surrogate parents who not only cared for, but also educated and guided. [8]

Preliminary Research entitled "Strategies for Forming Responsible Character in Foster Children in Al Amin Orphanage, Munggusoyi Village, Benjeng District, Gresik Regency". The results of this study state that the Al Amin orphanage has a parenting and care strategy, as well as a guidance strategy in forming the character of responsibility. The parenting and care strategy is in the form of making the bed every morning, and washing the dishes after eating.[9] Then the guidance strategy is in the form of studying earnestly, the culture of praying 5 times, caring for the environment, and connecting with the surrounding community in the Al Amin Benjeng Gresik orphanage. From the two care, parenting and guidance strategies, the formation of the character of responsibility here itself has included personal responsibility, moral responsibility, and also social responsibility. Furthermore, research "Leadership Management in the Development of Character of Responsibility in the Social Welfare Institution of Children of the Sulaiman Dahlan Ponogoro Orphanage" the results of this study state that planning by making an Orphanage Activity Plan (RKP) every year, forms a musyrif/musyriefah who serves as a caregiver.[10] Organizing by implementing a system of Coordination, Integration and Synchronization, forming a management organization in the orphanage, and giving more responsibility to the senior level. The implementation of the program by implementing planning that is in line with the vision, mission and goals through entrepreneurial activities of Self-

Sufficiency, tea pots, and religious chicken farming, the organization of the Muhammadiyah Student Association (IPM).[11]

This research has similarities with a number of previous studies that also highlight the importance of parenting strategies in shaping children's character, especially in the orphanage environment, where the methodological approach used and focus on character values such as responsibility are the common thread that connects various previous studies, both in local and global contexts. However, this study still has its own uniqueness because it specifically examines parenting strategies in the formation of character responsibility in orphans in the Annur Orphanage Medan, which has not been studied in depth in previous research, so that it is expected to make a new contribution to the development of science, especially in the field of character education and childcare in social institutions.

Although there is research on parenting and character building, most of the research focus is still on parenting patterns in the core family environment, such as biological parents at home.[12] In fact, orphans living in orphanages do not have the same upbringing as children who live with their biological parents. In addition, research that discusses the formation of children's character in orphanages is generally general, without focusing on one specific character value, such as responsibility. In fact, the value of responsibility is very important for orphans to be able to face independent life in the future. This research is important to find out how the Annur Medan Orphanage equips children to face the challenges of life in the future, both in the fields of education, work, and social life. Characters formed early will be the basis for their success in the future. Based on the above statement, therefore, the research is interested in knowing in depth the strategies used by the Annur Medan Orphanage in forming the character of responsibility for orphans, and is expected to provide relevant recommendations in the development of better parenting in other orphanage environments.

Method

This study uses Qualitative Approach By type qualitative descriptive, as explained by Sugiyono (2020), who emphasizes a deep understanding of social phenomena from the perspective of participants. This approach was chosen because it was considered the most appropriate to explore the parenting processes and strategies applied by caregivers in shaping the character of responsibility in orphans in the orphanage environment. The research was carried out in Annur Orphanage, which is located in the city of Medan, precisely on Jln Kapten M. Jamil lubis North Sumatra Province. The selection of this location was based on the consideration that the orphanage has a child character development program and implements a systematic parenting structure. The research was conducted for two months, namely in March to May 2025.

The data collection technique was through interviews with caregivers, orphanage managers, and 6 orphans aged 10 to 17 years old who were part of the parenting process, semi-structured interviews were conducted by providing a number of pre-prepared guiding questions, but still providing space for participants to develop answers freely according to their experiences and views. These interviews are flexible, allowing researchers to tailor follow-up questions based on the responses given by participants, in order to dig deeper and more contextual information. The interview process was carried out face-to-face in a comfortable and open atmosphere so that participants felt free to express their opinions. Observations were carried out systematically by recording various relevant phenomena using field records and photographs, which allowed researchers to review the situation more accurately. Then the documentation is used as a source of supporting data to strengthen the results of interviews and observations. Data analysis is carried out qualitatively by following the steps according to Samiaji Sarosa namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

Results and Discussion

A. Habituation, Exemplary and Assignment Strategies at An-Nur Orphanage Habituation Strategy

Based on the results of observations and interviews conducted with caregivers and several children at the An-Nur Orphanage Medan, it was found that the strategy of forming the character of responsibility applied by the caregivers includes three main approaches, namely: habituation, example, and assignment.

"The strategy I usually use here is refraction, example, and assignment" (interview with Mrs. S. K., teacher on April 16, 2025)

Then he reinforces his answer again:

"Every child we get used to waking up at dawn, praying in congregation, then they have a daily picket schedule. We want them to know that everyone has their own responsibility." (interview with Mrs. S. K., teacher on April 16, 2025)



Figure 1. Photo of the afternoon recital process of orphanage children

The habituation strategy carried out by caregivers for foster children is to consistently get children used to carrying out daily responsibilities, such as cleaning the bedroom, washing their own clothes, and taking care of personal belongings. This habit is carried out since the child first lived in the orphanage. The habituation strategy is in line with the research that has been carried out At Al-Azka Integrated Islamic Kindergarten in Jambi City, the implementation of habituation methods repeatedly and consistently succeeded in instilling the character of responsibility in early childhood. Children are used to tidying up the equipment used, taking care of their own and others' belongings, and taking care of toys in the classroom.

Parenting strategies carried out by parents such as protecting children, meeting nutritional needs, providing supervision, education, and support and motivation are important steps in responding to the needs of children, especially children with special needs.[13] However, in its implementation, parents often face challenges such as children who are easily angry, difficult to communicate with, and erratic mood swings. Therefore, this parenting strategy must be carried out consistently and sustainably over a long period of time, so that these obstacles can be reduced and children can grow and develop properly according to their potential.[14] The authors conclude that the most effective parenting strategies are those that balance compassion and discipline. Children need clear guidance, but they also need to feel loved and valued. I tend to agree with the authoritative parenting style, because parents not only give the rules, but also explain the reasons behind them, and remain open to listening to the child. Exemplary Strategy

Caregivers apply exemplary strategies by showing an attitude of responsibility through direct actions, such as punctuality, keeping the orphanage clean, and paying attention to the needs of children with great attention.[15] Children observe and slowly imitate the behavior. The caregivers not only give instructions, but also demonstrate responsible attitudes and behaviors in daily life. This is a concrete example that can be imitated by children in the

process of learning character. In addition, emotional approaches such as affection and attention are also an important part of this strategy.

"I always show good things, so that the children here imitate, usually children are very easy to imitate what he sees" (Interview with Mrs. F. Caregiver of the Nursing Home on April 16, 2025).

The importance of improving morale by example method for children, especially early childhood who are very vulnerable to what is seen, heard, and felt.[16] This means that children are very sensitive to what is happening in the surrounding environment, this is a big consideration for an educator to be able to further improve both in terms of attitudes, behaviors, and speech. Because if you are dealing with children, children will quickly imitate and capture what they have seen or heard, without thinking about whether it is good or not.[17] This is the duty of a teacher to play an important role in this exemplary learning process. Parenting is the first responsibility of parents, so it is really unfortunate that nowadays there are still people who carry out the role of parents without awareness of parenting.[18] Childcare or also called child care in Islam is called hadhanah. Hadhanah means the obligation of parents to nurture and educate their children as well as possible. This maintenance covers economic problems, education and everything else that is a child's basic needs.[19]

An orphanage is a social home that is in charge of providing guidance and taking care of underprivileged children, so that their potential and learning capacity are good and can develop as they should.[20] Orphanages in addition to accommodating underprivileged children and need shelter, daily needs and education. Orphanages can be a surrogate family for their foster children. Therefore, in the orphanage there are foster parents. Foster parents are people who are able to meet all the needs of their foster children and foster parents also function as parents who educate their foster children. This is in line with QS. Al-Baqarah Verse 220:

فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۚ وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْيَتَامَىٰ ۖ قُلْ إِصْلَاحٌ لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ ۚ وَإِنْ تُخَاطَبُوا عَنْهُمُ فَقُولُوا لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ ۚ وَاللَّهُ يَعْزِمُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ۚ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَافْتَدَيْنَا بِالْكُفْرِ وَالظُّلْمِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

"About this world and the hereafter. They ask you (Muhammad) about orphans. Say, "Improving their situation is good!" And if you associate with them, then they are your brothers. Allah knows the one who does evil and the one who does good. And if Allah wills, He will bring trouble upon you. Verily, Allah is Almighty, All-Wise..

Parenting strategies that are carried out actively and continuously are very important in reducing obstacles faced by parents or caregivers, such as children who are easily tantrums, difficult to communicate with, and uncertain moods.[21] This is also true in the context of caring for orphans in orphanages, which have special challenges and needs. According to the author, orphans require special attention in three main aspects, namely emotional, physical, and educational needs. Emotionally, they need more intensive affection and attention to replace the loss of a parent, as well as emotional stability and a sense of security from caregivers. From the physical aspect, orphanages must meet basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, and ensure their health and hygiene. Meanwhile, in terms of education, it is important for orphans to obtain a proper formal education as well as the development of skills that are beneficial for their future.

B. Compassion-Based Parenting Strategies

Compassion-based parenting: Caregivers need to provide genuine affection and care to orphans. Development of independence: Caregivers need to help orphans develop independence and responsibility, The development of a child is also influenced by his visual intelligence which is a vision that changes from what becomes the child's character or identity, such as a smart child drawing in his paintings what is the same as the mind, In developing this intelligence, the child needs to be imaginative and how the child can express his imagination broadly.[22] We can practice this ability from an early age with collage activities, Indicators of spatial visual intelligence are to divert something that the eye sees to another form such as seeing and then pouring it into a painting or collage, drawing puzzles, being able to read maps, graphs or diagrams, constructing 3-dimensional images, and being sensitive to shapes, shapes, lines and patterns, in order to develop special visual intelligence that children have. So as an educator you can do tactics including creating works from colored paper, painting pictures, designing This article discusses the development of children's spatial visual intelligence through collage activities. Art activities such as collage can be part of a parenting approach that supports children's creativity and thinking skills.[23]

C. Assignment strategy

The assignment strategy is carried out by giving children certain responsibilities according to their age and ability, such as alternating schedules to wake up, study, or cleaning the orphanage in turn.[24] This strategy aims to foster confidence and a sense of belonging to the responsibilities given. The parenting strategies implemented at the Annur Orphanage include the provision of routine tasks, the habituation of discipline, the giving of trust, and the inculcation of religious values. Children are taught to be responsible for personal and environmental hygiene, schoolwork, and social responsibility in living together in the orphanage. Each child is given space to develop according to his or her potential and age.

"We make rules by giving tasks to children, because when they are given tasks they feel appreciated" (Interview with Mr. F. chairman of the Orphanage (April 24, 2025)



Figure 2. Photo interview with the head of the orphanage

Based on the above statement, the author concludes that the strategies implemented by caregivers at the An-Nur Orphanage have proven to be effective in instilling the value of responsibility in foster children. A humanist approach based on religious values is the main strength in this character formation process.

D. Character Formation of Responsibility for Orphans in An-Nur Orphanage Gradual and Consistent

The results of the study showed that the process of forming the character of responsibility at the An-Nur Orphanage was carried out gradually and consistently through various structured daily activities. Children are involved in activities that require them to complete certain tasks independently or in groups. One form of responsibility that is instilled is through a daily picket schedule. Children take turns cleaning the orphanage's bedroom, dining room, and environment. This not only trains discipline, but also a sense of belonging to the environment in which they live.

"I know when my picket schedule is. If I forget, my friends will remind me" (interview with brother J., orphanage child on April 24, 2025)

Then it is reinforced by another child's statement:

"I have been here for approximately 2 years, my routine activities such as congregational prayers, formal school, afternoon recitals, cleaning the house, studying at night and when I make a mistake I am reprimanded with affection" (Interview with brother D., orphanage child on April 24, 2025).

In addition, responsibility in the academic field is also emphasized. Children are encouraged to do homework independently and follow a shared study schedule in the evening. Caregivers monitor directly and provide guidance if any child is struggling. They are also given the responsibility to help their younger siblings in learning, as a form of character learning to help each other and shoulder social responsibility. In the religious and spiritual aspects, children are given the task of being imams in congregational prayers, leading prayers, or taking turns waking up their friends at dawn.

"We arrange the children's schedules when waking up the dawn prayer, so they take turns waking up their friends" (Interview with Mrs. Y., the caregiver of the orphanage on April 24, 2025).

This activity aims to foster spiritual responsibility and courage in taking on roles in front of others. These forms of responsibility are built consistently through a persuasive and compassionate approach, yet remain firm. The success of this character formation can be seen from the increased awareness of children in completing tasks without always having to be reminded and the emergence of their initiative to help others without being told.

"As a caretaker and caregiver in this orphanage, I always give affection to children, because what the children need most is nothing but affection, after feeling safe they will obey with us on their own" (Interview with Mrs. F., Caregiver at the orphanage on April 24, 2025).

Giving attention and affection to assisted children Giving attention and affection to assisted children is the responsibility of the orphanage manager for the sake of creating a sense of concern for the development of children. The affection given by the manager of the orphanage Rahmat Azizah to the fostered children is implemented by caring and nurturing like their own children as stated by the orphanage manager. Character education is basically aimed at cultivating individuals who have integrity, empathy, a sense of responsibility towards themselves and society, and a commitment to upholding truth and justice. It plays an important role in shaping a harmonious, cultured, and morally conscious society.[25] The process of character education can take many forms, including hands-on instruction, imitation of role models, and experiential learning in everyday life. Nurturing important character traits from a young age is a must, and one effective approach involves integrating local wisdom from the surrounding environment into education. Local wisdom represents cultural values that are inherited by an area, passed down from generation to generation, and are able to shape the basic character of individuals. Incorporating local wisdom into education not only strengthens cultural identity but also develops strong character among students. In addition, character education must be in harmony with the culture.

E. Through Learning Evaluation

Instilling the character of responsibility through learning evaluation, namely by emphasizing to students about assignments, usually assignments such as one assessment in one chapter or one KD with various assessment methods, one of which emphasizes on students such as punctuality in collecting assignments, something that is very emphasized although there are still some students who are a little difficult to follow the timeliness in collecting assignments that have been given and determined. In instilling the character of responsibility, the figure of the teacher here plays a very important role in instilling the character of responsibility in students. This can be seen from teachers not only teaching but teachers who are a facilitator tool for students to instill the character of responsibility to God, themselves, family, and the community.

The character of responsibility in my opinion (depending on the context of the writing or a particular writer) generally refers to a person's attitude and behavior in carrying out his obligations, keeping promises, and being able to account for every action or decision taken. If explained in general, the character of responsibility reflects, Self-awareness understands that every action has consequences, Commitment to being willing to complete tasks well to completion, Honesty and integrity admitting mistakes and not blaming others, Independence does not depend on others for matters that are personal responsibility, Reliability can be trusted by others because they are consistent in carrying out tasks.

F. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors of Parenting at An-Nur Orphanage

Supporting factors include that the orphanage has an orderly and consistent daily schedule, starting from waking up, studying, worshiping, to recreational activities. This structure creates habits and routines that educate the child to be disciplined and responsible for the tasks given.

"We have arranged the children's schedule, starting from 4.30 a.m. the children wake up early to get ready for the dawn prayer, then continue to recite, then from 6 to 7 a.m. breakfast, continue to go to formal school after school they rest until the ashar prayer then before the prayer they take a bath, after that they study/recite until 6 pm, continued to have dinner and rest so it was so opposite" (Interview with Mrs. Y., Caregiver of the Orphanage on April 24, 2025).

This activity aims to support the development of the independence of orphanage children from the will of the children, the role of caregivers and facilities in the orphanage. Then The approach used by caregivers is more familial and emotional, not violent. Children feel comfortable, listened to, and understood. This creates a closeness that allows them to be more open and willing to take direction.

"I apply the love of saying from myself to the children so that they can feel what it feels like to have parents, so that they are comfortable with me because I make this orphanage like other orphanages where everything is limited here I bestow all forms of love saying" (Interview with Mrs. Y., Caregiver of the Orphanage on April 24).



Figure 3. Photo of giving instructions to orphanage children

The next supporter is activities such as congregational prayers, reading the Qur'an, routinely helping to instill moral and spiritual values that are the basis of children's character of responsibility.

"They are still given formal education at school, then in the afternoon they are also given spiritual intake such as reciting with teachers who come here" (Interview with Mrs. F., Teacher at the orphanage on April 27, 2025).

Inhibiting factors include that the orphanage has different family backgrounds and life experiences. Some of them have been traumatized or have lost confidence, making it difficult to direct or take longer to form a character of responsibility.

"Most of the children here don't know who their family is, where they are from, what their parents are like. There are even those who have passed 3 orphanages because the previous orphanage did not get clear data on the child" (Interview with Mrs. M., a teacher at the orphanage on April 27).

The number of caregivers that is not proportional to the number of children causes a lack of personal supervision. This makes some children still less motivated or tend to be negligent in carrying out their responsibilities. Based on observations, the orphanage only has 2 caregivers, one of whom is the head of the orphanage. Therefore, many tasks may be done with extra effort and are very time-consuming. I'm the only one here who teaches you how to manage your time. Supporting facilities such as study rooms that are used as one if the orphanage has guests or other events, the place must be shared, cleaning equipment, or learning materials are still limited, thus limiting the effectiveness of the optimal implementation of the responsibility program. Based on observations when the research took place at the same time, the children also learned to recite at the place where the researcher conducted interviews. Not all caregivers have an educational background in child psychology or character education. This sometimes makes the approach taken less appropriate for children with special emotional needs. "I was from a boarding school in the past, I also went to college to major in Islamic religious education but I was sick so I didn't finish it" (interview with Mrs. M., teacher at the orphanage on April 27, 2025)

Conclusion

Based on research on parenting strategies in forming the character of responsibility in orphans at the Annur Orphanage Medan, it can be concluded that the approach applied is effective in shaping the character of responsibility

of foster children. The Annur Medan Orphanage implements a parenting model that prioritizes open communication between caregivers and children, as well as providing examples of good behavior. Through this approach, children are taught to understand the importance of responsibility in daily life. In addition, educational programs and structured activities also play a role in instilling the values of responsibility in foster children. However, challenges such as limited resources and differences in children's backgrounds remain obstacles in the process of character formation. Therefore, continuous efforts and support from various parties are needed to overcome these barriers and ensure the sustainability of effective parenting programs. Overall, the Annur Medan Orphanage has shown a commitment to forming a character of responsibility for orphans through a holistic and development-oriented parenting strategy.

Acknowledgement

The researchers would like to thank those who have helped with this research until its completion.

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